skill in questions

Skill in Questions

How the Buddha Taught

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu

(Geoffrey DeGraff)

"That's the purpose of discussion, that's the purpose of counsel, that's the purpose of drawing near, that's the purpose of lending ear: i.e., the liberation of the mind through no clinging." — *AN 3:68*

"Just as if a man with good eyesight standing on the shore of a body of water were to see a large fish rise. The thought would occur to him, 'From the rise of this fish, from the break of its ripples, from its speed, it is a large fish, not a small one.' In the same way, one individual, in discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], from the way he addresses a question, he is discerning, not dull.'"
— *AN 4:192*

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Abbreviations

AN	*Aṅguttara Nikāya*
DN	*Dīgha Nikāya*
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
Iti	*Itivuttaka*
MN	*Majjhima Nikāya*
Mv	*Mahāvagga*
SN	*Saṁyutta Nikāya*
Sn	*Sutta Nipāta*
Ud	*Udāna*

Foreword

This is a book about discernment in action, centered on the Buddha's strategic use of discernment in framing and responding to questions.

The idea for this book was born more than a decade ago from reading three of the Buddha's discourses. The first was SN 44:10, in which he refused to answer the question of whether there is or is not a self. This discourse called attention to the fact that the Buddha had clear ideas about which questions his teachings were meant to answer, and which ones they weren't. I realized that if I wanted to understand and get the best use out of his teaching on not-self, I had to find the questions to which this teaching was a response and not take it out of context. I also realized that the same principle would apply to the Buddha's other teachings as well.

The second discourse was MN 2, which defined appropriate attention —one of the most important qualities of mind in leading to awakening— as the ability to know which questions were worth attending to, and which ones were not. Among the questions listed as not worth attending to were, "Am I?" "Am I not?" "What am I?" This discourse reinforced the lessons of SN 44:10, proving that they were not limited to the circumstances described in that discourse, at the same time showing that the ability to focus one's questions on the issue of suffering and stress was central to the path.

The third discourse was AN 4:42, in which the Buddha classified questions into four types depending on the response-strategy they deserved: a categorical answer, an analytical answer, cross-questioning, and being put aside. Although the discourse didn't define these types of questions or illustrate them with examples, it did suggest that the Buddha had reflected carefully on the general issue of how to approach questions. Because so many of his teachings were in response to questions, the thought occurred to me that it would be instructive to look through the

discourses to see if and how he used this typology in practice, and how it affected the way he approached particular topics in his teaching. And more than instructive: Given the importance of appropriate attention in the practice of the path, a study of this sort would provide a valuable practical tool, giving guidance in how to keep the practice on course by paying careful attention to the questions that motivated it and gave it shape.

That's how the idea for this book was born.

For many years I was unable to pursue this project because of other responsibilities, but I did keep a growing file of passages from the Canon that seemed relevant to this project as I encountered them in the course of other pursuits. These passages showed that the Buddha actually employed his fourfold typology in approaching questions, and that it was a useful tool in focusing attention on issues of genuine importance and avoiding distractions. I began applying the typology in my own practice, and found that it clarified many issues that had previously been unclear. Also, I began referring to the Buddha's response-strategies in my writings, for instance in the articles, "No Self or Not-self?" "Questions of Skill," "De-perception," and "Perennial Issues," along with the discussions of appropriate attention in *The Wings to Awakening,* "Food for Awakening," and "Untangling the Present." Some of the other projects I worked on in this period—in particular, the books, *The Paradox of Becoming* and *The Shape of Suffering*—broadened and sharpened my understanding of the issues involved in the Buddha's choice of response-strategies.

At the same time, I began noticing discussions on the topic of questions in non-Buddhist sources as well. Two passages in particular underlined its importance. One was a story told by a man born in New York whose parents had been immigrants from Eastern Europe. They had placed great importance on his education, and his mother would ask him every day after school, not what he had learned that day, but what questions he had asked. The mother was wise, understanding the importance of an inquisitive mind in the ability to learn what is of true value in a subject. The second passage was a quote from a famous author to the effect that if they can get you to ask the wrong questions, it doesn't matter what answers you come up with. This quote underlines the fact that we often pick up our questions from other people without

considering whether they actually help us or not, and that people can often use their influence in this way to keep others distracted from what's in their true best interest to know. Reflecting on this quote, I appreciated even more the Buddha's typology and the way he taught it in practice. He didn't rest content with teaching others the right answers to questions; by his example, he provided them with the tools to foster their own discernment: to choose their questions wisely, to find the answers for themselves, and to gauge whether their answers really helped them. This was a rare and important gift.

For the past year and a half I have been working on this project, and I have found that the more time and energy I have put into this issue, the more fruitful the results have been in my teaching and practice. As the manuscript took shape, I benefitted from sharing it with others and gaining their insights in how to improve it. In addition to the monks here at the monastery, these people include: Ven. Varadhammo Bhikkhu, Michael Barber, Gerald Eule, Bok-Lim Kim, Emer O'Hagan, Addie Onsanit, Nathaniel Osgood, Xiao-Quan Osgood, Narciso Polanco, Dale Schultz, Mary Talbot, Sebastian Wong, Jane Yudelman, and Michael Zoll. Ruby Grad and Jonathan Tarbox generously gave of their professional skills, compiling the indexes and proofreading the text, respectively. The generosity of these people in providing their time and expertise has greatly improved the book. I, of course, am responsible for any errors that remain.

I would like to dedicate this book, in gratitude, to the memory of Phra Rajvinayasobhana (Boontham Puññamayo) of Wat Makut Kasatriyaram, Bangkok, a monk I have known for many years as *Luang Lung,* or Venerable Uncle. Beginning with the day of my ordination, he provided much help and encouragement in my practice of the life gone forth. When he passed away last March, it was as if I had lost a protector. I hope that the merit of this book will help speed him on his way to Nibbāna.

And I hope it will help you, the reader, in the quest for discernment on the path.

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Skill in Questions

When we read the account of the Buddha's last night, it's easy to sense the importance of his final teaching before entering total nibbāna: "Now, then, monks, I exhort you: All fabrications are subject to decay. Bring about completion by being heedful." These words call attention to themselves because they were the last he ever said.

That may be why it's so easy to overlook the importance of what the Buddha did right before saying them. In a gesture extremely gracious—given that he had been walking all day, had fallen severely ill along the way, and now was about to die—he offered one last opportunity for his followers to question him. He even made the offer four times to show that it wasn't just a gesture. He seriously wanted to clear up any remaining doubts in their minds before closing his mouth for good.

> Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "If even a single monk has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don't later regret that 'The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn't bring ourselves to cross-question him in his presence.'"
> When this was said, the monks were silent.
> A second time... A third time, the Blessed One said, "If even a; single monk has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don't later regret that 'The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn't bring ourselves to cross-question him in his presence.'"
> A third time, the monks were silent.
> Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Now, if it's out of respect for the Teacher that you don't ask, let a friend inform a friend."
> When this was said, the monks were silent.

> Then Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding. I'm confident that in this community of monks there isn't even a single monk who has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice."
> "You, Ānanda, speak out of confidence, while there is knowledge in the Tathāgata that in this community of monks there isn't even a single monk who has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice. Of these 500 monks, the most backward is a stream-winner, not destined for the planes of deprivation, headed to self-awakening for sure." — *DN 16*

It's possible to read this passage simply as a rhetorical flourish, indicating how special the assembly was that had gathered to witness the Buddha's passing: Only those who had had their first taste of the deathless were privileged enough to be present. But the passage goes deeper than that, showing *how* the Buddha had brought them to that taste. Instead of enforcing an unquestioning acceptance of his teachings, he had resolved his students' doubts by being open to their questions. The fact that this incident is placed right before the last teaching is a measure of how central this method was to his teaching, and how important it was to his followers who assembled the Canon.

Other discourses emphasize this point as well. AN 2:46 [§73], for instance, notes that the Buddha trained his followers in cross-questioning, with the result that, "when they have mastered the Dhamma, they cross-question one another about it and dissect it: 'How is this? What is the meaning of this?' They make open what isn't open, make plain what isn't plain, dispel doubt on its various doubtful points."

The central role of questioning in the Buddha's teaching may be connected to the fact that his teaching starts not with a first principle but with a self-evident problem: how to put an end to suffering. And instead of trying to argue from this problem back to first principles, he stays focused on the immediate question of how to solve it. As he noted, suffering gives rise to two responses—bewilderment and a searching question: "Who knows a way or two to stop this pain?" To help put an end to that bewilderment, the Buddha presented his teachings as responses to

the many questions deriving from that primal, searching question. Thus questions formed the primary mode for organizing what he taught.

But even though the Buddha ordered his teachings around questions rather than first principles, he did not set out to answer every controversial question that came his way. He focused solely on questions related strategically to the end of suffering, i.e., questions that would actually help in attaining that goal. For this reason, he classified questions —as they related to this focus—according to the response-strategy they deserved, and he arrived at four sorts: those that deserved a categorical answer, those that deserved an analytical answer, those that deserved to be cross-questioned before being answered, and those that deserved to be put aside. This fourfold classification is the theme of this book, for it provides important insights into both how and what the Buddha taught about the way to end suffering.

To understand the importance of this classification, and why the Buddha formulated it in those terms, it might be useful first to reflect in general terms on what it means to ask and answer a question based on a desire to attain a goal. A helpful way to begin that reflection is with a question that, in Western thought, is first stated in Plato's *Meno:*

> *When you're looking for something but don't know quite what it is, how do you know when you've found it?*

In the *Meno,* Socrates uses this question as the departure point for his doctrine of memory from past lives: You know what you want because you knew it in a previous lifetime. But from a Buddhist point of view, a more fruitful approach to this question is to look at the psychology of how people go about setting up a problem and solving it in the here and now: You know when you've found the knowledge you were seeking because the desire that sparked your search had already given it a function and a shape. You wanted knowledge that would perform a desired function, and you wanted it to make sense, to fit in with what had worked with similar problems in the past. When you've encountered something that, when put to the test, meets both specifications—the function and the fit—you know that that's what you wanted. (Ironically, even Socrates himself would set up a problem and test the proposed solutions in precisely this way.)

The questions aimed at determining the fit and function of your answers operate on three levels. The first level aims at giving your ignorance a shape, to define your felt need and why the need makes sense. The second and third levels determine if the answer actually functions as you want it to, with the second level establishing tests for checking the actual performance of whatever potential answer seems to fit that shape, and the third setting standards for measuring whether an answer has actually passed the tests.

In formulating a question on the first level, you create the frame of a sentence and leave part of the frame blank. The important feature of the blank is that it's not an amorphous hole. It's more like the shape of a missing piece of a puzzle. Only a piece that matches the shape and the pattern of the puzzle will fit. If you ask, "Why am I suffering?" and are told, "42," you won't be satisfied with the answer, for it's not just a wrong piece from the right puzzle. It's from the wrong puzzle entirely.

The reason we need questions to give shape to our ignorance is that the shape helps to narrow down the range of potential answers we will need to test to see if they fulfill the function we want. It's a way of saving energy and time so that our second and third levels of questions can be applied immediately to the most promising candidates. If it turns out that none of the possibilities suggested by the shape of the first-level questions pass the second- or third-, we can then turn around and question the puzzle with which we started: Maybe the shape it suggested was mistaken, and we have to find a new puzzle or a new way of putting the pieces together. Then we experiment with a new shape, and apply the second- and third-level questions again. This way, through trial and error, we have a chance of finding the answer we want. When our questions on all three levels are well formulated, they help us to recognize the solution to our problem even though we originally had only a vague notion of what it might be.

But if the questions are wrongly formulated, they can easily lead us astray. The original narrowing-down might narrow down on the wrong spot, focusing our attention away from the actual answer. The tests we set for our answers, and our standards for judging the results of those tests, might be misguided or aim too low.

This means that when you try to find an answer to a question of this sort, you have to do more than simply provide a piece that fits into the

puzzle you've formulated. You have to question the question, remembering that your answer will have an impact, in terms either of what the questioner—you or your listener—will do with it, or of what it will do to the questioner. And this means that the puzzle analogy, which is essentially static, has to be replaced with a more dynamic one: The questioner is assembling a complex tool or instrument, such as a piano or a machine, and—seeing that you have practical experience with what he wants to assemble—has asked you for a missing part and advice on how to use the completed instrument. In this case, the first-level questions would cover the structure of the instrument; the second-level questions, the way it should be played or used; and the third-level questions, standards for determining whether it's being played or used well. If you want to give responsible answers in a situation like this, you can't simply supply the missing part. You first have to ascertain the desire behind the request: Does the questioner really want the part, or is he trying to make you look like a fool? Or does he want to use the part to assemble something more sinister? Even if his desire for the part is sincere, you want to make sure he's planning to use the instrument for a beneficial purpose, that the instrument is the correct one for the purpose he has in mind, and that he knows how to use the instrument in a way that doesn't cause inadvertent harm.

For instance, suppose that you're a construction engineer, and a close friend—a would-be do-it-yourselfer totally inexperienced in construction—has come to you for advice. He's discovered that a concrete barrier in his backyard is acting as a dam after heavy rain, preventing drainage, and keeping his yard and cellar flooded. He has what he thinks is a jackhammer for chipping away the concrete and has asked you for a missing part. Your first duty is to make sure that he really intends to use the jackhammer to attack the barrier, and that he's not actually going to dig into a sewer main instead. Then you check to see that the concrete is actually causing harm, and that its removal will be beneficial: The water, when allowed to flow, won't cause worse damage somewhere else. And you want to make sure that your friend isn't assembling a cement mixer to make more cement by mistake.

When you're sure that his purpose is skillful and that he actually has a jackhammer, you then check to see that the parts he's already assembled

have been put together correctly. Otherwise, even the best possible part you might give him wouldn't fit, and the jackhammer wouldn't work. And even then, when you supply the missing part, you might have to quiz him to make sure that he knows where to put it and how to use the jackhammer once it's fully assembled so that he doesn't end up injuring himself. And ideally you should give him the opportunity to ask you questions, for otherwise you can't be sure that he's understood what you've said. If you're really responsible, you'll give him a checklist of questions that will teach him how to judge whether he's using his jackhammer appropriately and with skill.

What this means is that when you take into consideration the impact of the knowledge you're providing, simply being truthful is not enough. You also have to ensure that your answer will be beneficial. If it's challenging to your listener, you have to take care in presenting it with words that are timely: appropriate to the situation and the listener's level of skill and understanding.

This was the Buddha's approach to the responsibilities he took on when answering questions. His primary purpose in teaching was to provide his listeners with something they were looking for—a total end to suffering and stress—yet he knew that they might have only vague or downright wrong ideas of what that end might be or how to attain it. He had learned from experience that the act of framing skillful questions played an essential role in directing his own search for release, so his first step in helping his listeners overcome their ignorance was to show them how to give it the proper shape: how to frame the questions they addressed to him so that they would recognize the truth and utility of his solutions when they heard them. However, he had also learned from personal experience the importance of self cross-examination in testing the original frames he had formulated, and the answers he had come up with, in the course of his quest. Thus he also wanted to teach his listeners how to frame the questions they addressed to themselves, so that they could become independent in the Dhamma and learn to overcome their ignorance on their own.

In other words, he wasn't content simply to provide answers to people's questions. He also wanted to show them how unskillful questions can be recognized through testing, and how skillful questions—

conducive to the end of suffering—can be framed and tested in their place.

The Buddha was one of those rare teachers who understood how the content of his teaching gave insight into the act of teaching, so that *how* he taught was shaped by *what* he taught. In this case, the how was shaped by what he had learned on the night of his awakening. In the second watch of the night, he had seen that people's experience of pleasure and pain is shaped by their actions *(kamma),* that their actions are shaped by their views, and that their views are shaped by their attitude of respect or disrespect for those who have realized and taught the truth.

This insight showed him that, as a teacher, he would be responsible for more than simply providing his listeners with right views. To be effective, he would also have to provide them with good reasons for respecting him and accepting those views, along with the right framework for putting them to proper use and testing the results they received. In other words, his approach would have to be strategic. He saw that words are not only descriptive but also performative: The act of speaking is a type of kamma, and as with all kamma it has an effect. The speaker's responsibility is to make that effect as beneficial and timely as possible.

Thus, when answering questions, he kept the kamma of teaching and learning in mind. He saw that teaching and learning, to be most effective, have to be cooperative efforts. This meant, as a basic ground rule, that he'd be open to questions about his teachings, showing that he was responsive both to his listeners' desire to find an end to suffering and to their desire to learn and understand his teachings. At the same time, however, he'd be careful to answer questions only when he felt the questioner was truthful and sincerely wanted to put an end to suffering and stress. Then he'd make sure that the person's way of framing questions was appropriate to that task. If it was, he'd respond to the questions with answers that were categorical—absolute and without exceptions. If it wasn't, he had a choice. Either he'd reframe the questions, giving what he called analytical answers, if the questions were relevant to the ending of suffering and the frame could be adjusted to bring it in line with the path—the jackhammer wrongly assembled—or else he'd put the questions aside if he found them irrelevant and the frame totally inappropriate: the cement mixer when a jackhammer was the better tool.

If he saw that his listeners might have trouble understanding the way he framed his answers, he'd cross-question them to help them remember and apply their knowledge of other skills to understanding and utilizing the skills he was teaching. When he was being especially thorough, he'd continue the cross-questioning by providing them with a checklist of points to ask themselves so that they could put his answers to the best use and gauge for themselves how well they were succeeding.

These are apparently the considerations that lay behind the Buddha's decision to classify questions as to whether they deserved categorical answers, analytical answers, cross-questioning, or to be put aside. These four categories form the framework for his skill in questions—*pañha-kosalla*—which was not simply a matter of providing deft answers to difficult questions, but also an ability always to keep in mind how an individual question fits into the larger quest for freedom from suffering. This is why the Buddha said that a person's wisdom and discernment can be gauged by the way he or she responds to questions, for wisdom is not content simply with correct answers. It's strategic, pragmatic. It wants those answers to have as beneficial an effect as possible.

Because of this intimate connection between what the Buddha taught and how he taught, the *how* is not just an offshoot of the *what.* The *what* is also shaped by the *how.* In particular, there's a great deal to be learned about the content of the Buddha's teachings by examining where those teachings fit into the four response-strategies, for the questions provide the framework in which the terms and strategies of the teachings find their meaning. This is particularly important in a teaching like the Buddha's, which—as we have noted—neither starts nor ends with first principles, but stays focused on a question that seeks a solution to a problem. This is why the Buddha viewed questions as the primary means by which the mind creates contexts for its concepts. If we want to understand and use his teachings for their intended purpose, we have to view them in terms of the questions they were and were not meant to answer. So there's a great deal to be learned by looking at his skill in choosing which questions to answer as they were, which to reframe, which to cross-question, and which to put aside.

This is the motivation behind this book. Although the Buddha lists the four types of questions three times in the discourses (DN 33, AN 3:68

[§118], and AN 4:42 [§1]), he doesn't illustrate the lists with examples of the different types. However, there are many situations in which he calls attention to the fact that a particular question deserves a particular response-strategy, which he then provides. Thus it's possible to collate these examples from the discourses to show these various response-strategies in action, along with the distinctive patterns that emerge when the material is organized in this way.

For this reason—after Chapters One and Two provide a theoretical and narrative background for the Buddha's approach to responding to questions—Chapters Three through Eight provide readings that consist primarily of passages in which a particular response-strategy is used. I say *primarily* because the Buddha tended to use particular response-strategies with particular topics, and so I have augmented the passages in some of the chapters with additional passages that help to flesh out these topics. I have done this with two aims in mind: to help give a more coherent account of the Dhamma lessons contained in the Buddha's responses, and to help clarify the rationale behind the response-strategies he has chosen.

Also, each chapter is prefaced by a discussion calling attention to some of the salient lessons to be learned when similar response-strategies are viewed side by side. Although some of these discussions are fairly long, they are not meant to be exhaustive. They simply provide a few beginning insights for anyone interested in pursuing the material further. Because the Buddha, in responding to questions, is often operating on many levels, I felt it would be most useful to limit my observations to the essentials, and to give extensive quotations from the texts so that the reader can observe the Buddha's skill in questions in action for him or herself.

However, because it's easy to get lost in the large number of passages provided in these chapters, *I would recommend reading the discussion sections for all the chapters before delving into the readings in any one of the chapters.* That way you can start with a clear overview of the main points, which will then allow you to pursue the particulars of whatever you find interesting without losing your bearings.

You will notice—especially in the discussions in Chapters Three, Five, and Eight—that I have frequently compared the Buddha's approach to

asking and responding to questions with Socrates' approach as recorded in the Platonic dialogues. I have done this for four reasons.

The first is that some modern commentators have asserted that the Buddha employed the Socratic method in his teaching, and I felt that a close examination of the Buddha's approach to the four types of questions would offer a good opportunity to test exactly how far this assertion is true.

The second reason, related to the first, is that some have noted that the Buddha and Socrates were near contemporaries in the so-called Axial Age, and that as seminal figures representing the spirit of inquiry in that age they shared a common agenda. A comparative study of how they handled questions is a good way to test this assertion as well.

Third, to the extent that Socrates and Plato set the agenda for Western intellectual life, I thought that comparing the Buddha's approach to dialogue with Socrates' would be a useful starting point for comparing the Buddha's thought with Western thought in a way not limited to superficial or invidious generalities—to see precisely where his approach to wisdom differs from the assumptions about wisdom that Westerners have absorbed, often unthinkingly, from the history of their culture.

Fourth, I found that the comparisons between the Buddha's approach and Socrates' help highlight what is truly distinctive and important in the Buddha's manner of teaching. To make clear what he *was* doing in his teaching strategy, it's useful to have a clear point of comparison to show what he *wasn't.* The compilers of the Pali Canon use this approach to introduce the Buddha's teachings in the discourses they place at the beginning of both the Dīgha Nikāya and the Majjhima Nikāya (DN 1 & DN 2, MN 1 & MN 2), and it's especially helpful here in clarifying the Buddha's reasons for dividing questions into four types.

There are many advantages to viewing the Buddha's teachings from the standpoint of these four types of questions, but one of the most important is that it allows us to see those teachings in a framework that the Buddha himself regarded as having utmost importance. For example, when we compare the questions to which the Buddha gave categorical answers to those whose answers were more specific to the context, we can see which of his teachings, in his eyes, had the most categorical, universal significance, and which had a more limited, specific range. When we note

the topics he taught using analytical or cross-questioning strategies—which are primarily methods of clarification—we can see which of his teachings his contemporaries found hardest to understand. This, in turn, helps us to see which of his teachings were most original to his thought and newest to them. And when we examine the questions he put aside, we can learn important lessons about how his teachings are best understood and used, in that they were clearly meant to function in the context of some questions but not others.

This way of organizing the Buddha's teachings also draws attention to the central fact that all of his teachings have the strategic purpose of helping people to change their minds. As we watch the Buddha respond to questions, we are watching discernment in action, for that's how he understood discernment: as an action, as a compassionate strategy for bringing about release. To see his teachings in this light helps to correct the common tendency to regard Buddhist wisdom as sage aphorisms devoid of context. It also helps to correct the more academic tendency—dating back to the Abhidhamma—of teaching Buddhist wisdom as a vocabulary lesson, believing that if we can define the terms, we can fully understand what he's saying. Admittedly, the terms are important, and clear definitions useful, but they find their true meaning only when applied in the context of the Buddha's overall strategy of questions and answers in teaching the path to release.

Although our main focus will be on how the Buddha used the four response-strategies when dealing with the questions of his time, the import of the book is not entirely historical. As we will see in Chapter Two, the Buddha's own path of practice to awakening was directed by the questions he asked himself. The more skillful he became in asking and answering the right questions, the closer he came to release. For this reason, in Chapters Five and Six we will find that he encouraged his students to ask questions of him—and themselves—in just the same way. Thus, for anyone interested in practicing the Buddha's teachings, an important dimension in reading this book will lie in learning how to apply its lessons in formulating the questions you ask yourself in the course of your practice.

At the same time, Chapters Four, Five, and Eight show the many ways in which the Buddha's listeners misinterpreted his teachings by trying to

force those teachings to answer questions shaped by the listeners' preconceived notions—an important object lesson for those of us at present who may not share the preconceived notions of the Buddha's time, but still bring preconceived notions to the Dhamma nonetheless. When we see the advantages that the Buddha's listeners gained as he reworked their questions, we can be more inclined to accept the idea that our questions may require some reworking as well.

So by watching the Buddha in action as he responds to a wide range of questions that people in his time brought to their practice, we can gain lessons in how to be more skillful and discerning in the questions we bring to our own.

Chapter One

The Kamma of Teaching

The Buddha as a teacher was known for his skill in giving apt and effective answers to difficult people asking difficult questions. When a fierce and powerful spirit threatened him, saying, "I will ask you a question, contemplative. If you can't answer me, I will possess your mind or rip open your heart or, grabbing you by the feet, hurl you across the Ganges," the Buddha remained unfazed and gave such satisfactory answers that he converted the spirit into becoming one of his followers (Sn 1:10). When approached by Sakka, the king of the devas—who had never received satisfactory answers to his questions from any other teacher—he answered those questions in such a way that Sakka gained the highest happiness he had ever experienced: his first taste of awakening [§4]. When a famous brahmanical teacher sent sixteen of his students to test his knowledge of advanced stages of meditation, the Buddha's answers to their questions not only converted all sixteen, but also brought all but one of them to total release (Sn 5).

The discourses in the Pali Canon—our earliest extant record of the Buddha's teachings—show that the Buddha's skill in dealing with questions went beyond simply providing good answers. Whereas other teachers at the time had formulaic doctrines that they repeated regardless of the questions they were asked, the Buddha tailored his answers not only to the question but also to the questioner's needs [§5, §99]. He could often detect the assumptions or beliefs lying behind a question [§66], and could tell when two questions—though widely different in their wording—were actually equivalent [§167].

The Buddha was also able to pass some of this mastery on to his students. When Ven. Assaji, one of the Buddha's first students, was approached by the wanderer Upatissa—later Ven. Sāriputta—his brief answer to Upatissa's question gave Upatissa a first glimpse of awakening.

When Upatissa later reported this answer to his friend, Kolita—later Ven. MahāMoggallāna—Kolita gained his first glimpse of awakening as well [§3].

From the early years of the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha's followers memorized and celebrated these skillful answers. The question-and-answer dialogues recorded in the fourth and fifth chapters of the Sutta Nipāta, we are told, were memorized during the Buddha's lifetime not only by monks but also by lay followers (Ud 5:6; AN 7:50). When the Pali Canon was compiled, two chapters in the Saṁyutta Nikāya were devoted to the Buddha's answers to questions posed by devas; another chapter, to the answers that his nun disciples gave to questions posed by Māra. When King Asoka, in one of his edicts, compiled a list of texts for monks and nuns to chant frequently, he included Ven. Assaji's answer to Upatissa's question in the list. Amulets distributed to pilgrims to the Buddhist holy spots in the early centuries of the Common Era were inscribed with the first line of Ven. Assaji's answer on the reverse side.

Part of the reason for the early tradition's focus on these question-and-answer dialogues was their effectiveness as teaching tools: They spoke directly to the questions that many people brought to the early Buddhists about their teachings. But another part is that the Buddha explicitly cited the skill with which one addresses a question as a measure of one's wisdom and discernment. The early Buddhists, in focusing on this aspect of the Buddha's teachings, wanted to show clearly that their teacher was wise.

> "There is the case where one individual, through discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], *from the way he addresses a question,* he is discerning, not dull. Why is that? He makes statements that are deep, peaceful, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. He can declare the meaning, teach it, describe it, set it forth, reveal it, explain it, & make it plain. He is discerning, not dull.' Just as if a man with good eyesight standing on the shore of a body of water were to see a large fish rise. The thought would occur to him, 'From the rise of this fish, from the break of its ripples, from its speed, it is a large fish, not a small one.' In the same way, one individual, in discussion with

> another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], *from the way he addresses a question*... he is discerning, not dull.'" — *AN 4:192* [emphasis added]

Thus, given the tradition's appreciation of the Buddha's skill in answering questions, it is somewhat ironic that in the centuries following the compilation of the Pali Canon a misunderstanding developed around one of the most important features of that skill. The Canon contains a list of the Buddha's analysis of questions into four categories based on the response they deserved, but the meaning of those categories was apparently forgotten at a later date.

> "There are these four ways of answering questions. Which four? There are questions that should be answered categorically. There are questions that should be answered analytically. There are questions that should be answered with cross-questioning. There are questions that should be put aside. These are the four ways of answering questions." — *AN 4:42*

In the three discourses where the Buddha lists these four categories of questions, he gives no examples or definitions for any of the categories, nor does he explain why a particular question would fall into one category rather than another. This may be why his intended definitions of the categories were lost by the tradition and—by the time of Buddhaghosa, the primary commentator of the Theravada tradition—replaced by definitions that dealt with issues in formal logic and had nothing to do with questions the Buddha actually encountered (see Appendix One).

Fortunately, however, even though the Buddha didn't explain the four categories in the discourses where he listed them, he did leave clues in other discourses that provide a clear indication of what these categories meant. In some cases, he would state outright that he was employing a particular response-strategy. For instance, he might preface an analytical answer by saying, "Prince, there is no categorical answer to that," or "Here... I am one who speaks analytically, not one who speaks categorically"; a session of cross-questioning by saying, "Very well then ... I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit"; or the fact that the question deserved to be put aside by saying, "Not a valid

question," "Don't say that," or "Enough.... Put that aside. Don't ask me that."

In other cases, he would correct his students if they asked a question in the wrong way: "Your question should not be phrased in this way... instead, it should be phrased like this." Or he would chastise them for employing the wrong response-strategy to a question: "His question, which deserved an analytical answer, has been given a categorical answer by this worthless man." Or he would commend them for using the right response. Once [§62], when he asked Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, every habit & practice, every life, every holy life that is followed as of essential worth: Is every one of them fruitful?" Ven. Ānanda responded, "Lord, that is not [to be answered] with a categorical answer."

"Very well then, Ānanda, give an analytical answer."

Ānanda then gave an answer, got up, and left, after which the Buddha said to the monks who had listened in, "Monks, Ānanda is still in training, but it would not be easy to find his equal in discernment"—showing both that Ven. Ānanda's answer qualified as analytical and that his ability to use this strategy aptly in responding to the question was a clear sign of his discernment.

In addition to flagging instances where one of the more strategic approaches to answering questions should be used, the Buddha also made a habit of framing his formal talks as responses to questions he would pose at the beginning of the talks, to show the proper framework for understanding his statements, at the same time demonstrating which questions are worth answering in a categorical way.

So even though he did not spell out a clear system for classifying the four sorts of questions into these four categories, he did teach his four response-strategies by example. This means that it's possible to draw examples from the discourses to see what the Buddha meant by these four categories and how they are best put to use. That is the approach taken in this book. Instead of trying to approach the four categories of questions with predetermined definitions, I have culled the discourses for passages in which the Buddha calls attention to the way he is using a particular response-strategy in answering a question. Having gathered these passages and organized them by strategy, I tried to discover the patterns underlying each strategy, and then added other passages that fall in line

with those patterns. In adopting this approach, I have done my best to follow the method for learning these strategies that the Buddha himself seems to have intended. He apparently wanted his students to use their own powers of observation to gain a sense of how he used these categories in action, so that they could employ them in action themselves.

When we collect the instances of the various response-strategies as flagged by the Buddha, we find that the primary criterion for sorting out the four categories is a consideration highlighted in the Buddha's own statement of his purpose in engaging in conversation:

> "That's the purpose of discussion, that's the purpose of counsel, that's the purpose of drawing near, that's the purpose of lending ear: i.e., the liberation of the mind through no clinging."
> — *AN 3:68*

In every case, the Buddha responds to questions in line with how effective a particular response to those questions would be in leading the listener to follow the path of practice leading to liberation. He starts not with a logical first principle, but by holding in mind a solution to a problem, an intended final goal. Then he has to gauge how the act of asking and answering a question would relate to that goal. This, in turn, requires that he focus on three issues: the way the question is framed, the topic of the question, and the mental state of the listener.

To gain a fuller appreciation of how the Buddha uses these considerations in gauging the proper response-strategy for a particular question, we need to look at his larger analysis of what is involved in the act of teaching—and learning—the way to liberation. And the best way to do this is to consider these issues in light of the two teachings he said were categorical: skillful and unskillful kamma (action) on the one hand, and the four noble truths on the other [§21, §22].

Of these two teachings, the one on kamma is the more basic. In the second watch of the night of his awakening, the Buddha gained insight into how beings pass away and are reborn in line with their actions [§18]. This insight was the source both of the content and of the method of his teachings on skillful and unskillful kamma. He saw that beings fared well on the basis of skillful kamma, and poorly on the basis of unskillful kamma. Their choice of skillful or unskillful kamma, in turn, was

influenced by their views and by their level of respect for noble ones. This last factor indicated that skillful and unskillful kamma were not inspired solely by internal factors. If beings could be induced to develop respect for the noble ones, they could learn from those noble ones to develop right view and skillful kamma. This meant that they could be taught.

Soon after his awakening, though, the Buddha despaired at the idea of trying to teach others what he had found.

> "The thought occurred to me, 'This Dhamma I have attained is deep, hard to see, hard to realize, peaceful, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. But this generation delights in attachment *[ālaya],* is excited by attachment, enjoys attachment. For a generation delighting in attachment, excited by attachment, enjoying attachment, this/that conditionality *[idappaccayatā]* [§40] & dependent co-arising *[paṭicca samuppāda]* [§41] are hard to see. This state too is hard to see: the pacification of all fabrications, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding *(nibbāna).* And if I were to teach the Dhamma and others would not understand me, that would be tiresome for me, troublesome for me.'
> "Just then these verses, unspoken in the past, unheard before, occurred to me,
>
> 'Enough now with teaching
> what
> only with difficulty
> I reached.
> This Dhamma is not easily realized
> by those overcome
> with aversion & passion.
>
> What is abstruse, subtle,
> deep,
> hard to see,
> going against the flow—
> those delighting in passion,
> cloaked in the mass of darkness,
> won't see.'

> "As I reflected thus, my mind inclined to dwelling at ease, not to teaching the Dhamma." — *MN 26*

However, the Brahmā Sahampati—on reading the Buddha's thoughts, came down from his heaven and, on bended knee, pleaded with the Buddha to teach, saying that there would be those who would understand the Dhamma and benefit from it. The Buddha then confirmed this fact with his own knowledge, and so resolved to teach.

On a later occasion, the brahman Lohicca challenged the Buddha on whether it was fitting to teach the Dhamma, arguing,

> "Suppose that a contemplative or brahman were to arrive at a skillful doctrine. Having arrived at a skillful doctrine, he should not declare it to anyone else, for what can one person do for another? It would be just the same as if, having cut through an old bond, one were to make another new bond. I say that such a thing is an evil, greedy deed, for what can one person do for another?" — *DN 12*

The Buddha responded that this position would create obstacles for those who desire freedom, thus implying that it is both possible and beneficial to teach others. He did note, however, that a teacher could escape censure only if he had attained the goal of the contemplative life and was able to teach his disciples in a way that convinced them to lend ear, apply his instructions, and attain that goal for themselves. Thus a teacher's duty was both to have true knowledge and attainment on the one hand, and to be able to interest others in trying to follow the way to that attainment on the other.

Now, even a skilled teacher could not expect that everyone would reach the goal after listening to his teachings. The listener's past and present kamma could form insurmountable obstacles. For example:

> "Endowed with these six qualities, a person is incapable of alighting on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities even when listening to the true Dhamma. Which six?
> "He is endowed with a [present] kamma obstruction, a defilement obstruction, a result-of-[past]-kamma obstruction; he lacks conviction, has no desire [to listen], and has dull discernment."
> — *AN 6:86*

> "Endowed with these six qualities, a person is incapable of alighting on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities even when listening to the true Dhamma. Which six?
> "He has killed his mother; he has killed his father; he has killed an arahant; he has, with corrupt intent, caused the blood of a Tathāgata to flow; he has caused a split in the Saṅgha; or he is a person of dull discernment, slow & dull-witted." — *AN 6:87*

In addition to having no control over the past and present kamma of his listeners, a teacher has no control over their future kamma. Thus he has no control over what they will do with his words. Given these limitations posed by the workings of kamma, a teacher can at most only point the way to others and persuade them that it's worth following. His words, on their own, cannot spark an experience of liberation without his listeners' kammic cooperation. Their proper response while listening is to develop appropriate attention—i.e., to focus on questions that would lead to the end of suffering and stress [§25]—and then to practice the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma (SN 55:5), i.e. to practice in a way that leads to disenchantment with stress and suffering, and on to release [§37]. But whether they would do so is up to them [§94].

> I have taught you this path
> having known
> —for your knowing—
> the extraction of arrows.
>
> It's for you to strive
> ardently.
> Tathāgatas simply
> point out the way.
> Those who practice,
> absorbed in jhāna:
> from Māra's bonds
> vthey'll be freed. — *Dhp 275-276*

Because his primary task was to inspire in his listeners the will to follow the path, the Buddha adopted an approach as a teacher that was more rhetorical than logically dialectical. In other words, instead of presenting his teaching as a body of knowledge derived logically from a foundation

of first principles, he focused on the impact his words would have on his listeners: getting them not only to acquiesce to his teachings but also to act on them. This meant that he, like any rhetorician, had to tailor his instructions to his audience, sensitive to their level of understanding and to the mixture of skillful and unskillful qualities in their minds. Instead of starting all his discourses with the same principles, he had to start each one at a point accessible to where his listeners already were.

However, his purpose in speaking was not to leave them there. It was to induce them to act in the direction of the desired goal. In fact, this is precisely the difference between a dialectical or foundational approach and a rhetorical one: In dialectics, everything lies in the foundational principles, and the duty of logic is to draw out their implications to wherever they will lead. In rhetoric, words are not merely descriptive. They are also performative, having an impact on the listener and leading the listener to react in various ways. The duty of the rhetorician is to use this performative aspect of words skillfully to induce his or her audience to move from where they already are toward a specific desired result.

In the common practice of rhetoric, the desired results are often ad hoc and subject to the mood of the moment, but it is possible to develop a coherent rhetorical system where intermediate results are all directed toward a single overarching end. This was the rhetorical approach the Buddha adopted. But it is important to understand what "coherent" means in the context of a system of this sort. In a logical or dialectical system, coherence is foundational, lying in the logical consistency with which secondary principles are derived from first principles. In a systematic rhetorical approach, however, coherence is teleological, lying in the consistency with which intermediate ends assist in reaching a common final goal. This point is important to keep in mind as we evaluate the coherence of the Buddha's teachings.

The word "rhetoric" has acquired some unfortunate connotations in our culture—as in the phrases, "empty rhetoric" and "rhetorical tricks"—but we have to remember that when combined with compassionate and responsible motives, rhetorical tools can have a powerful effect for the good. Because the Buddha aimed his teachings at leading his listeners to the end of suffering, we can characterize his teaching style as the rhetoric of compassion. And because he was concerned with the long-term

beneficial impact of his teachings—he wasn't the sort of person who simply wanted to gain their approval or get them to feel good in the present moment—we could add that the compassion of his rhetoric was also responsible.

As a responsible and compassionate rhetorician, he faced a particular difficulty in that the goal he taught was non-verbal. The deathless is said to be "touched with the body" (AN 6:46) or "plunged into" (Khp 6), indicating that it is an all-encompassing experience unmediated by the verbal processing of the mind. However, this did not mean that the path to that goal couldn't be taught by verbal means. In the same way that the kamma of the noble eightfold path can be used to bring an end to kamma [§31], words can be used to induce a listener to practice in line with the Dhamma so as to experience something that lies beyond words. They do this by engendering right view within the listener, so that the listener will then be inclined to exert the proper effort to follow the remainder of the path. The Buddha would sometimes use his psychic powers to subdue the pride of his listeners in a non-verbal way [§205; also MN 86; Mv.I.15-21], but these non-verbal methods served simply to induce his listeners to feel proper respect for his words. This respect was what then caused them to act on those words and follow the path to release.

> "Monks, there are these two conditions for the arising of right view. Which two? The voice of another and appropriate attention. These are the two conditions for the arising of right view." — *AN 2:124*

> "In a knowledgeable person, immersed in clear knowing, right view arises. In one of right view, right resolve arises. In one of right resolve, right speech.... In one of right speech, right action.... In one of right action, right livelihood.... In one of right livelihood, right effort.... In one of right effort, right mindfulness.... In one of right mindfulness, right concentration arises." — *SN 45:1*

Because right view plays an instrumental role in the path leading to release, the words that inspire it—and the truths they contain—are instrumental as well, an important part of the kamma leading to the end of kamma.

This is why the Buddha never taught a truth simply because it was true. As a compassionate and responsible rhetorician, he also chose his words

for their beneficial and timely effect.

> "In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial [or: not connected with the goal], unendearing & displeasing to others, he doesn't say them.
> "In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, unendearing & displeasing to others, he doesn't say them.
> "In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, but unendearing & displeasing to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them.
> "In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial, but endearing & pleasing to others, he doesn't say them.
> "In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, but endearing & pleasing to others, he doesn't say them.
> "In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, and endearing & pleasing to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them. Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has sympathy for living beings." — *MN 58*

These three attributes of his words—true, beneficial, and timely in being pleasing or displeasing—provide a useful framework for understanding the ways in which the Buddha responded to questions from his listeners.

A primary point to note in the above passage is that the Buddha, while listing the possibility that true words might be unbeneficial, never entertains the idea that untrue words could ever be of benefit. There is no such thing as a "useful fiction" in his teaching. Thus the first consideration in choosing one's words is always whether they are true, for only in the realm of truth can anything beneficial be found.

As AN 2:124 [§7] suggests, a teacher hoping to focus a listener's attention on what is true and beneficial should encourage the listener to develop appropriate attention, for this is the primary internal quality leading to awakening.

> "With regard to internal factors, I don't envision any other single factor like appropriate attention as doing so much for a monk in training, who has not attained the heart's goal but remains intent on the unsurpassed safety from bondage. A monk who attends appropriately abandons what is unskillful and develops what is skillful." — *Iti 16*

This is because appropriate attention frames issues in terms of skillful and unskillful actions. Not only that, it also frames issues in terms of the four noble truths.

> "The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones... discerns what ideas are fit for attention, and what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he doesn't attend to ideas unfit for attention, and attends [instead] to ideas fit for attention.... And which are the ideas fit for attention that he attends to? Whichever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen fermentation *[āsava]* of sensuality doesn't arise, and the arisen fermentation of sensuality is abandoned; the unarisen fermentation of becoming... the unarisen fermentation of ignorance doesn't arise, and the arisen fermentation of ignorance is abandoned.... He attends appropriately, *This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.* As he attends appropriately in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: self-identity view, doubt, and grasping at habits & practices."— *MN 2*

> On one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Kosambī in the siṁsapā forest. Then, picking up a few siṁsapā leaves with his hand, he asked the monks, "What do you think, monks? Which are more numerous, the few siṁsapā leaves in my hand or those overhead in the siṁsapā forest?"
> "The leaves in the hand of the Blessed One are few in number, lord. Those overhead in the forest are far more numerous."
> "In the same way, monks, those things that I have known with direct knowledge but have not taught are far more numerous [than those I have taught]. And why haven't I taught them? Because they are not connected with the goal, do not relate to the rudiments of

> the holy life, and do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. That is why I have not taught them.
> "And what have I taught? *'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress':* This is what I have taught. And why have I taught these things? Because they are connected with the goal, relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. This is why I have taught them."
> — *SN 56:31*

On the night of his awakening, the Buddha had found that the most beneficial truths to teach as means to liberation were those focusing on stress and the way to its cessation. In fact, he often declared that these two issues formed the framework for his entire teaching.

> "Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress." — *SN 22:86*

In this way, his teaching can be seen as a response to the bewilderment and search that come from the gut-level experience of stress—the first level of questions to which his teaching responds.

> "And what is the result of stress? There are some cases in which a person overcome with stress, his mind exhausted, grieves, mourns, laments, beats his breast, & becomes bewildered. Or one overcome with stress, his mind exhausted, comes to search outside, 'Who knows a way or two to stop this stress?' I tell you, monks, that stress results either in bewilderment or in search." — *AN 6:63*

The teachings on skillful and unskillful kamma relate to the teachings on stress and its ending in two ways. The first is that they provide a preliminary framework for understanding how actions lead either to pleasure or pain. Thus they act as a preliminary level of right view that can be developed into right view on the transcendent level.

> "And which is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad

> actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are contemplatives & brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions."
> — *MN 117*

Taking skillful action and pleasant results as one pair, and unskillful actions and unpleasant results as another, we have the framework for the four noble truths.

> "And which is right view? Knowledge in terms of stress, knowledge in terms of the origination of stress, knowledge in terms of the cessation of stress, knowledge in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view." — *SN 45:8*

The other way in which the principle of skillful and unskillful kamma relates to the four noble truths is that, for a person who desires the end of stress, each of the truths implies a duty that must be developed as a skill.

> "Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: .... 'This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended'.... 'This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned'.... 'This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be directly realized'.... 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed.'" — *SN 56:11*

Thus the role of appropriate attention is not only to see things in terms of the four noble truths, but also to attend to things in such a way as to develop the skills appropriate to each: developing factors of the path, abandoning the causes of stress, and comprehending the factors of stress in such a way as to realize dispassion for them [§23, §24].

In addition, the role of appropriate attention is to dismantle and reject any form of questioning that would interfere with developing these skills [§25]. In particular, it rejects the categories of *papañca,* a type of thinking whose categories begin with the thought, "I am the thinker" [§52] and proliferate from there. We will consider this topic further in our

continued discussion of appropriate attention in Chapters Three and Eight. Suffice it to say here that *papañca* is a primary example of dialectic or foundational thinking—with "I am the thinker" the underlying first principle—and thus the antithesis of the Buddha's rhetorical approach.

So, in providing a framework for understanding stress in a way that encourages one to develop the skills actually leading to its cessation, appropriate attention provides the Buddha's standards for determining whether a teaching is true and beneficial.

As for whether the teaching is timely in being pleasing or displeasing, the Buddha's teaching methods show that he kept in mind at least five major dimensions in what *pleasing* and *displeasing* might mean.

First was the issue of whether the teacher knew what he/she was talking about, and acted in line with his/her words. We have already noted, in the discussion of DN 12, that a person is qualified to teach the goal of the contemplative life only if he/she has had direct experience of that goal. This accords with a principle set forth in the Dhammapada [§§11-13], that words are fragrant only when carried out, and sweet only when spoken from direct knowledge of what they say. In this sense, the Buddha's words were always pleasing.

The second consideration the Buddha used in judging the timeliness of a teaching was that of clarity. There are occasional instances in which he deliberately spoke in a cryptic way—either to humble the pride of his listener [§47; also SN 1:1; SN 1:20], to rebuff a listener looking for a debate [§123], or to spark the curiosity of the monks (MN 131, MN 138) —but for the most part he made every effort to be clear. He would invite his listeners to question him about any of his teachings they did not understand [§75] and often would tailor his similes and metaphors to the personal background of the person he was teaching. In line with the pragmatic thrust of his teaching, he held that two of the duties of a Dhamma teacher were to speak step by step and to explain the sequence of cause and effect [§8]. In this way he took to heart the duty of a discerning teacher, which is to take subtle and profound matters, and to "reveal them, explain them, & make them plain" [§55]. This is an area where the issue of timely speech overlaps with that of beneficial speech, for unclear words are hard to put into practice. Clear words are effective tools on the path.

Third, the Buddha had a strong sense of who was and wasn't fit to engage in discussion. Although he was willing to teach all people regardless of their kammic background (AN 3:22, below), he would engage specific individuals in discussion only if he respected their ability to conduct a fair discussion. As Ven. Sāriputta commented, some questioners are sincere, whereas others ask questions with evil or contemptuous motives [§2]. Thus only when a listener was truthful and sincere in his or her search for truth would the Buddha be willing to join in a discussion. This means that even when he was aggressive and cutting in arguing with his listeners, it was not a sign of disrespect [§125-§126]. The fact that he was willing to speak with them in the first place showed that he respected their intentions and compassionately wanted to help them understand the error of their views.

Fourth, the Buddha was sensitive to the social background of his speakers, understanding how best to address the members of the different social castes of his time in a way appropriate to their status [§10]. For instance, he could use urbane language with brahmans, although there are also many discourses in which he derides them for their ill-founded caste pride [§125]. However, there are no recorded cases in which he insulted lepers or members of lower castes for their social status. In many cases he showed them high respect (Thag 12:2; Ud 5:3).

Finally, the Buddha was sensitive to the need for a teacher not to hurt himself or others with his teaching [§8]. According to the Commentary, this means that the teacher must not exalt himself or disparage others. Again, the Buddha had a sense of time and place when employing this principle, making critical remarks about other contemporary teachers by name only to his monk disciples (AN 3:138, Chapter Seven), and criticizing a person's occupation or mode of practice to his face only when the person showed that he sincerely wanted the Buddha to comment on the kammic results of his way of life [§§145-147].

In making sure that his words conformed to these standards for being timely as well as beneficial, the Buddha showed the pragmatic thrust of his teaching. He didn't expound truths just for the sake of saying what's true. He wanted his words to *work* so that the kamma of teaching would bear fruit.

To put it another way, he wanted that kamma to be skillful. Anyone familiar with the factors of the noble eightfold path will recognize that the Buddha's standards for his speech—true, beneficial, and timely—fall under the path factor of right speech. Even though the Buddha had followed the path to its end, he still applied its standards to the problem of how to speak to others so that they would follow the path to awakening. This is an important point. As we will see in later chapters, the Buddha would recommend some ways of thinking as skillful at certain stages of the path and not at others. But the path factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood he saw as standards of behavior that applied all along the path, and even after the path had issued in awakening.

> "I don't say, brahman, that everything that has been seen should be spoken about. Nor do I say that everything that has been seen should not be spoken about. I do not say that everything that has been heard... everything that has been sensed... everything that has been cognized should be spoken about. Nor do I say that everything that has been cognized should not be spoken about.
> "When, for one who speaks of what has been seen, unskillful qualities increase and skillful qualities decrease, then that sort of thing should not be spoken about. But when, for one who speaks of what has been seen, unskillful qualities decrease and skillful qualities increase, then that sort of thing should be spoken about.
> "When, for one who speaks of what has been heard... what has been sensed... what has been cognized, unskillful qualities increase and skillful qualities decrease, then that sort of thing should not be spoken about. But when, for one who speaks of what has been cognized, unskillful qualities decrease and skillful qualities increase, then that sort of thing should be spoken about." — *AN 4:183*

> "There is the case where a certain person, abandoning false speech, abstains from false speech.... He doesn't consciously tell a lie for his own sake, for the sake of another, or for the sake of any reward.... He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world.
> "Abandoning divisive speech, he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he doesn't tell there to break those people

> apart from these people here. What he has heard there he doesn't tell here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord.
> "Abandoning coarse speech, he abstains from coarse speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing, & pleasing to people at large.
> "Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, & the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal." — *AN 10:165*

Thus in ensuring that his speech is beneficial, clear ("circumscribed"), and timely, the Buddha is following the principle of abstaining from idle chatter. In knowing when it is appropriate and inappropriate to criticize contemporary teachers, he is abstaining from divisive speech. In knowing how to frame the answers to his questions, he is following the principle of speaking truths that do not foster the unskillful mental quality of delusion.

Underlying all of these considerations is a personal quality that SN 16:3 calls compassion *(kāruñña);* MN 58 [§69], sympathy *(anukampā);* and AN 5:159 [§8], kindliness *(anudayā).* The Buddha, as a teacher, saw himself as a doctor, treating the fevers and illnesses of the world.

> "I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was staying at Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. At the end of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, he surveyed the world with the eye of an Awakened One. As he did so, he saw living beings burning with the many fevers and aflame with the many fires born of passion, aversion, & delusion." — *Ud 3:10*

“There are these three types of sick people to be found existing in the world. Which three?

“There is the case of the sick person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive amenable food, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive amenable medicine, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive proper nursing—will not recover from that illness. There is the case of the sick person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive amenable food, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive amenable medicine, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive proper nursing—will recover from that illness. There is the case of the sick person who will recover from that illness if he receives amenable food, amenable medicine, & proper nursing, but not if he doesn’t.

“Now, it is because of the sick person who will recover from that illness if he receives amenable food, amenable medicine, & proper nursing—but not if he doesn’t—that food for the sick has been allowed, medicine for the sick has been allowed, nursing for the sick has been allowed. And it is because there is this sort of sick person that the other sorts of sick persons are to be nursed as well [on the chance that they may actually turn out to need and benefit from such nursing].

“These are the three types of sick people to be found existing in the world.

“In the same way, these three types of people, like the three types of sick people, are to be found existing in the world. Which three?

“There is the case of the person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn’t get to see the Tathāgata, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t get to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata—will not alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities. There is the case of the person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn’t get to see the Tathāgata, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t get to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata—will alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities. There is the case of the person who will alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities if he gets to see the Tathāgata and gets to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata, but not if he doesn’t.

> "Now, it is because of the person who will alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities if he gets to see the Tathāgata and gets to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata—but not if he doesn't—that the teaching of the Dhamma has been allowed. And it is because there is this sort of person that the other sorts of persons are to be taught the Dhamma as well [in case they may actually turn out to need and benefit from the teaching, or will benefit from it at a later time].
> "These are the three types of people, like the three types of sick people, to be found existing in the world." — *AN 3:22*

Thus a teacher, like a doctor, should always hold the well-being of his suffering listeners in mind, aiming his remarks at their immediate or eventual liberation. However, for this compassion to be pure, one should not teach for the sake of material gain [§8]. And even though one should aim at gaining the respect of the listener, one should hope that the respect is aimed not at oneself but at the Dhamma, so that the listener will understand it and feel inspired to practice it.

> "Any monk who teaches the Dhamma to others with this sort of thought in mind, 'O, may they listen to the Dhamma from me! And having listened, may they gain confidence in the Dhamma! Confident, may they show an expression of confidence in me!'—the Dhamma teaching of this sort of monk is impure.
> "But any monk who teaches the Dhamma to others with this sort of thought in mind, '"The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be realized by the observant for themselves." O, may they listen to the Dhamma from me! And having listened, may they understand it! Understanding it, may they practice for the sake of what's authentic!' He teaches the Dhamma to others inspired by the true rightness of the Dhamma, inspired by compassion, inspired by kindliness, inspired by sympathy—the Dhamma teaching of this sort of monk is pure." — *SN 16:3*

Compassion should also be balanced with mindful alertness so that one isn't emotionally dependent on whether one's listeners show an interest in one's instructions.

"'There are three establishings of mindfulness that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group.' Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said?
"There is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their benefit—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: 'This is for your benefit, this is for your happiness.' His disciples do not listen or lend ear or apply their minds to gnosis. Turning aside, they stray from the Teacher's message. In this case the Tathāgata is not satisfied nor is he sensitive to satisfaction, yet he remains untroubled, mindful, & alert. This is the first establishing of mindfulness....
"Furthermore, there is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their benefit—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: 'This is for your benefit, this is for your happiness.' Some of his disciples do not listen or lend ear or apply their minds to gnosis. Turning aside, they stray from the Teacher's message. But some of his disciples listen, lend ear, & apply their minds to gnosis. They do not turn aside or stray from the Teacher's message. In this case the Tathāgata is not satisfied nor is he sensitive to satisfaction; at the same time he is not dissatisfied nor is he sensitive to dissatisfaction. Free from both satisfaction & dissatisfaction, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert. This is the second establishing of mindfulness....
"Furthermore, there is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their benefit—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: 'This is for your benefit, this is for your happiness.' His disciples listen, lend ear, & apply their minds to gnosis. They do not turn aside or stray from the Teacher's message. In this case the Tathāgata is satisfied and is sensitive to satisfaction, yet he remains untroubled, mindful, & alert. This is the third establishing of mindfulness....
"'There are three establishings of mindfulness that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group.' Thus it was said. And in reference to this was it said." — *MN 137*

These, then, appear to be the considerations that shaped the rhetoric of the Buddha's teaching. He began with the realization that the end of suffering and stress can be attained through human effort and with his

compassionate desire to help others reach that attainment. Thus his teaching is strategic and teleological, i.e., all his words are aimed at this goal. This means that his words have to be not only true, but also beneficial for the listener in not creating distractions or obstacles to that end.

The Buddha's strategies to attain that end are further shaped by the principle of kamma, or action. There are people whose kammic background—past or present—is such that they will respond to the Dhamma teaching the path to the end of suffering and stress. Within the context of this background, the act of teaching and learning is a collaborative effort. On the one hand, the act of *teaching* is a type of kamma, which means that the teacher has to maintain a pure intention while teaching, to ensure that he is teaching from kind and compassionate motives. He must also keep in mind the performative nature of his words—what they *do* to the listener or *incite* the listener to do—and that they must follow the principles of right speech. On the other hand, the act of *learning* is also a type of kamma, in that the listener must respond sincerely to the teacher's words in order to benefit from them. This means that the purity of the listener's intention plays an important role as well. The Buddha cannot take his listeners to awakening simply by acting on his own.

Because the act of instruction is a collaborative effort, the listener's contribution is not fully under the teacher's control. For this reason, the teacher's words have to be not only true and beneficial, but also timely so as to persuade the listener to act in an appropriate way. Here the primary consideration, as noted in the Buddha's second knowledge, is that the listener develop an attitude of respect. This in turn requires that the teacher be sensitive to the listener's background and motivation in listening. In cases where the Buddha sensed that the listener was not ready to develop the proper attitude, he gave only a cursory teaching or none at all [§95]. If, however, the listener was ready, the Buddha would adjust his teaching strategies, paying attention to the listener's state of mind and social status, sensing when to be clear and when cryptic, when to be pleasing and when not, so as to persuade the listener to take up the practice and reap its benefits in the most effective way.

As we will see throughout this book, these considerations also underlay the Buddha's responses to questions posed by those he was trying to teach. If we keep these considerations in mind, we can more fully appreciate his four major response-strategies for dealing with these questions. The details of how these considerations shaped his responses will become apparent in the following chapters, but here we can make the following general observations:

1) Questions deserving a categorical answer are those framed in terms of appropriate attention.

2) Questions deserving an analytical answer are those touching on topics of legitimate concern for the pursuit of liberation, but are wrongly framed. The purpose of the analytical answer is to reframe the question—either by adding an extra variable or two, or by changing the variables entirely—so that it can be answered in a categorical way.

3) Cross-questioning is a strategy used in nine types of situations, only four of which involve cross-questioning in response to a question. However, all nine uses of this strategy are concerned with clarification, and two common threads among them are important to note: A person should take responsibility for his or her actions or statements; and truth is to be found and clarified by a mutual willingness to cross-question and be cross-questioned. Thus we will list all nine situations here. They are:

a) A monk is accused of an offense that he denies committing. His fellow monks cross-question him to see if he can give a coherent and believable account of his behavior.

b) A monk, even after being reproved by his fellow monks, maintains a position in the Buddha's presence that is clearly pernicious. After the Buddha ascertains that the monk will not abandon the pernicious view, he rebukes the monk and then turns to the other monks to cross-question them as to the relevant right view. This is to ensure that none of them pick up the first monk's errant position.

c) The Buddha or one of his disciples makes a statement that a listener finds unclear. The listener asks him to explain what the statement means and how it fits in with his other statements.

d) A person asks a question unclear in its wording or underlying motive. The Buddha cross-questions him to clarify the original question.

e) A person asks for a definition of a term without realizing that he has enough knowledge to provide at least part of the definition himself. The Buddha responds by cross-questioning the person in such a way that the person ends up contributing to the answer of his own question.

f) A person asks a question in a way indicating that he may not understand the response the Buddha will give—either the content of the response or the strategy with which it is given. The Buddha then draws an example, usually an activity, familiar to the person and questions him on it. From the person's replies, the Buddha shows how the proper response to the original question can be understood in the same frame as the person's understanding of the familiar activity. For the most part, this sort of response is pleasing to the listener.

g) A person presents an argument against the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha cites an example that disproves the person's position and then questions him on it. From the person's answers, the Buddha shows how the person has contradicted himself and so disproven his own argument. This strategy usually displeases the listener initially, but it can nevertheless lead to his conversion to the Buddha's way.

h) The Buddha encourages his listeners to cross-question themselves about their actions or traits present in their minds. This process can lead directly to awakening.

i) The Buddha cross-questions his listeners as to phenomena they are experiencing in the present moment. Often this strategy causes them to abandon any clinging to what they are being asked to examine, so that they too achieve awakening.

4) Questions deserving to be put aside are those that are so wrongly framed—springing from ways of thought antithetical to the categories of appropriate attention, and dealing with topics that distract attention from the path—that they cannot be properly reframed in a way that would lead to liberation. Thus they are put aside.

The Buddha also uses the last three response-strategies—analytical, cross-questioning, and putting aside—to avoid giving a categorical answer in situations where a categorical answer would lead him to harm himself or others, in the sense explained above.

Notice that these four response-strategies—contrary to the way the Commentary defines them—are not determined simply by formal considerations. They address not only the form of the question, but also—more importantly—its purpose and the mental receptivity of the person asking it. This means that to better understand the Buddha's skill in using these strategies, we have to watch him in action, to see how he applied them in response to specific questions asked by specific individuals. Thus, beginning with Chapter Three, we will treat each of these strategies in turn, collating passages by the strategy used, and prefacing them with more specific observations about some of the lessons to be drawn from these examples.

But before we watch the Buddha in action as a teacher, we will watch him in an earlier phase of his life, when—as a bodhisatta, a "being in search of awakening"—he acted on the questions that he posed to himself and that directed his search. The Buddha's own accounts of this period and of these questions shed light on how he may have arrived at his fourfold strategy for answering questions to begin with. Apparently, he became skilled at answering others' questions by first learning how skillfully to answer his own.

READINGS

SKILL IN QUESTIONS

§ 1. "There are these four ways of answering questions. Which four? There are questions that should be answered categorically. There are questions that should be answered analytically. There are questions that should be answered with cross-questioning. There are questions that should be put aside. These are the four ways of answering questions."

> First the categorical statement,
> then the analytical,

third, the type to be cross-questioned,
& fourth, the one to be put aside.
And any monk who knows which is which,
in line with the Dhamma,
is said to be skilled
in the four types of questions:
hard to overcome, hard to beat,
profound, hard to defeat.
He knows what's worthwhile
& what's not,
proficient in [recognizing] both,
he, wise,
rejects the worthless,
grasps the worthwhile.
He's called
one who has broken through
to what's worthwhile,
enlightened,
wise. — *AN 4:42*

§ 2. Ven. Sāriputta said, "All those who ask questions of another do so from any one of five motivations. Which five?

"One asks a question of another through stupidity & bewilderment. One asks a question of another through evil desires & overwhelmed with greed. One asks a question of another through contempt. One asks a question of another when desiring knowledge. Or one asks a question with this thought, 'If, when asked, he answers correctly, well & good. If not, then I will answer correctly [for him].'

"All those who ask questions of another do so from any one of these five motivations. And as for me, when I ask a question of another, it's with this thought: 'If, when asked, he answers correctly, well & good. If not, then I will answer correctly [for him].'" — *AN 5:165*

SKILL IN ANSWERS

§ 3. Then Ven. Assaji, having gone for alms in Rājagaha, left, taking his alms. Then Sāriputta the wanderer approached him and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he stood to one side. As he was standing there he said, "Bright are your faculties, my friend, pure your complexion, and clear. On whose account have you gone forth? Or who is your teacher? Or in whose Dhamma do you delight?"

"There is, my friend, the Great Contemplative, a son of the Sakyans, gone forth from a Sakyan family. I have gone forth on account of that Blessed One. That Blessed One is my teacher. And it is in that Blessed One's Dhamma that I delight."

"But what is your teacher's teaching? What does he proclaim?''

"I am new, my friend, not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. I cannot explain the Dhamma in detail, but I will tell you the gist in brief."

Then Sāriputta the wanderer spoke thus to the Ven. Assaji:

"Speak a little or a lot,
        but tell me just the gist.
The gist is what I want.
        What use is a lot of verbosity?"

Then Ven. Assaji gave this Dhamma exposition to Sāriputta the wanderer:

"Whatever phenomena arise from cause,
        their cause,
                & their cessation:
Such is the teaching of the Tathāgata,
                the Great Contemplative."

Then to Sāriputta the wanderer, as he heard this Dhamma exposition, there arose the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: "Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation." — *Mv.I.23.5*

§ 4. [Sakka the deva-king:] "But what, dear sir, is the cause of desire, what is its origination, what gives it birth, what is its source? When what exists does it come into being? When what doesn't exist does it not?"

"Desire has thinking as its cause, has thinking as its origination, has thinking as what gives it birth, has thinking as its source. When thinking exists, desire comes into being. When thinking is not, it doesn't."

"But what, dear sir, is the cause of thinking, what is its origination, what gives it birth, what is its source? When what exists does it come into being? When what doesn't exist does it not?"

"Thinking has the perceptions & categories of objectification as its cause, has the perceptions & categories of objectification as its origination, has the perceptions & categories of objectification as what gives it birth, has the perceptions & categories of objectification as its source. When the perceptions & categories of objectification exist, thinking comes into being. When the perceptions & categories of objectification are not, it doesn't."

"And how has he practiced, dear sir: the monk who has practiced the practice leading to the right cessation of the perceptions & categories of objectification?"

"Joy is of two sorts, I tell you, deva-king: to be pursued & not to be pursued. Grief is of two sorts: to be pursued & not to be pursued. Equanimity is of two sorts: to be pursued & not to be pursued.

"'Joy is of two sorts, I tell you, deva-king: to be pursued & not to be pursued.' Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said? When one knows of a feeling of joy, 'As I pursue this joy, unskillful qualities increase, and skillful qualities decline,' that sort of joy is not to be pursued. When one knows of a feeling of joy, 'As I pursue this joy, unskillful (mental) qualities decline, and skillful qualities increase,' that sort of joy is to be pursued. And this sort of joy may be accompanied by directed thought & evaluation or free of directed thought & evaluation. Of the two, the latter is the more refined. 'Joy is of two sorts, I tell you, deva-king: to be pursued & not to be pursued.' Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

[Similarly with grief and equanimity.]

"This is how he has practiced, deva-king: the monk who has practiced the practice leading to the right cessation of the perceptions & categories

of objectification."

Thus the Blessed One answered, having been asked by Sakka the deva-king. Gratified, Sakka was delighted in & expressed his approval of the Blessed One's words: "So it is, O Blessed One. So it is, O One Well-gone. Hearing the Blessed One's answer to my question, my doubt is now cut off, my perplexity overcome."

Then Sakka the deva-king, having delighted in & expressed his approval of the Blessed One's words, asked him a further question: "But how has he practiced, dear sir: the monk who has practiced for restraint in the Pāṭimokkha?"

"Bodily conduct is of two sorts, I tell you, deva-king: to be pursued & not to be pursued. Verbal conduct is of two sorts: to be pursued & not to be pursued. Searching is of two sorts: to be pursued & not to be pursued.

"'Bodily conduct is of two sorts, I tell you, deva-king: to be pursued & not to be pursued.' Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said? When one knows of bodily conduct, 'As I pursue this bodily conduct, unskillful qualities increase, and skillful qualities decline,' that sort of bodily conduct is not to be pursued. When one knows of bodily conduct, 'As I pursue this bodily conduct, unskillful qualities decline, and skillful qualities increase,' that sort of bodily conduct is to be pursued. 'Bodily conduct is of two sorts, I tell you, deva-king: to be pursued & not to be pursued.' Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

[Similarly with verbal conduct and searching.]

"This is how he has practiced, deva-king: the monk who has practiced the practice for restraint in the Pāṭimokkha."

Thus the Blessed One answered, having been asked by Sakka the deva-king. Gratified, Sakka was delighted in & expressed his approval of the Blessed One's words: "So it is, O Blessed One. So it is, O One Well-gone. Hearing the Blessed One's answer to my question, my doubt is now cut off, my perplexity overcome."

Then Sakka, having delighted in & expressed his approval of the Blessed One's words, asked him a further question: "But how has he practiced, dear sir: the monk who has practiced for restraint with regard to the sense faculties?"

"Forms cognizable by the eye are of two sorts, I tell you, deva-king: to be pursued & not to be pursued. Sounds cognizable by the ear.... Aromas cognizable by the nose.... Flavors cognizable by the tongue.... Tactile sensations cognizable by the body.... Ideas cognizable by the intellect are of two sorts: to be pursued & not to be pursued."

When this was said, Sakka the deva-king said to the Blessed One, "Dear sir, I understand the detailed meaning of the Blessed One's brief statement. If, as one pursues a certain type of form cognizable by the eye, unskillful qualities increase, and skillful qualities decline, that sort of form cognizable by the eye is not to be pursued. But if, as one pursues a certain type of form cognizable by the eye, unskillful qualities decline, and skillful qualities increase, that sort of form cognizable by the eye is to be pursued.

"If, as one pursues a certain type of sound cognizable by the ear....

"If, as one pursues a certain type of aroma cognizable by the nose....

"If, as one pursues a certain type of flavor cognizable by the tongue....

"If, as one pursues a certain type of tactile sensation cognizable by the body....

"If, as one pursues a certain type of idea cognizable by the intellect, unskillful qualities increase, and skillful qualities decline, that sort of idea cognizable by the intellect is not to be pursued. But if, as one pursues a certain type of idea cognizable by the intellect, unskillful qualities decline, and skillful qualities increase, that sort of idea cognizable by the intellect is to be pursued.

"This is how I understand the detailed meaning of the Blessed One's brief statement. Hearing the Blessed One's answer to my question, my doubt is now cut off, my perplexity overcome."

Then Sakka, having delighted in & expressed his approval of the Blessed One's words, asked him a further question: "Dear sir, do all contemplatives & brahmans teach the same doctrine, adhere to the same precepts, desire the same thing, aim at the same goal?"

"No, deva-king, not all contemplatives & brahmans teach the same doctrine, adhere to the same precepts, desire the same thing, aim at the same goal."

"Why, dear sir, don't all contemplatives & brahmans teach the same doctrine, adhere to the same precepts, desire the same thing, aim at the same goal?"

"The world is made up of many properties, various properties. Because of the many & various properties in the world, then whichever property living beings get fixated on, they become entrenched & latch onto it, saying, 'Only this is true; anything else is worthless.' [§48] This is why not all contemplatives & brahmans teach the same doctrine, adhere to the same precepts, desire the same thing, aim at the same goal."

"But, dear sir, are all contemplatives & brahmans utterly complete, utterly free from bonds, followers of the utterly holy life, utterly consummate?"

"No, deva-king, not all contemplatives & brahmans are utterly complete, utterly free from bonds, followers of the utterly holy life, utterly consummate."

"But why, dear sir, are not all contemplatives & brahmans utterly complete, utterly free from bonds, followers of the utterly holy life, utterly consummate?"

"Those monks who are released through the total ending of craving are the ones who are utterly complete, utterly free from bonds, followers of the utterly holy life, utterly consummate. This is why not all contemplatives & brahmans are utterly complete, utterly free from bonds, followers of the utterly holy life, utterly consummate."

Thus the Blessed One answered, having been asked by Sakka the deva-king. Gratified, Sakka was delighted in & expressed his approval of the Blessed One's words: "So it is, O Blessed One. So it is, O One Well-gone. Hearing the Blessed One's answer to my question, my doubt is now cut off, my perplexity overcome."

Then Sakka, having delighted in & expressed his approval of the Blessed One's words, said to him, "Yearning is a disease, yearning is a boil, yearning is an arrow. It seduces one, drawing one into this or that state of becoming, which is why one is reborn in high states & low. Whereas other outside contemplatives & brahmans gave me no chance to ask them these questions, the Blessed One has answered at length, so that he has removed the arrow of my uncertainty & perplexity."

"Deva-king, do you recall having asked other contemplatives & brahmans these questions?"

"Yes, lord, I recall having asked other contemplatives & brahmans these questions."

"If it's no inconvenience, could you tell me how they answered?"

"It's no inconvenience when sitting with the Blessed One or one who is like him."

"Then tell me, deva-king."

"Having gone to those whom I considered to be contemplatives & brahmans living in isolated dwellings in the wilderness, I asked them these questions. But when asked by me, they were at a loss. Being at a loss, they asked *me* in return, 'What is your name?'

"Being asked, I responded, 'I, dear sir, am Sakka, the deva-king.'

"So they questioned me further, 'But what kamma did you do to attain to this state?'

"So I taught them the Dhamma as far as I had heard & mastered it. And just this much was enough to gratify them: 'We have seen Sakka, the deva-king, and he has answered our questions!' So, instead of my becoming their disciple, they simply became mine. But I, lord, am [now] the Blessed One's disciple, a stream-winner, steadfast, never again destined for states of woe, headed for self-awakening."

"Deva-king, do you recall ever having previously experienced such happiness & joy?"

"Yes, lord, I do."

"And how do you recall ever having previously experienced such happiness & joy?"

"Once, lord, the devas & asuras were arrayed in battle. And in that battle the devas won, while the asuras lost. Having won the battle, as the victor in the battle, this thought occurred to me, 'Whatever has been the divine nourishment of the asuras, whatever has been the divine nourishment of the devas, the devas will now enjoy both of them.' But my attainment of happiness & joy was in the sphere of violence & weapons. It didn't lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. But my attainment of happiness & joy on hearing the Blessed One's Dhamma is

in the sphere of no violence, the sphere of no weapons. It leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding." — *DN 21*

§ 5. [King Ajātasattu:] "Once, venerable sir, I approached Pūraṇa Kassapa and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there, I asked him, 'Venerable Kassapa, there are these common craftsmen: elephant-trainers, horse-trainers, charioteers, archers, standard bearers, camp marshals, supply corps officers, high royal officers, commandos, military heroes, armor-clad warriors, leather-clad warriors, domestic slaves, confectioners, barbers, bath attendants, cooks, garland-makers, laundrymen, weavers, basket-makers, potters, calculators, accountants, and any other common craftsmen of a similar sort. They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now. They give pleasure & refreshment to themselves, to their parents, wives, & children, to their friends & colleagues. They put in place an excellent presentation of offerings to contemplatives & brahmans, leading to heaven, resulting in happiness, conducive to a heavenly rebirth. Is it possible, venerable Kassapa, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?'

"When this was said, Pūraṇa Kassapa said to me, 'Great king, in acting or getting others to act, in mutilating or getting others to mutilate, in torturing or getting others to torture, in inflicting sorrow or in getting others to inflict sorrow, in tormenting or getting others to torment, in intimidating or getting others to intimidate, in taking life, taking what is not given, breaking into houses, plundering wealth, committing burglary, committing highway robbery, committing adultery, speaking falsehood—one does no evil. If with a razor-edged disk one were to turn all the living beings on this earth to a single heap of flesh, a single pile of flesh, there would be no evil from that cause, no coming of evil. Even if one were to go along the right bank of the Ganges, killing and getting others to kill, mutilating and getting others to mutilate, torturing and getting others to torture, there would be no evil from that cause, no coming of evil. Even if one were to go along the left bank of the Ganges, giving and getting others to give, making sacrifices and getting others to make sacrifices, there would be no merit from that cause, no coming of merit. Through

generosity, self-control, restraint, & truthful speech there is no merit from that cause, no coming of merit.'

"Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Pūraṇa Kassapa answered with non-action. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango: In the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Pūraṇa Kassapa answered with non-action. The thought occurred to me, 'How can anyone like me think of disparaging a contemplative or brahman living in his realm?' Yet I neither delighted in Pūraṇa Kassapa's words nor did I protest against them. Neither delighting nor protesting, I was dissatisfied. Without expressing dissatisfaction, without accepting his teaching, without adopting it, I got up from my seat and left....

"Another time I approached Pakudha Kaccāyana and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there, I asked him, 'Venerable Kaccāyana, there are these common craftsmen.... They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here and now.... Is it possible, venerable Kaccāyana, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?'

"When this was said, Pakudha Kaccāyana said to me, 'Great king, there are these seven substances—unmade, irreducible, uncreated, without a creator, barren, stable as a mountain peak, standing firm like a pillar—that do not alter, do not change, do not interfere with one another, are incapable of causing one another pleasure, pain, or both pleasure & pain. Which seven? The earth-substance, the liquid-substance, the fire-substance, the wind-substance, pleasure, pain, and the soul as the seventh. These are the seven substances—unmade, irreducible, uncreated, without a creator, barren, stable as a mountain peak, standing firm like a pillar—that do not alter, do not change, do not interfere with one another, and are incapable of causing one another pleasure, pain, or both pleasure & pain.

"'And among them there is no killer nor one who causes killing, no hearer nor one who causes hearing, no cognizer nor one who causes cognition. When one cuts off [another person's] head, there is no one

taking anyone's life. It is simply between the seven substances that the sword passes.'

"Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Pakudha Kaccāyana answered with non-relatedness. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango. In the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Pakudha Kaccāyana answered with non-relatedness. The thought occurred to me, 'How can anyone like me think of disparaging a contemplative or brahman living in his realm?' Yet I neither delighted in Pakudha Kaccāyana's words nor did I protest against them. Neither delighting nor protesting, I was dissatisfied. Without expressing dissatisfaction, without accepting his teaching, without adopting it, I got up from my seat and left.

"Another time I approached Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there, I asked him, 'Venerable Sañjaya, there are these common craftsmen.... They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here and now.... Is it possible, venerable Sañjaya, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here and now?'

"When this was said, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta said to me, 'If you ask me if there exists another world [after death], if I thought that there exists another world, would I declare that to you? I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not. If you asked me if there isn't another world... both is and isn't... neither is nor isn't... if there are beings who transmigrate... if there aren't... both are & aren't... neither are nor aren't ... if the Tathāgata exists after death... doesn't... both... neither exists nor doesn't exist after death, would I declare that to you? I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not.'

"Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta answered with evasion. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango: In the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now,

Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta answered with evasion. The thought occurred to me, 'This—among these contemplatives & brahmans—is the most foolish & confused of all. How can he, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, answer with evasion?' Still the thought occurred to me, 'How can anyone like me think of disparaging a contemplative or brahman living in his realm?' Yet I neither delighted in Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta's words nor did I protest against them. Neither delighting nor protesting, I was dissatisfied. Without expressing dissatisfaction, without accepting his teaching, without adopting it, I got up from my seat and left." — *DN 2 [See also Chapter Seven and Appendix Two for answers given by other teachers, and §99 for the answer given by the Buddha.]*

THE BUDDHA'S RHETORIC

§ 6. "Monks, there are these two conditions for the arising of wrong view. Which two? The voice of another and inappropriate attention. These are the two conditions for the arising of wrong view." — *AN 2:123*

§ 7. "Monks, there are these two conditions for the arising of right view. Which two? The voice of another and appropriate attention. These are the two conditions for the arising of right view." — *AN 2:124*

§ 8. "It's not easy to teach the Dhamma to others, Ānanda. The Dhamma should be taught to others only when five qualities are established within the person teaching. Which five?

"[1] The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, 'I will speak step-by-step.'

"[2] The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, 'I will speak explaining the sequence [of cause & effect].'

"[3] The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, 'I will speak out of kindliness.'

"[4] The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, 'I will speak not for the purpose of material reward.'

"[5] The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, 'I will speak without hurting myself or others.'

“It’s not easy to teach the Dhamma to others, Ānanda. The Dhamma should be taught to others only when these five qualities are established within the person teaching.” — *AN 5:159*

§ 9. “There are these five rewards in listening to the Dhamma. Which five?

“[1] One hears what one has not heard before. [2] One clarifies what one has heard before. [3] One gets rid of doubt. [4] One’s views are made straight. [5] One’s mind grows serene.

“These are the five rewards in listening to the Dhamma.” — *AN 5:202*

§ 10. “There is the case where a monk knows his social gathering: ‘This is a social gathering of noble warriors; this, a social gathering of brahmans; this, a social gathering of householders; this, a social gathering of contemplatives; here one should approach them in this way, stand in this way, act in this way, sit in this way, speak in this way, stay silent in this way.’” — *AN 7:64*

§ 11.

Just like a blossom,
bright colored
        but scentless:
a well-spoken word
        is fruitless
when not carried out.
Just like a blossom,
bright colored
        & full of scent:
a well-spoken word
        is fruitful
when well carried out. — *Dhp 51-52*

§ 12.

First
he’d settle himself
in what is correct,

only then
teach others.
He wouldn't stain his name
: he is wise. — *Dhp 158*

§ 13.

A monk restrained in his speaking,
giving counsel unruffled,
declaring the message & meaning:
sweet is his speech. — *Dhp 363*

Chapter Two

The Bodhisatta's Quest

The Buddha's own accounts of his actions as a bodhisatta, taken together, are one of the earliest spiritual autobiographies in recorded history. Some writers—citing the Buddha's teaching on *anattā,* or not-self—have seen irony in this fact. Why would a teacher whose central teaching denies the self, they have asked, be so concerned with his own self-story?

This question derives from two misunderstandings. First, the anattā teaching does not deny the existence of the self. It is a mode of perception, a strategy using the label "not-self" to help abandon attachment to whatever is clung to as self, so as to reach liberation. Second, the Buddha's central teaching is not anattā. It's kamma, the principle of action. As we noted in the preceding chapter, the most fruitful and appropriate viewpoint for a person aiming at liberation is to regard experience in terms of skillful and unskillful actions, and their respective results. The anattā teaching is meant to function in the context of questions shaped by that viewpoint: When is the perception of self a skillful mental action and when is it not? When is the perception of not-self a skillful mental action and when is it not?

From this perspective, it is altogether appropriate that the Buddha would have pioneered the genre of spiritual autobiography, and for two reasons. First, the content of these accounts shows how his actions, his kamma, led to his understanding of action, and how that understanding then led to his awakening. The basic pattern of the accounts is this: "First I did this, then I experienced these results. In response to these results, I did that and experienced those results." In the course of these experiments with action, he had done something no one else had done, and had learned something new about action that was of universal import. His purpose in relating his autobiography wasn't simply to elicit an

empathetic response from his listeners; he wanted to teach them lessons about kamma that would apply to their own pursuit of true happiness as well. Thus the story of his actions deserved to be shared.

Second, the Buddha's act of relating this story shows one of the instances in which a perception of self is skillful: By sharing his experiences of his actions and their results, the Buddha encourages his listeners to develop both a desire for awakening and a confidence that if the Buddha did it, they could do it too. AN 4:159 calls these attitudes the craving needed to abandon craving, and the conceit needed to abandon conceit. This is thus an area where the perception of self is skillful both in the act of relating the accounts and in the act of listening and responding to them.

In addition to showing the role of kamma in the bodhisatta's quest, these accounts also show the role of questioning as a type of kamma that provided the framework for shaping his other actions. In the basic pattern of the accounts, the statement, "I did this," is often prefaced by the questions that led to his doing the "this": "I asked myself, 'Why am I doing that? What if I were to do this?'" Thus it is possible to cull from these accounts the questions that shaped the Buddha's quest for awakening, not only to get a sense of the underlying concerns they express, but also to see what lessons the Buddha learned about questions in general as he allowed particular questions to shape his actions.

When viewed from the standpoint of the Buddha's later use of his fourfold strategy in responding to questions, the questions that shaped his quest for awakening show two consistent features. The first is that they all take for granted the principle that action has results, and that those results determine whether the actions are skillful or unskillful. As the Buddha says in MN 26 [§14], his quest was from the very outset a search for "what might be skillful." Other accounts in the Canon tell us that there were teachers in the bodhisatta's time who taught a doctrine of inaction—saying either that human action was totally powerless to give results, that it was totally predetermined by influences from the past, or that the only way to liberation was to abstain from physical action—but the bodhisatta does not appear to have shown any interest in their teachings. He was convinced that the way to a deathless happiness involved skillful action. The one question he reports posing to his

teachers—"To what extent do you declare that you have entered & dwell in this Dhamma?"—shows that he was interested not simply in rote learning, but also in actual attainment. His response to their answers shows his conviction that attainment is something to reach through action. To the extent that his questions all reflect this conviction, they were properly framed.

In a handful of texts [§83, §84; also MN 14], the Buddha says that he approached members of sects who taught various forms of inaction (which, according to his analysis, includes determinism) and disputed their teaching, but he doesn't indicate whether these conversations occurred before or after his awakening. Either way, they would be consistent with concerns that we know *did* predate his awakening, for his arguments against doctrines of this sort are based on the conviction that if one engages in a holy life involving effort, one should believe in the efficacy of human effort. Otherwise, if one believes that everything is predetermined by the past, predetermined by an outside power, or—the other extreme—totally without cause, one's actions are not in line with one's beliefs. This alone, of course, doesn't prove the efficacy of action, but it does tell us why the bodhisatta showed no interest in doctrines denying that efficacy.

The second feature common to all the questions the bodhisatta posed to himself is that they all rank as a form of self cross-examination. In questioning himself, he examined his assumptions and habits, at the same time stretching his imagination to find new and better possibilities for what might be skillful in his search. He then tested his answers in practice, to see what did and didn't succeed in producing the desired results, at the same time formulating additional questions to establish what counts as success. In this way he refined the shape of his original questions—his sense of what is skillful and unskillful—honing it to the point where it yielded the perspective of the four noble truths. In the course of this refinement he discovered that some of his concepts of skillful and unskillful—such as the idea that self-torment is inherently skillful—had to be recast.

Even his response to the memory of his experience of jhāna in his youth followed the same pattern of phrasing a question and then testing the answer he had arrived at. He asked himself, "Could that be the path to

awakening?" And even though there followed the consciousness, "That is the path to awakening," he still tested this answer to see how far it might be true [§17].

Because all of these questions are a form of self-examination through cross-questioning, it is easy to see why the Buddha made such extensive use of cross-questioning in his teachings, citing it as a distinctive feature of the way he taught [§73]. He saw that the ability to question one's own assumptions, and to make one's understanding more accurate and useful by testing new assumptions in practice, lay at the heart of the path to liberation. As §19 shows, even the application of the four noble truths, in the form of dependent co-arising, was a type of self-examination through cross-questioning that led to his ultimate awakening. Thus cross-questioning is obviously a strategy that the Buddha had perfected in the process of his own quest.

An important aspect of his pursuit of that perfection lay in consistently holding to high standards for measuring the success of his quest. MN 26 [§14] indicates that the bodhisatta was not easily satisfied by the attainments he achieved under the instruction of other teachers. He wanted the deathless, and was not content with anything less. In AN 2:5 [§15] he claimed that one of the reasons for his self-awakening was that he didn't rest content with the skillful qualities he had developed until they had yielded absolute release. Thus, when he later became a teacher, a crucial element in the training he gave his students in self cross-examination lay in showing them how to measure their own behavior, and the success of their actions, against high standards as well.

This insistence on high standards aimed at a very specific goal is one of the distinctive features of the Buddha's pragmatism. Instead of allowing his students to rest complacent, defining "what works" by "what feels good enough for me," he showed them that the highest form of compassion is to raise one's standards to the level of a deathless happiness, for only through testing the results of one's actions against those standards can a truly safe and reliable happiness be attained.

In addition to perfecting the strategy of cross-questioning, the bodhisatta also perfected the other response-strategies, along with the most fruitful way to combine them. His basic assumption, tested and verified in practice—that action is fruitful and that it can be either skillful

or not—provided his most basic standard for questions that are to be answered categorically. He then refined the principle of skillful and unskillful action into four categories—unskillful action, undesirable result, skillful action, desirable result—which formed the framework for the four noble truths. As he further explored the framework of these truths through self cross-examination, he arrived at the categories of dependent co-arising. The fact that awakening followed on these ultimate refinements meant that the four noble truths and dependent co-arising provided his most refined standard for the categorical response-strategy as well. In this way, he learned the value of self cross-examination in refining the framework of his categorical questions.

Also, his discovery that self-torment was not inherently skillful provided the hard-earned insight—after six years of extreme physical suffering—that some questions deserve analytical answers. His first statement in his first sermon—that sensual indulgence and self-torment are both ignoble extremes—can be seen as an analytical answer to the question of whether self-torment was a nobler livelihood than sensual indulgence. His listeners had long assumed that the answer was a categorical Yes, so before teaching them the middle way the Buddha had to reframe the question by giving the analytical response that his own self cross-examination had shown to be most productive in leading to freedom.

As we will see in Chapter Four, many variations on the issue of how different livelihoods should be judged kept resurfacing throughout his teaching career, and they provided the occasion for the largest sub-set of his analytical answers. When asked which livelihood is most praiseworthy and fruitful, the Buddha would respond in each case that a livelihood is to be measured not by social status or heroic austerities, but by the fruitfulness of one's actions.

And finally, when the bodhisatta on the night of his awakening moved from the first and second knowledges (the recollection of his past lives, and the knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings) to the third knowledge (the knowledge of the ending of mental fermentations) [§18], he learned an object lesson in the fact that assumptions useful on one level of the path might have to be put aside on a higher level. This

meant that questions based on those assumptions would have to be put aside on higher levels of the path as well.

He also learned which particular assumptions deserve to be put aside. The first and second knowledges were expressed in terms of beings and worlds—the basic terms of *bhava,* or becoming. The third knowledge dropped those terms in favor of the bare terms of stress and fermentations, their origination, their cessation, and the path to their cessation.

DN 1 [§184] and MN 136 [§66] show that many other meditators of the period, on gaining knowledge of the same sort that the bodhisatta gained in his first and second knowledges, proceeded to develop theories about the self and the world based on what they had seen. As a result, they became entangled in controversies and further states of becoming, leading them further and further away from awakening.

In contrast, the bodhisatta, on attaining those two knowledges, maintained the original framework for his quest: "What is the most skillful use of this knowledge?" By maintaining this framework, he was able ultimately to avoid developing theories of the self or the world. In fact, *in order to* maintain this framework on a heightened level, he *had to* stop thinking in terms of beings and worlds. After discovering in his second knowledge the role of view and intention in determining birth, aging, and death throughout the cosmos, he applied this knowledge to processes he experienced in the present moment, as they were directly experienced apart from notions of being and self. As he cross-questioned his experience of the causes of aging and death in the present, he learned the entire interdependent sequence of causes down through becoming, from there through the factor of fabrications—which shape views and intentions—and from there to ignorance. In this way, he learned how the ending of ignorance could bring all these causes to an end. This proper framing of the issue, part of the third knowledge he gained that night, led to the step corresponding to what is elsewhere called the arising of the Dhamma eye: insight into dependent co-arising and its use in bringing stress and suffering to an end.

> "I discerned, as it had come to be, that 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress." — *MN 19*

Then, apparently, he followed a similar process whereby he discerned how ignorance and the fermentations are mutually conditioned [§42], and how both of these could also be brought to an end.

> "I discerned, as it had come to be, that 'These are fermentations... This is the origination of fermentations... This is the cessation of fermentations... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.' My heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, was released from the fermentation of sensuality, released from the fermentation of becoming, released from the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there was the knowledge, 'Released.' I discerned that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'" — *MN 19*

This was his total release. And because total release followed on dismantling and putting aside the terms of becoming—*self* and *world*—he learned that, even though questions framed in these terms might be legitimately answered on earlier levels of the path (see Chapters One and Six), on later levels they would have to be put aside.

From these passages we can see how the bodhisatta's experience in cross-questioning his assumptions of what might be skillful in leading to release provided him with the framework for the four response-strategies he used, as the Buddha, in dealing with his listeners' questions and in teaching them the way to release.

But his quest for awakening also taught him other lessons about questions. In particular, he learned an important lesson about the pitfalls of using a simile to answer a question. Prior to his awakening, his initial response to the three similes about timber and sensuality [§17] was to undertake six years of severe austerities and the total avoidance of pleasure. This, however, was a serious misreading of how to use those similes most effectively. Only when he came to appreciate the pleasure of jhāna as secluded from sensuality was he able to benefit from the similes. This may explain why, when using a simile to explain an answer, he would often accompany the simile with detailed cross-questioning to ensure that his listener would interpret the simile in the most effective way. His hard-won experience had taught him the need for clarity in this approach.

These are some of the ways in which the bodhisatta's quest for awakening perfected his skill in asking and answering questions. By describing these experiences to his listeners, he taught them important lessons in how they could develop skill in asking and answering questions as part of the path to their awakening as well.

READINGS

§ 14. "Before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, being subject myself to birth, I sought what was likewise subject to birth. Being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, I sought [happiness in] what was likewise subject to illness... death... sorrow... defilement. The thought occurred to me, 'Why do I, being subject myself to birth, seek what is likewise subject to birth? Being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, why do I seek what is likewise subject to illness... death... sorrow... defilement? What if I, being subject myself to birth, seeing the drawbacks of birth, were to seek the unborn, unexcelled safety from the yoke: unbinding. What if I, being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeing the drawbacks of aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, were to seek the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, unexcelled safety from the yoke: unbinding.'

"So, at a later time, while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life—and while my parents, unwilling, were crying with tears streaming down their faces—I shaved off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robe and went forth from the home life into homelessness.

"Having thus gone forth in search of what might be skillful, seeking the unexcelled state of sublime peace, I went to Āḷāra Kālāma and, on arrival, said to him, 'Friend Kālāma, I want to practice in this Dhamma & Vinaya.'

"When this was said, he replied to me, 'You may stay here, my friend. This doctrine is such that a wise person can soon enter & dwell in his own teacher's knowledge, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge.'

"It was not long before I quickly learned the doctrine. As far as mere lip-reciting & repetition, I could speak the words of knowledge, the words of the elders, and I could affirm that I knew & saw—I, along with others.

"I thought, 'It isn't through mere conviction alone that Āḷāra Kālāma declares, "I have entered & dwell in this Dhamma, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge." Certainly he dwells knowing & seeing this Dhamma.' So I went to him and said, 'To what extent do you declare that you have entered & dwell in this Dhamma?' When this was said, he declared the dimension of nothingness.

"I thought, 'Not only does Āḷāra Kālāma have conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, & discernment. I too have conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, & discernment. What if I were to endeavor to realize for myself the Dhamma that Āḷāra Kālāma declares he has entered & dwells in, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge.' So it was not long before I quickly entered & dwelled in that Dhamma, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge. I went to him and said, 'Friend Kālāma, is this the extent to which you have entered & dwell in this Dhamma, having realized it for yourself through direct knowledge?'

"'Yes, my friend....'

"'This, friend, is the extent to which I too have entered & dwell in this Dhamma, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge.'

"'It is a gain for us, my friend, a great gain for us, that we have such a companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma I declare I have entered & dwell in, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge, is the Dhamma you declare you have entered & dwell in, having realized it for yourself through direct knowledge. And the Dhamma you declare you have entered & dwell in, having realized it for yourself through direct knowledge, is the Dhamma I declare I have entered & dwell in, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge. The Dhamma I know is the Dhamma you know; the Dhamma you know is the Dhamma I know. As I am, so are you; as you are, so am I. Come friend, let us now lead this community together.'

"In this way did Āḷāra Kālāma, my teacher, place me, his pupil, on the same level with himself and pay me great honor. But the thought occurred to me, 'This Dhamma leads not to disenchantment, to

dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, nor to unbinding, but only to reappearance in the dimension of nothingness.' So, dissatisfied with that Dhamma, I left.

"In search of what might be skillful, seeking the unexcelled state of sublime peace, I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta and, on arrival, said to him, 'Friend Uddaka, I want to practice in this Dhamma & Vinaya.' [The story here follows a pattern similar to that of the bodhisatta's encounter with Āḷāra Kālāma, except that Uddaka teaches the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, which he himself has not attained, but which had been attained by his teacher, Rama. When the bodhisatta reaches that attainment, Uddaka offers to set him up as the sole leader of the community.]

"In this way did Uddaka Rāmaputta, my companion in the holy life, place me in the position of teacher and pay me great honor. But the thought occurred to me, 'This Dhamma leads not to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, nor to unbinding, but only to reappearance in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.' So, dissatisfied with that Dhamma, I left.

"In search of what might be skillful, seeking the unexcelled state of sublime peace, I wandered by stages in the Magadhan country and came to the military town of Uruvelā. There I saw some delightful countryside, with an inspiring forest grove, a clear-flowing river with fine, delightful banks, and villages for alms-going on all sides. The thought occurred to me, 'How delightful is this countryside, with its inspiring forest grove, clear-flowing river with fine, delightful banks, and villages for alms-going on all sides. This is just right for the exertion of a clansman intent on exertion.' So I sat down right there, thinking, 'This is just right for exertion.'" — *MN 26*

§ 15. "Monks, I have known two qualities through experience: discontent with regard to skillful qualities & unrelenting exertion. Relentlessly I exerted myself, (thinking,) 'Gladly would I let the flesh & blood in my body dry up, leaving just the skin, tendons, & bones, but if I have not attained what can be reached through human firmness, human persistence, human striving, there will be no relaxing my persistence.'

From this heedfulness of mine was attained awakening. From this heedfulness of mine was attained the unexcelled safety from bondage.

"You too monks, should relentlessly exert yourselves, (thinking,) 'Gladly would we let the flesh & blood in our bodies dry up, leaving just the skin, tendons, & bones, but if we have not attained what can be reached through human firmness, human persistence, human striving, there will be no relaxing our persistence.' You too in no long time will reach & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for yourselves in the here & now.

"Thus you should train yourselves: 'We will relentlessly exert ourselves, (thinking,) "Gladly would we let the flesh & blood in our bodies dry up, leaving just the skin, tendons, & bones, but if we have not attained what can be reached through human firmness, human persistence, human striving, there will be no relaxing our persistence."' That's how you should train yourselves." — *AN 2:5*

§ 16. "The thought occurred to me, 'What if—on recognized, designated nights such as the eighth, fourteenth, & fifteenth of the lunar fortnight—I were to stay in the sort of places that are awe-inspiring and make your hair stand on end, such as park-shrines, forest-shrines, & tree-shrines? Perhaps I would get to see that fear & terror.' So at a later time—on recognized, designated nights such as the eighth, fourteenth, & fifteenth of the lunar fortnight—I stayed in the sort of places that are awe-inspiring and make your hair stand on end, such as park-shrines, forest-shrines, & tree-shrines. And while I was staying there a wild animal would come, or a bird would drop a twig, or wind would rustle the fallen leaves. The thought would occur to me: 'Is this that fear & terror coming?' Then the thought occurred to me, 'Why do I just keep waiting for fear? What if I were to subdue fear & terror in whatever state they come?' So when fear & terror came while I was walking back & forth, I would not stand or sit or lie down. I would keep walking back & forth until I had subdued that fear & terror. When fear & terror came while I was standing, I would not walk or sit or lie down. I would keep standing until I had subdued that fear & terror. When fear & terror came while I was sitting, I would not lie down or stand up or walk. I would keep sitting until I had subdued that fear & terror. When fear & terror came while I was lying down, I would not sit up

or stand or walk. I would keep lying down until I had subdued that fear & terror." — *MN 4*

§ 17. "Then, Aggivessana, these three similes—spontaneous, never before heard—appeared to me. Suppose there were a wet, sappy piece of timber lying in the water, and a man were to come along with an upper fire-stick, thinking, 'I'll produce fire. I'll make heat appear.' Now, what do you think? Would he be able to produce fire and make heat appear by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the wet, sappy timber lying in the water?"

"No, Master Gotama. Why is that? Because the timber is wet & sappy, and besides it is lying in the water. Eventually the man would reap only his share of weariness & disappointment."

"So it is with any contemplative or brahman who doesn't live secluded from sensuality in body & mind, and whose desire, infatuation, urge, thirst, & fever for sensuality is not relinquished & stilled within him: Whether or not he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings due to his striving [for awakening], he is incapable of knowledge, vision, & unexcelled self-awakening. This was the first simile—spontaneous, never before heard—that appeared to me.

"Then a second simile—spontaneous, never before heard—appeared to me. Suppose there were a wet, sappy piece of timber lying on land far from water, and a man were to come along with an upper fire-stick, thinking, 'I'll produce fire. I'll make heat appear.' Now, what do you think? Would he be able to produce fire and make heat appear by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the wet, sappy timber lying on land far from water?"

"No, Master Gotama. Why is that? Because the timber is wet & sappy, even though it is lying on land far from water. Eventually the man would reap only his share of weariness & disappointment."

"So it is with any contemplative or brahman who lives secluded from sensuality in body only, but whose desire, infatuation, urge, thirst, & fever for sensuality is not relinquished & stilled within him: Whether or not he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings due to his striving, he is incapable of knowledge, vision, & unexcelled self-awakening. This was the second simile—spontaneous, never before heard—that appeared to me.

"Then a third simile—spontaneous, never before heard—appeared to me. Suppose there were a dry, sapless piece of timber lying on land far

from water, and a man were to come along with an upper fire-stick, thinking, 'I'll produce fire. I'll make heat appear.' Now, what do you think? Would he be able to produce fire and make heat appear by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the dry, sapless timber lying on land?"

"Yes, Master Gotama. Why is that? Because the timber is dry & sapless, and besides it is lying on land far from water."

"So it is with any contemplative or brahman who lives secluded from sensuality in body & mind, and whose desire, infatuation, urge, thirst, & fever for sensuality is relinquished & stilled within him: Whether or not he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings due to his striving, he is capable of knowledge, vision, & unexcelled self-awakening. This was the third simile—spontaneous, never before heard—that appeared to me.

"I thought, 'What if I, clenching my teeth and pressing my tongue against the roof of my mouth, were to beat down, constrain, & crush my mind with my awareness?' So, clenching my teeth and pressing my tongue against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrained, & crushed by mind with my awareness. Just as a strong man, seizing a weaker man by the head or the throat or the shoulders, would beat him down, constrain, & crush him, in the same way I beat down, constrained, & crushed my mind with my awareness. As I did so, sweat poured from my armpits. And although tireless persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established, my body was aroused & uncalm because of the painful exertion. But the painful feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain.

"I thought, 'What if I were to become absorbed in the jhāna of non-breathing?' So I stopped the in-breaths & out-breaths in my nose & mouth. As I did so, there was a loud roaring of winds coming out my earholes, just like the loud roar of winds coming out of a smith's bellows.... So I stopped the in-breaths & out-breaths in my nose & mouth & ears. As I did so, extreme forces sliced through my head, just as if a strong man were slicing my head open with a sharp sword.... Extreme pains arose in my head, just as if a strong man were tightening a turban made of tough leather straps around my head.... Extreme forces carved up my stomach cavity, just as if a butcher or his apprentice were to carve up the stomach cavity of an ox.... There was an extreme burning in my body, just as if two strong men, grabbing a weaker man by the arms, were to

roast & broil him over a pit of hot embers. And although tireless persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established, my body was aroused & uncalm because of the painful exertion. But the painful feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain.

"Devas, on seeing me, said, 'Gotama the contemplative is dead.' Other devas said, 'He isn't dead, he's dying.' Others said, 'He's neither dead nor dying, he's an arahant, for this is the way arahants live.'

"I thought, 'What if I were to practice going altogether without food?' Then devas came to me and said, 'Dear sir, please don't practice going altogether without food. If you go altogether without food, we'll infuse divine nourishment in through your pores, and you will survive on that.' I thought, 'If I were to claim to be completely fasting while these devas are infusing divine nourishment in through my pores, I would be lying.' So I dismissed them, saying, 'Enough.'

"I thought, 'What if I were to take only a little food at a time, only a handful at a time of bean soup, lentil soup, vetch soup, or pea soup?' So I took only a little food at a time, only a handful at a time of bean soup, lentil soup, vetch soup, or pea soup. My body became extremely emaciated. Simply from my eating so little, my limbs became like the jointed segments of vine stems or bamboo stems.... My backside became like a camel's hoof.... My spine stood out like a string of beads.... My ribs jutted out like the jutting rafters of an old, run-down barn.... The gleam of my eyes appeared to be sunk deep in my eye sockets like the gleam of water deep in a well.... My scalp shriveled & withered like a green bitter gourd, shriveled & withered in the heat & the wind.... The skin of my belly became so stuck to my spine that when I thought of touching my belly, I grabbed hold of my spine as well; and when I thought of touching my spine, I grabbed hold of the skin of my belly as well.... If I urinated or defecated, I fell over on my face right there.... Simply from my eating so little, if I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair—rotted at its roots—fell from my body as I rubbed, simply from eating so little.

"People on seeing me would say, 'Gotama the contemplative is black. Other people would say, 'Gotama the contemplative isn't black, he's brown.' Others would say, 'Gotama the contemplative is neither black nor

brown, he's golden-skinned. So much had the clear, bright color of my skin deteriorated, simply from eating so little.

"I thought, 'Whatever painful, racking, piercing feelings have been felt in the past by contemplatives or brahmans due to their striving, this is the utmost. None have been greater than this. Whatever painful, racking, piercing feelings will be felt in the future by contemplatives or brahmans due to their striving, this is the utmost. None will be greater than this. Whatever painful, racking, piercing feelings are being felt in the present by contemplatives or brahmans due to their striving, this is the utmost. None is greater than this. But with this racking practice of austerities I haven't attained any superior human state, any distinction in knowledge or vision worthy of the noble ones. Could there be another path to awakening?'

"I thought, 'I recall once, when my father the Sakyan was working, and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, then—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—I entered & remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. Could that be the path to awakening?' Then there was the consciousness following on that memory: 'That is the path to awakening.' I thought, 'So why am I afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensuality, nothing to do with unskillful qualities?' I thought, 'I am no longer afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensuality, nothing to do with unskillful qualities, but that pleasure is not easy to achieve with a body so extremely emaciated. What if I were to take some solid food: some rice & porridge?' So I took some solid food: some rice & porridge. Now five monks had been attending to me, thinking, 'If Gotama, our contemplative, achieves some higher state, he will tell us.' But when they saw me taking some solid food —some rice & porridge—they were disgusted and left me, thinking, 'Gotama the contemplative is living luxuriously. He has abandoned his exertion and is backsliding into abundance.'

"So when I had taken solid food and regained strength, then—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—I entered & remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. But the pleasant feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain." — *MN 36*

§ 18. “Monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, the thought occurred to me, ‘What if I were to keep dividing my thinking into two sorts?’ So I made thinking imbued with sensuality, thinking imbued with ill will, & thinking imbued with harmfulness one sort, and thinking imbued with renunciation, thinking imbued with non-ill will, & thinking imbued with harmlessness another sort.

“And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with sensuality arose. I discerned that ‘Thinking imbued with sensuality has arisen in me; and that leads to my own affliction or to the affliction of others or to the affliction of both. It obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding.’

“As I noticed that it leads to my own affliction, it subsided. As I noticed that it leads to the affliction of others… to the affliction of both… it obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding, it subsided. Whenever thinking imbued with sensuality had arisen, I simply abandoned it, destroyed it, dispelled it, wiped it out of existence.

“And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with ill will arose. I discerned that ‘Thinking imbued with ill will has arisen in me; and that leads to my own affliction or to the affliction of others or to the affliction of both. It obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding.’

“As I noticed that it leads to my own affliction, it subsided. As I noticed that it leads to the affliction of others… to the affliction of both… it obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding, it subsided. Whenever thinking imbued with ill will had arisen, I simply abandoned it, destroyed it, dispelled it, wiped it out of existence.

“And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with harmfulness arose. I discerned that ‘Thinking imbued with harmfulness has arisen in me; and that leads to my own affliction or to the affliction of others or to the affliction of both. It obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding.’

“As I noticed that it leads to my own affliction, it subsided. As I noticed that it leads to the affliction of others… to the affliction of both… it obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding,

it subsided. Whenever thinking imbued with harmfulness had arisen, I simply abandoned it, destroyed it, dispelled it, wiped it out of existence.

"Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with sensuality, abandoning thinking imbued with renunciation, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with sensuality. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with non-ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmfulness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmlessness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmfulness.

"Just as in the last month of the Rains, in the autumn season when the crops are ripening, a cowherd would look after his cows: He would tap & poke & check & curb them with a stick on this side & that. Why is that? Because he foresees flogging or imprisonment or a fine or public censure arising from that [if he were to let his cows wander into the crops]. In the same way I foresaw in unskillful qualities drawbacks, degradation, & defilement, and I foresaw in skillful qualities rewards related to renunciation & promoting cleansing.

"And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with renunciation arose. I discerned that 'Thinking imbued with renunciation has arisen in me; and that leads neither to my own affliction, nor to the affliction of others, nor to the affliction of both. It fosters discernment, promotes lack of vexation, & leads to unbinding. If I were to think & ponder in line with that even for a night... even for a day... even for a day & night, I do not envision any danger that would come from it, except that thinking & pondering a long time would tire the body. When the body is tired, the mind is disturbed; and a disturbed mind is far from concentration.' So I steadied my mind right within, settled, unified, & concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind would not be disturbed.

"And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with non-ill will arose. I discerned that 'Thinking imbued with non-ill will has arisen in me; and that leads neither to my own affliction, nor to the affliction of others, nor to the affliction of both. It fosters discernment, promotes lack of vexation, & leads to unbinding. If I were to

think & ponder in line with that even for a night... even for a day... even for a day & night, I do not envision any danger that would come from it, except that thinking & pondering a long time would tire the body. When the body is tired, the mind is disturbed; and a disturbed mind is far from concentration.' So I steadied my mind right within, settled, unified, & concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind would not be disturbed.

"And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with harmlessness arose. I discerned that 'Thinking imbued with harmlessness has arisen in me; and that leads neither to my own affliction, nor to the affliction of others, nor to the affliction of both. It fosters discernment, promotes lack of vexation, & leads to unbinding. If I were to think & ponder in line with that even for a night... even for a day... even for a day & night, I do not envision any danger that would come from it, except that thinking & pondering a long time would tire the body. When the body is tired, the mind is disturbed; and a disturbed mind is far from concentration.' So I steadied my mind right within, settled, unified, & concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind would not be disturbed.

"Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with renunciation, abandoning thinking imbued with sensuality, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with renunciation. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with non-ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with non-ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmlessness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmfulness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmlessness.

"Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been gathered into the village, a cowherd would look after his cows: While resting under the shade of a tree or out in the open, he simply keeps himself mindful of 'those cows.' In the same way, I simply kept myself mindful of 'those qualities.'

"Unflagging persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established. My body was calm & unaroused, my mind concentrated & single. Quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered & remained in the first jhāna: rapture &

pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation.[1] With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I entered & remained in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture, I remained equanimous, mindful, & alert, and sensed pleasure with the body. I entered & remained in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joys & distresses—I entered & remained in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.

"When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of recollecting my past lives. I recollected my manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two... five, ten... fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion: 'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus I remembered my manifold past lives in their modes & details.

"This was the first knowledge I attained in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute.

"When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the passing away & reappearance of beings. I saw—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with actions: 'These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence

of wrong views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.' Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—I saw beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with actions.

"This was the second knowledge I attained in the second watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute.

"When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the ending of (mental) fermentations. I discerned, as it had come to be, that *'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress... These are fermentations... This is the origination of fermentations... This is the cessation of fermentations... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.'* My heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, was released from the fermentation of sensuality, released from the fermentation of becoming, released from the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there was the knowledge, 'Released.' I discerned that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"This was the third knowledge I attained in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute."
— *MN 19*

NOTE: 1. AN 9:41 describes the question that led the bodhisatta from right resolve to the first jhāna:

"Even I myself—before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta—thought, 'Renunciation is good; seclusion is good,' but my heart didn't leap up at renunciation, didn't grow confident, steadfast, or

firm, seeing, 'That is peace.' The thought occurred to me, 'What is the cause, what is the reason, why my heart doesn't leap up at renunciation, doesn't grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing, "That is peace"?' Then the thought occurred to me, 'I haven't seen the drawback of sensuality; I haven't pursued [that theme]. I haven't understood the reward of renunciation; I haven't familiarized myself with it. That's why my heart doesn't leap up at renunciation, doesn't grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing, "That is peace."'

"Then the thought occurred to me, 'If, having seen the drawback of sensuality, I were to pursue that theme; and if, having understood the reward of renunciation, I were to familiarize myself with it, there's the possibility that my heart would leap up at renunciation, grow confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing, "That is peace."'

"So at a later time, having seen the drawback of sensuality, I pursued that theme; having understood the reward of renunciation, I familiarized myself with it. My heart leaped up at renunciation, grew confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing, 'That is peace.' Then, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered & remained in the first jhāna."

Similar questions and reflections then led him to the remaining jhānas and levels of formlessness [§150.]

§ 19. "Monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, the realization came to me: 'How this world has fallen on difficulty! It is born, it ages, it dies, it falls away & rearises, but it doesn't discern the escape from this stress, from this aging-&-death. O when will it discern the escape from this stress, from this aging-&-death?'

"Then the thought occurred to me, 'Aging-&-death exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Aging-&-death exists when birth exists.[1] From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death.'

Then the thought occurred to me, 'Birth exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes birth?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Birth exists when becoming exists. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.'....

"'Becoming exists when what exists?' ... 'Becoming exists when clinging exists....

"'Clinging exists when what exists?' ... 'Clinging exists when craving exists....

"'Craving exists when what exists?' ... 'Craving exists when feeling exists....

"'Feeling exists when what exists?' ... 'Feeling exists when contact exists....

"'Contact exists when what exists?' ... 'Contact exists when the six sense media exist....

"'The six sense media exist when what exists?' ... 'The six sense media exist when name-&-form exists....

"'Name-&-form exists when what exists?' ... 'Name-&-form exists when consciousness exists....

"'Consciousness exists when what exists?' ... 'Consciousness exists when fabrications exist....

Then the thought occurred to me, 'Fabrications exist when what exists? From what as a requisite condition come fabrications?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Fabrications exist when ignorance exists. From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

"'Thus:

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering. Origination, origination.' Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose,

knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never before heard.

"Then the thought occurred to me, 'Aging-&-death doesn't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of aging-&-death?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Aging-&-death doesn't exist when birth doesn't exist. From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging-&-death.'

"Then the thought occurred to me, 'Birth doesn't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of birth?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Birth doesn't exist when becoming doesn't exist. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth.'....

"'Becoming doesn't exist when what doesn't exist?' ... 'Becoming doesn't exist when clinging doesn't exist....

"'Clinging doesn't exist when what doesn't exist?' ... 'Clinging doesn't exist when craving doesn't exist....

"'Craving doesn't exist when what doesn't exist?' ... 'Craving doesn't exist when feeling doesn't exist....

"'Feeling doesn't exist when what doesn't exist?' ... 'Feeling doesn't exist when contact doesn't exist....

"'Contact doesn't exist when what doesn't exist?' ... 'Contact doesn't exist when the six sense media don't exist....

"'The six sense media don't exist when what doesn't exist?' ... 'The six sense media don't exist when name-&-form doesn't exist....

"'Name-&-form doesn't exist when what doesn't exist?' ... 'Name-&-form doesn't exist when consciousness doesn't exist....

"'Consciousness doesn't exist when what doesn't exist?' ... 'Consciousness doesn't exist when fabrications don't exist....

Then the thought occurred to me, 'Fabrications don't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of fabrications?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Fabrications don't exist when ignorance doesn't exist. From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.

"'Thus:

From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.

From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness.

From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form.

From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media.

From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact.

From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling.

From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving.

From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance.

From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming.

From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering. Cessation, cessation.' Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never before heard." — *SN 12:10*

NOTE: 1. The statements, "X exists when Y exists" and "X doesn't exist when Y doesn't exist" appear as part of the general causal principle—*idappaccayatā*, this/that conditionality—underlying dependent co-arising as a whole [§42]. In that principle, these statements are paired with two other statements: "From the arising of X comes the arising of Y" and "From the cessation of X comes the cessation of Y."

The first pair of statements can be read in two ways: loosely and precisely. Read loosely, they can mean that the existence of X creates the conditions for Y eventually to exist; when X goes out of existence, that creates the conditions for Y eventually to go out of existence. Read in this way, the statements are equivalent with the second pair of statements. The resulting interpretation of this/that conditionality, however, has very little explanatory power, for it cannot account for the Buddha's rejection of determinism [§83, §84], nor can it

account for the complexity of feedback loops in the Buddha's detailed descriptions of causality.

Read as precise statements, however, these statements can mean that Y will come into existence simultaneously with X's coming into existence and that Y will go out of existence simultaneously with X's going out of existence. Read in this way, this/that conditionality contains the interplay of two fairly different causal principles—causes that bring effects in the immediate present, and causes that can give effects over time—which goes a great way toward explaining both the complexity and the non-deterministic nature of the causal relationships described in the Buddha's teachings. (See the Introduction to *The Wings to Awakening* for a discussion of this point.)

However, it has been argued that this second reading is invalid because it obviously does not apply to the statement that aging-&-death exist when birth exists, for the aging and death of a being can obviously occur many years after its birth. This argument, however, ignores the possibility that the Buddha in this passage is referring to the arising, decay, and passing away of momentary mind-states, which can occur so quickly that the process of aging-&-death on this level would occur simultaneously with the process of birth.

This interpretation is supported by two considerations. The first is that the Buddha terms this insight a "breakthrough of discernment," which would hardly apply to the general observation that aging-&-death follows on birth. The second consideration is that in SN 23:2 [§199], the Buddha states that one becomes a "being" whenever one gets caught up in desire for any of the aggregates. Because this is a purely mental process, and because individual aggregates and their attendant desires can arise and pass away very quickly—SN 22:95 compares the arising and passing away of feelings with the evanescent appearance and disappearance of bubbles caused by rain falling on a body of water—the aging-&-death of a "being" on this level could very easily occur simultaneously with its birth.

Chapter Three

Categorical Answers

The Buddha often structured his talks as categorical *(ekaṁsa)* answers to specific questions that he himself had posed. In this way, he accomplished three objectives. He was showing his listeners which questions are worth asking, he was demonstrating the context in which they should place the concepts he was discussing, and he was providing a framework to help them remember what he said. (See Appendix Two.) The fact that he structured his talks in this way means that the vast majority of the questions he answered in the Canon are categorical, and that there are thousands of them. It would be impractical in a book of this scope to survey all of the Buddha's categorical answers, so we will focus instead on two central questions related to this type of answer: (1) What standards did the Buddha use to determine which sorts of questions deserved a categorical answer? (2) How did he intend his listeners to organize the vast body of his categorical answers into a coherent and useful fund of knowledge? In answering these two questions, we will also gain an understanding of how far the truth-value of a categorical answer goes.

Fortunately, the Buddha himself provided a useful hint in how to answer these two questions by clearly indicating that some of his answers were more categorical than others. Of all the teachings he gave in the Canon, only two did he label as categorical. The first is the distinction between good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, and good mental conduct on the one hand, and bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct on the other [§21]. Comparing MN 9 [§27] with AN 10:165 [§28], we can see that this distinction is the same as that between skillful and unskillful kamma. The second teaching the Buddha labeled as categorical was that of the four noble truths [§22].

These two sets of teachings are categorical because their range isn't limited to particular situations. Acting on them leads categorically—

universally—to good results. They are reliable guides to mastering the principle of kamma across the board. Any people who act on the distinction between skillful and unskillful actions—adopting the skillful and abandoning the unskillful—produce bright kamma, in the sense that they don't have to fault themselves on their behavior; observant people, on close examination, praise them; their good reputation gets spread about; they die unconfused; and—on the breakup of the body, after death—reappear in the good destinations, in the heavenly world [§31]. Any people who act on the four noble truths—comprehending stress, abandoning its cause, realizing its cessation, and developing the path to its cessation—produce kamma that leads to the end of kamma, in that these truths are conducive to the goal, conducive to the Dhamma, and basic to the holy life; they lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding: a happiness so total that the need for any further action for the sake of happiness has been transcended (SN 56:31).

As for other teachings that the Buddha gave as categorical answers to questions, they can be regarded as falling under these two. As Ven. Sāriputta noted,

> "Just as the footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant's footprint is reckoned the foremost among them in terms of size; in the same way, all skillful qualities are included in the four noble truths." — *MN 28*

In much the same way, all the Buddha's categorical answers to questions are encompassed by his two categorical teachings. For instance, as we saw in Chapter Two and will see again in Chapter Eight, the teachings of dependent co-arising are also conducive to awakening and unbinding. A cursory glance at these teachings shows that they actually fall under the four noble truths, being an elaboration of the first three of the four. In the case of other categorical answers the relationship to the categorical teachings may not be so obvious, but careful analysis will show that it's there.

As we noted in Chapter One, the four noble truths and the distinction between skillful and unskillful action supply the categories both of right view and of appropriate attention. And as we have also noted, right view

and appropriate attention involve not only looking *at* these topics, but also looking at the rest of experience *in terms of* them. In particular, right view and appropriate attention use these topics as a framework for selecting and developing the skills needed to comprehend stress and bring it to an end. They direct one to focus primary attention on one's actions and the results of those actions, and in this way they foster the skill most essential for understanding and mastering the principle of kamma: the ability to learn from one's mistakes so as to develop ever-higher levels of skill.

Thus appropriate attention—and, to streamline the discussion, we will refer to both right view and appropriate attention under this term—provides the framework for best understanding the Buddha's overarching approach to giving categorical answers. This framework shows not only how to frame questions that will deserve categorical answers, but also how best to learn from those answers—how to comprehend and use them once they are received. In this way, just as Chapter One was concerned with the kamma of teaching, this chapter will focus on the kamma of learning, of listening and figuring things out. Because learning involves understanding the intention of the person teaching, the discussion in this chapter will inevitably overlap somewhat with the discussion in Chapter One, but here we will focus more on how the Buddha's intention in teaching shaped the kind of learning he encouraged in his students, and—by implication—in those of us who still want to reap the most benefit from his words.

It's commonly recognized that people attend to a teaching in line with the views they bring to it. But it's a common mistake to regard these views as lying somehow outside of the field of action—thinking that, for instance, one's understanding of the world may guide one's actions while at the same time not noticing that one's choice of a view and the way one attends to it is a type of action as well. The Buddha, however, saw clearly the kammic aspect of building a view, holding to it, forming questions based on it, and attending to its different features. All of these actions form the frame for how people listen to a teaching and what they take away from it. So when the Buddha, in the typical formula at the beginning of his talks, told his listeners to "listen and attend well," he wasn't simply telling them to pay attention to all of his words. He was also

telling them to bring appropriate attention to what he was saying, framing the questions they brought to the teaching in terms of appropriate attention and placing his comments in the same framework as well.

It might seem strange that the Buddha would be asking his listeners to bring right view to his teaching even before they had heard his teaching, but he was depending on the fact that all people have experienced stress, and all search for someone who knows a way to put an end to stress (AN 6:63, Chapter One). This is the primal search, beginning in early childhood, from which all other searches grow. The question embodied in this search—"Who knows a way or two to stop this pain?"—is probably the most earnest question we ask. In advising his listeners to bring right view to his teaching, the Buddha was simply recommending that they approach it from the viewpoint of this earnest, primal search, and not through the lens of less primal issues. For anyone sensitive to the problem of stress, this is not too much to ask.

To help clarify the issue of what does and doesn't count as appropriate attention in this area, the Buddha in MN 2 [§25] defined appropriate attention primarily as knowledge of which sorts of questions deserve attention and which don't. The implication here is that those deserving attention are the ones most worth bringing to his teachings. He then provided lists to illustrate both categories of questions. Although the lists are not exhaustive, they provide important insights into where the line between appropriate attention and inappropriate attention can be drawn, and why it is drawn precisely there.

The questions deserving appropriate attention, predictably, are those defined in terms of the four noble truths. Those not deserving attention are these:

> "This is how one attends inappropriately: 'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?' Or else one is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?'" — *MN 2*

These questions are framed in terms of two dichotomies—*me* and *not me, existence* and *non-existence*—placed in the time frame of *past, future,* and *present.*

Although the texts don't explicitly make this connection, these terms correspond to what MN 18 [§50] calls the "perceptions & categories of *papañca.*" *Papañca* is a difficult term to translate. Some common English equivalents for it include objectification, complication, elaboration, differentiation, and proliferation.

In ancient Indian artistic theory, *papañca* referred to the elaboration of an artwork's basic theme: the process of embodying that theme in specific objects—the notes of a musical piece, the colors and forms of a painting, or the words and images of a literary work. The Buddha, however, had his own uses and explanations for the term. Without giving it a formal definition, he cited it functionally in MN 18 and DN 21 [§4] to describe the sort of thinking that leads to conflict. In Sn 4:14 [§52] he identified the root of *papañca*-classifications as the thought, "I am the thinker." Because this thought turns the "I" into an object or being; and because the classifications derived from this thought deal with the status of individual objects existing in a world of objects, "objectification" is probably the best translation for the Buddha's use of the term, *papañca.* The one caveat here is that, unlike the modern psychological use of "objectification"—in which the subject treats other people as objects—objectification in the Buddha's sense begins when the subject objectifies itself. Only then does it apply the same process to others.

Given that objectification-classifications begin with the thought, "I am the thinker," the connection between objectification and the inappropriate questions in MN 2 is clear. Those questions are phrased in terms that try to define what the "I" is, what it means to "be," whether the "I" exists, and what its fate over time has been and will be: Did it come into existence from nothing? Has it always existed? Will it always exist? Will its continued existence be happy?

As the Buddha pointed out, people who attend to inappropriate questions of this sort tend to settle on views like these:

> "The view *I have a self* arises in him as true & established, or the view *I have no self*... or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive*

> *self*... or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive not-self*... or the view *It is precisely by means of not-self that I perceive self* arises in him as true & established, or else he has a view like this: *This very self of mine—the knower that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & bad actions—is the self of mine that is constant, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will endure as long as eternity."* — MN 2

In addition, the act of attending to these inappropriate questions can lead to other views as well, for the "where" in the questions, "Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?" leads not only to views about the nature of the existence of the self, but also about the existence of the world, its source, and its final end. DN 1 [§184] provides a long list of views that can be derived in this way.

The Buddha found these questions inappropriate because the act of giving an answer framed in their terms—regardless of how true it might be—would go against the duties of the four noble truths. As SN 22:81 [§153] points out, any answer to these questions would be a form of fabrication. But these questions—instead of focusing attention on the process of fabrication leading up to them, with the purpose of freeing the mind from passion for that process—focus on using the process of fabrication for gaining what they see as worthwhile information about other things. In this way, they induce more passion for the results of fabrication, while keeping the actual processes in the dark. Thus they interfere with the duty appropriate to the first noble truth, which is to comprehend fabrication to the point of dispassion.

Similarly, SN 22:36 [§200] points out that the act of self-definition is also an act of obsession, in that one develops passion for whatever one identifies as one's self. Because anything that could be identified in this way comes under the five clinging-aggregates, one is again going against the basic duty with regard to the first noble truth, which is to comprehend those clinging-aggregates to the point of dispassion. Furthermore, the act of taking on an identity in the context of a specific world of experience is an act of becoming, which is one of the fermentations from which the mind needs to be released. The desire to engage in becoming is one of the primary forms of craving leading to suffering and stress. To indulge in this desire goes against the duty with regard to the second noble truth, which is to abandon that craving.

At the same time, as MN 102 [§53] shows, any sense of "I am" applied to even the subtlest levels of concentration developed along the path hides a remnant of clinging that, because it has not been fully comprehended and abandoned, gets in the way of awakening.

Thus the texts go into a fair amount of detail to show how any answer to the above inappropriate questions would go against the duties of the four noble truths. As a result, any such answer—instead of leading to happiness or freedom—would lead only to entanglement.

> "This [the array of views derived from these questions] is called a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is not freed, I tell you, from stress." — *MN 2*

MN 18 [§50] makes a similar point in terms of the psychology of sensory perception:

> "Dependent on eye & forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as a requisite condition, there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives [labels, assigns a meaning]. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one objectifies. Based on what a person objectifies, the perceptions & categories of objectification assail him/her with regard to past, present, & future forms cognizable via the eye.
> [Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, and intellect.] — *MN 18*

The progression in this passage is instructive. At first the processes of sensory contact are described in impersonal terms: eye, forms, eye-consciousness, contact, and feeling. With feeling, however, an agent appears, who then feels, perceives, and thinks. This thinking, however, does not yet use the perceptions and categories of objectification—a point that will be important in allowing for the use of thought on the path. (The verb for *thinking* used here—*vitakketi*—corresponds to the noun *vitakka,* which appears in the standard definitions of right concentration [§33] and noble right resolve [§39].) Nevertheless, the agent frequently moves from thinking to objectifying, at which point the role of agent

changes to that of victim, assailed by the perceptions and categories of objectification, entangled in the thicket and fetter of views.

There are at least five reasons for this entanglement.

(1) The first is that the categories and perceptions of objectification deal in abstractions that are impossible to pin down with any certainty in the present. Thus any answer framed in their terms is bound to lead simply to more uncertainty.

The remaining reasons derive from the self-reflexive nature of this kind of thinking.

(2) The categories of objectification not only raise issues about objects of thought—selves and worlds—but also draw into those issues the identity of the person thinking: "How does this thinker, as an object, fit into the world of its thoughts? How does it fit into the world of other people's thoughts?" In this way, the thinker is inevitably entangled in internal difficulties and controversy.

(3) As SN 22:36 [§200] points out, the act of self-definition is an act of self-limitation, for anything that one might identify as one's self—even a cosmic self—is limited by the restrictions of space and time.

(4) Also, all people engaged in objectification are busy defining themselves and the world around them in terms of "I am the thinker." Thus they are defining—and placing limitations on—not only themselves and their worlds, but also other people who have defined themselves and their worlds in line with their own "I am the thinker." The act of trying to impose on other people the limitations implicit in one's own objectifications, insisting that they submit to one's own sense of self and world, is an act of aggression, an attempt to exert dominance over how they define themselves and their worlds. There are bound to be people who will resist any views produced from this sort of thinking, and thus the person engaged in this process is bound to meet with external conflict.

(5) Finally, the act of identifying oneself creates a "being" [§199]. As Khp 4 points out, all beings subsist on food. In creating a being that needs to feed, one is creating the many problems that come with that need: the hunger—the "foremost disease" (Dhp 203)—driving that need, along with the consequent needs to secure a source of food and to defend it

from other beings who will try to take it as food for themselves. Often, one has to defend against being treated as food oneself.

These are some of the ways in which the categories and perceptions of objectification assail and entangle the person who fabricates them.

The questions framed in terms of appropriate attention, however, avoid these uncertainties and conflicts by using a level of thinking prior to objectification. To begin with, they are framed in terms that are immediately felt and perceived. Thus they deal in certainties about actions and results. In fact, in MN 2 [§25], these terms are expressed not as questions but as observations: "This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress." Only in other discourses [§33; §39] does the Buddha express these sentences in the form of questions, to show how best to induce these observations about the mind in the present.

Second, questions expressed in terms of appropriate attention avoid the entanglements that come with trying to define a sense of the self and the world around an "I am." Instead, they simply offer therapy for the problem of suffering: explaining how it can be comprehended in terms of actions and results, and thus brought to an end. When the Buddha offered views based on these categories to his listeners, he was not engaging in an act of aggression or seeking dominance, for he was not trying to define who they were. Instead of treating them as objects, he was speaking to the main burden of subjectivity: the experience of pain. In offering his teachings, he was simply offering tools—or to use his own analogy, medicine—to cure that pain, leaving his listeners free to use that medicine, or not, as they saw fit.

Now, there are obviously some passages in the discourses where the Buddha offers answers to such questions as, "Was I in the past?" or "Shall I be in the future?", particularly in his discussion of past and future lives. These answers, however, should be viewed in terms of his strictures for his own speech: that it be true, beneficial, and timely. In all of the instances where the Buddha answers questions that could derive from the root thought, "I am the thinker," he does so with the purpose of addressing a person caught in the midst of that mode of thinking, and inducing either (1) an interest in why "the thinker" should pursue skillful action or (2) a

sense of dispassion for the act of continuing to think in the mode of objectification at all. A graphic example of the latter case is the following:

> Now on that occasion the Blessed One was dwelling in Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Grove. Then thirty monks from Pāvā—all wilderness dwellers, all alms-goers, all triple-robe wearers, all still with fetters *[saṁyojana]*—went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side.
> Then the thought occurred to the Blessed One, "These thirty monks from Pāvā... are all still with fetters. What if I were to teach them the Dhamma in such a way that, in this very sitting, their minds—through lack of clinging/sustenance—would be released from fermentations?"
> So he addressed the monks: "Monks."
> "Yes, lord," the monks responded.
> The Blessed One said, "From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. What do you think, monks? Which is the greater, the blood you have shed from having your heads cut off while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time, or the water in the four great oceans?"
> "As we understand the Dhamma taught to us by the Blessed One, this is the greater: the blood we have shed from having our heads cut off while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time, not the water in the four great oceans."
> "Excellent, monks. Excellent. It is excellent that you thus understand the Dhamma taught by me.
> "This is the greater: the blood you have shed from having your heads cut off while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time, not the water in the four great oceans.
> "The blood you have shed when, being cows, you had your cow-heads cut off: Long has this been greater than the water in the four great oceans.
> "The blood you have shed when, being water buffaloes, you had your water buffalo-heads cut off... when, being rams, you had your ram-heads cut off... when, being goats, you had your goat-heads cut

off… when, being deer, you had your deer-heads cut off… when, being chickens, you had your chicken-heads cut off… when, being pigs, you had your pig-heads cut off: Long has this been greater than the water in the four great oceans.
"The blood you have shed when, arrested as thieves plundering villages, you had your heads cut off… when, arrested as highway thieves, you had your heads cut off… when, arrested as adulterers, you had your heads cut off: Long has this been greater than the water in the four great oceans.
"Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabrications, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released."
That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of the thirty monks from Pāvā—through lack of clinging/sustenance—were released from fermentations.
— *SN 15:13*

Thus, when the Buddha found it timely and beneficial to use the categories and perceptions of objectification in a strategic way to get a person mired in those categories to see the advantages of dropping them, he would use them for that purpose. This, in fact, is the function of the mundane level of right view, which employs categories that fall into the realm of objectification, such as "beings" and "worlds."

However, he did not always have to follow this approach. As we noted in our discussion of MN 18, there is a type of thinking that precedes objectification and does not impose the categories of objectification on what is felt and perceived. When his listeners were ready, the Buddha would appeal to that level of thought in hopes of getting them to use it in their pursuit of the path.

This he would do in a variety of ways. To begin with, he would often describe the benefits of thinking in terms of appropriate attention:

> "The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones... discerns which ideas are fit for attention, and which ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he doesn't attend to ideas unfit for attention, and attends [instead] to ideas fit for attention.... And which are the ideas fit for attention that he attends to? Whichever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen fermentation of sensuality doesn't arise, and the arisen fermentation of sensuality is abandoned; the unarisen fermentation of becoming... the unarisen fermentation of ignorance doesn't arise, and the arisen fermentation of ignorance is abandoned.... He attends appropriately, *This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.* As he attends appropriately in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: self-identity view, uncertainty, and grasping at habits & practices." — *MN 2*

Second, the Buddha would recommend questions that his listeners should ask other people or themselves. Because the questions they should ask themselves are a type of cross-questioning, we will consider them in Chapter Six. Here we will simply note that, in recommending the questions they should ask others, the Buddha advised (1) that they ask only experienced and knowledgeable people and (2) that the questions deal with skillful action: how to understand the concept of skillfulness, what sort of actions are skillful, and how specific skills are to be developed [§43, §44]. Of special interest are the questions in MN 135 [§43], for these are said to be the source of discernment:

> "This is the way leading to discernment: when visiting a contemplative or brahman, to ask: 'What is skillful, venerable sir? What is unskillful? What is blameworthy? What is blameless? What should be cultivated? What should not be cultivated? What, having been done by me, will be for my long-term harm & suffering? Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term benefit & happiness?'"

These questions mark the beginning of discernment because they recognize that long-term happiness is better than short-term, that happiness depends on one's actions, and that one's actions can be chosen

and developed as skills. Everything else in the practice comes from recognizing these basic principles.

But the Buddha's most common method in encouraging appropriate attention among his listeners was, as we have already noted, to frame his talks as categorical answers to questions that he himself would pose. In fact, most of the detailed descriptions of the ramifications of right view—the definitions of many of the terms, and explanations of how to carry out the duties appropriate to the categories of right view—are found in talks of just this sort [§§27-31, §33, §35, §36 and §§38-41].

Because this information comes primarily in discourses where the Buddha is in total control of the shape of the discussion, posing the questions before providing the answers, it's somewhat surprising to find gaps and apparent inconsistencies in the information about right view that can be drawn from these passages. For instance, many of the most basic terms are not formally defined. The four noble truths center on stress, but nowhere is stress given a formal definition. It is illustrated with examples, and the Buddha gives a summary definition—in terms of the five clinging-aggregates [§33]—that helps strategically in knowing how to analyze stress for the purpose of putting an end to it, but nowhere does he say what stress is in and of itself. Similarly with other basic terms: Happiness *(sukha),* which in one form serves as part of the path of practice (as a factor in right concentration), and in another form (unbinding) as the goal of the practice, is nowhere defined. Becoming *(bhava),* a concept central to understanding the cause of stress, is said simply to have three types—sensuality, form, and formless—but what it is, is not explained. The mind *(citta),* which functions as the agent trained in the course of the practice and is released on the attainment of the goal, is described in terms of what it does but never in terms of what it is.

As for apparent inconsistencies, one of the most striking is that the discourses offer at least four separate definitions of right view:

> "And which is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are contemplatives & brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing

rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions." — *MN 117*

"And which is right view? Knowledge in terms of stress, knowledge in terms of the origination of stress, knowledge in terms of the cessation of stress, knowledge in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view." — *SN 45:8*

"And which is the right view that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The discernment, the faculty of discernment, the strength of discernment, analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, the path factor of right view in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is free from fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right view that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path." — *MN 117*

"By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is supported by [takes as its object] a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world as it has come to be with right discernment, 'non-existence' with reference to the world doesn't occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it has come to be with right discernment, 'existence' with reference to the world doesn't occur to one.
"By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings [sustenances], & biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on 'my self.' He has no doubt or uncertainty that mere stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. It's to this extent, Kaccāyana, that there is right view." — *SN 12:15*

The first of these definitions is obviously preliminary, as it doesn't fully cut through the mental fermentations. The next two are more advanced and—because the strength and faculty of discernment, mentioned in the third definition, are defined as seeing things in terms of the four noble

truths—apparently equivalent. The fourth is more advanced than the others, as it reduces the four noble truths to one: stress. Yet, even though all four definitions are right, the first definition is framed in terms of worlds and beings, a frame discarded by the second and third definitions. They, in turn—in their definition of stress—are framed in terms of aggregates [§33], a frame discarded in the fourth. The fourth, by reducing everything that arises and passes away to mere stress, also implicitly reduces the four duties of the second and third definitions [§34, §35] to one [§36].

Another apparent inconsistency closely related to the theme of this book concerns the relationship of thinking *(vitakka)* to objectification *(papañca)*. As we noted above, MN 18 states that thinking comes prior to objectification, a fact that allows for thinking devoid of objectification—framed in terms of processes and events—to have a role on the path, in the factors of noble right resolve and right concentration. However, DN 21 [§4] states that the categories and perceptions of objectification come prior to thinking; when these categories do not exist, thinking stops. Thus any thinking employed on the path would require at least a modicum of objectification.

If the Buddha were trying to propose a foundational philosophy or a full description of reality, these gaps and apparent inconsistencies would be blatant weaknesses in his system. And later Buddhist scholastics and philosophers, who *did* try to present Buddhism as a foundational philosophy, clearly regarded them as such, providing definitions for all the terms the Buddha neglected to define, and trying to resolve inconsistencies by advancing the idea that there were two levels of truth in his teachings, conventional and ultimate. But there are two reasons for regarding this approach as misguided.

The first is that the Buddha himself never used the concept of two levels of truth, so the concept is foreign to his teachings. He did occasionally mention (e.g., DN 9), when adopting the technical vocabulary of others for the sake of discussion, that he was speaking in line with the expressions of the world to which he did not hold. But that simply meant that his adoption of that vocabulary should not be taken out of context. He never identified any of his own vocabulary as dealing with ultimate truths. When identifying the "highest noble truth," for

instance, he cited only one truth—unbinding—and the context shows clearly that he was referring not to true statements about unbinding, but to the actual attainment of release [§49]. As §195 notes, this attainment lies beyond the limits of expression and description, which means that it lies beyond even the powers of "ultimate" description to describe. And reading §197 together with §198, it's obvious that this attainment lies beyond the range even of the word, "all." Thus the scholastic attempt to identify such terms as the aggregates as dealing in ultimate realities—while other, more personal terms, deal only in conventional truths—is clearly misguided. All language, in the face of the experience of unbinding, is a matter of convention.

The second reason for regarding the scholastic approach as misguided can be seen in all the evidence we have cited that the Buddha was not trying to build a systematic description of reality—or ultimate realities—as a whole. Thus to try to create one out of the raw materials of his words is a misapplication of his teaching—a form of inappropriate attention that distracts from the actual practice of his teachings, and one he would not condone.

Here it's useful to remember the Buddha's own analogy for his project as a teacher. From the first day of his teaching to the last, he stated that he was teaching a *path.* He started not with a first principle, but with a self-evident problem—stress—and then showed a path to its solution. Instead of trying to provide a total account of the world, he was simply showing the route to a particular goal where the initial problem is solved.

This is why the most fitting way to respond to his teaching is to employ appropriate attention, seeing his words in terms of how they apply to the immediate problems of stress and the way to its end. This in turn is why he defined appropriate attention as "This is stress"... "This is the origination of stress" ... "This is the cessation of stress" ... "This is the way leading to the cessation of stress," for he wanted his listeners to apply these categories to what is immediately present to awareness. Building on this analysis of the present, the next step is to practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma (SN 55:5), i.e., to develop the skills elicited by appropriate attention to the point of disenchantment with and dispassion for the aggregates of stress, leading to the solution of total release (SN 22:39-42).

Thus in order to benefit from the Buddha's teachings and to reach their goal, it's necessary to apply the framework of appropriate attention to what he says: to orient oneself to one's immediate surroundings in terms of his directions, and then to follow the path he recommends. That's all.

In a teaching of this sort, there is no need for a systematic description of the entire landscape or for a formal definition of all the terms. Definitions are necessary only when there might be some cause for confusion. To follow a road, one doesn't need to have "road" formally defined; but when one is told to turn left at the big tree, there can be many trees, and many gradations of big, so these terms have to be clearly defined or described—perhaps not in a formal way, but clearly enough to be of use. This may be one of the reasons why, when the Buddha was explaining his terms, he would phrase his questions not with a "what," but with a "which": not *what* is a tree, but *which* tree.

It's also important to note that if the instructions start out by saying to turn left, that doesn't mean that any later instructions to turn right are inconsistent with initial principles. The instructions have to follow the twists and turns of the path. Although there is a consistency to the Buddha's description of the various stages of the path, that consistency—as we noted in Chapter One—is teleological and pragmatic: teleological in that all the steps of the path are aimed at the primary goal of solving the problem of stress; pragmatic in that the steps actually work together in leading to that goal. This is why the Buddha insisted that the ideal Dhamma teacher teach step-by-step [§8], for the consistency of the Dhamma lies not in any adherence to formal definitions but in the coherent progression of its stages.

This explains why there are different levels of right view, for different stages of the path. This also apparently explains the seeming inconsistency between MN 18 and DN 21 on the relationship of *thinking* to the categories and perceptions of *objectification.* On one level of the path, thinking is necessary, and—because they aren't afflictive enough to qualify as objectification on this level—the categories and perceptions supplied by right view should be developed: thus the interpretation given in MN 18. However, on a more advanced level of the path—as when, according to MN 79, even skillful resolves are abandoned in the second jhāna—any categories of thinking would be experienced as afflictive, so

on that level even the categories of right view would count as objectification and so should be abandoned: thus the interpretation in DN 21. In this way, the sense of what counts as *objectification* would alter as one's sensitivities develop along the path and call for different strategies of approach. The fact that the Buddha gives no formal definition for the term allows him to use it with differing shades of meaning as differing levels of sensitivity require.

The same principle accounts for the lack of definitions in the more general area of developing of the mind for the sake of happiness. There are cases where formal definitions in this area might be counterproductive, in that one's sense of the mind and of happiness will naturally develop as one progresses along the path. If these concepts are tied down from the beginning by formal definitions, they can hinder one's developing sensitivities.

Thus, these are some of the implications of the Buddha's basic analogy comparing his teachings to directions for following a path to a destination: To begin with, the directions are to be used only for the sake of reaching the goal, and not for their implications for other purposes. To achieve this aim, they need only be clear and complete enough to enable the listener to follow them to the end of the path. Not everything needs to be defined, only the points necessary for keeping the listener from going astray. And although consistent definitions often help in clarity, there are cases where a definition useful at one stage of the path would be an obstacle at another. This is why the Buddha sometimes gives different explicit definitions of his terms, for use at different stages, and at other times gives no explicit definitions at all, allowing the person on the path to develop his or her own sensitivity, based on experience, of how the directions should be understood at any particular turn along the way.

A useful way of exploring some of the further implications of the path analogy is to compare the Buddha's use of the analogy with the same analogy as used by Socrates in Plato's dialogues.

In the *Meno,* Socrates states that a man who has been to Larissa knows the way to Larissa and so would be able to give correct instructions to someone else on how to get there. Yet a man who had never been to Larissa, but who had received correct and adequate information on how to get there—who, in Socrates' terms, didn't have *knowledge* but had a

correct *opinion*—could also give correct instructions to someone else on how to get there. The question is, then, with both knowledge and correct opinion serving as adequate guides to correct action, in what way is knowledge superior to correct opinion?

Socrates' answer is that correct opinion doesn't "stay put"—that it scampers away from the soul. But knowledge ties opinion down with clear definitions and reasons so that it stays put in a way that it doesn't change meaning or get forgotten. Thus for Socrates, there is no genuine knowledge without clear definitions of the essence of things: what they are in and of themselves. And for him the philosophic quest is a process of dialectic, where friends test one another's definitions to arrive at a clear intellectual vision of ultimate essences, in and of themselves. In cases where clear definitions are hard to arrive at, they can be approximated by proposing a hypothesis and then testing its implications against reality. If the hypothesis fails, one has still benefited from the dialectic by learning how to think more clearly and ultimately to propose better hypotheses. This process continues until one finds a definition totally adequate to its object, connected by adequate reasons to all other known objects of value in the world of experience. Socrates expressed doubt that this project could reach completion on the human plane, but was convinced that dialectic—with its definitions connected by reasons—prepared one for a direct intellectual vision of the Good after death.

Thus for Socrates, philosophical dialogue was aimed at more than just giving directions to a goal. Simple utility was not enough. He aimed instead at a form of knowledge built out of clear definitions connected through reason: an intellectual grasp of reality as a whole, and a goal understood in terms of its inherent essence.

In contrast, the Buddha used the path analogy in two ways—general and specific—to make points that differ sharply from Socrates'. (1) His general analogy, in which he called the fourth noble truth a "path," indicated that his attitude toward his teaching was strictly utilitarian. All his words were meant to be instrumental in attaining the goal. (2) And in a specific application of the path analogy [§96], he showed that although his teaching was utilitarian and his truths instrumental, they were universal nevertheless—not that they were logically derived from universal principles, but that they gave universal results.

These two uses of the path analogy can be explained as follows.

(1) In the general analogy, right view is the first step of the path. It is part of a course of action leading to total release. The fact that the Buddha places right view in this position—and not outside of the path—shows that, unlike Socrates, he is content to provide his listeners with a correct opinion on how to get to the goal, for if they adopt that opinion and keep it in mind, it will be enough to motivate them to apply right effort in following his instructions. Only when they have reached the goal will their correct opinion become confirmed through direct knowledge of the noble truth of unbinding [§49]. But this knowledge is to be attained not through dialectic, definitions, or logic, but by developing all eight factors of the noble path.

Even the words of the third noble truth, describing the cessation of stress, are simply a correct opinion about the goal. They neither stand outside that path nor are they a fully adequate representation of the goal. As MN 18 [§50] indicates, the attaining of the release of cessation ultimately requires abandoning all bases for the processes of thought.

> "Now, when there is no eye, when there are no forms, when there is no eye-consciousness, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of contact. When there is no delineation of contact, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of feeling. When there is no delineation of feeling, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of perception. When there is no delineation of perception, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of thinking. When there is no delineation of thinking, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of being assailed by the perceptions & categories of objectification.
> "When there is no ear....
> "When there is no nose....
> "When there is no tongue....
> "When there is no body....
> "When there is no intellect, when there are no ideas, when there is no intellect-consciousness, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of contact. When there is no delineation of contact, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of feeling. When there is no delineation of feeling, it is impossible that one will

delineate a delineation of perception. When there is no delineation of perception, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of thinking. When there is no delineation of thinking, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of being assailed by the perceptions & categories of objectification." — *MN 18*

Because no thought can occur in this attainment, processes of thought —such as language and logic—cannot encompass it. This is why even right views have to be abandoned in the attainment of the goal, a point conveyed in the Buddha's famous simile of the path as a raft:

"Suppose a man were traveling along a path. He would see a great expanse of water, with the near shore dubious & risky, the far shore safe & free from risk, but with neither a ferryboat nor a bridge going from this shore to the other. The thought would occur to him, 'Here is this great expanse of water, with the near shore dubious & risky, the far shore safe & free from risk, but with neither a ferryboat nor a bridge going from this shore to the far one. What if I were to gather grass, twigs, branches, & leaves and, having bound them together to make a raft, were to cross over to safety on the far shore in dependence on the raft, making an effort with my hands & feet?'
"Then the man, having gathered grass, twigs, branches, & leaves, having bound them together to make a raft, would cross over to safety on the far shore in dependence on the raft, making an effort with his hands & feet. Having crossed over to the far shore, he might think, 'How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I have crossed over to safety on the far shore. Why don't I, having hoisted it on my head or carrying on my back, go wherever I like?' What do you think, monks? Would the man, in doing that, be doing what should be done with the raft?"
"No, lord."
"And what should the man do in order to be doing what should be done with the raft? There is the case where the man, having crossed over to the far shore, would think, 'How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I have crossed over to safety on the far shore. Why don't I, having dragged it on dry land or sinking it in the

> water, go wherever I like?' In doing this, he would be doing what should be done with the raft. In the same way, monks, I have taught the Dhamma compared to a raft, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto. Understanding the Dhamma as taught compared to a raft, you should let go even of Dhammas, to say nothing of non-Dhammas." — *MN 22*

> "The great expanse of water stands for the fourfold flood: the flood of sensuality, the flood of becoming, the flood of views, & the flood of ignorance. The near shore, dubious & risky, stands for self-identity. The far shore, safe and free from risk, stands for unbinding. The raft stands for just this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. Making an effort with hands & feet stands for the arousing of persistence." — *SN 35:197*

Just as the raft cannot encompass the far shore, even right view—as a factor of the path—cannot encompass unbinding. Thus the Buddha's approach of providing correct opinions but not knowledge in the ultimate sense is dictated by the nature of the goal he taught. Direct knowledge of unbinding is not something that one person can give to another even in an approximate form, not even through language or logic. This is a point the Buddha repeatedly makes, for in his eyes language is too slippery, and logic too unreliable, to form an adequate guide to what is true. The phrase, a "teaching hammered out by logic" is, for him, a term of denigration [§184]; as he points out in MN 95:

> "Some things are well-reasoned and yet vain, empty, & false. Some things are not well-reasoned, and yet are genuine, factual, & unmistaken.... In these cases it isn't proper for a knowledgeable person who safeguards the truth to come to a definite conclusion, 'Only this is true; anything else is worthless.'" — *MN 95*

Thus the knowledge provided by logic is not necessarily knowledge at all, even on the level of everyday sensory experience. Now, the Buddha does observe the principle of consistency in presenting his teachings and in arguing against others. In fact, as we will see in Chapter Five, his primary strategy for disproving an opponent's position is to cross-question the opponent to the point where the opponent shows the

internal inconsistency of his own views. However, the simple fact that a teaching is consistent is no proof of its validity. For the Buddha, consistency is simply one way of instilling an attitude of respect and faith that the teaching makes enough sense to deserve a careful hearing and to be put into practice.

As for the limitations of language as a means of comprehending the goal, one of the Buddha's most striking statements of his position is in Sn 4:9 [§47]. There, Māgandiya, upset that the Buddha would not accept his gift of his daughter, asks the Buddha to describe the inner peace that could excel her. The Buddha, seeing Māgandiya's pride, answers with a complex grammatical pun:

> One doesn't speak of purity
> in connection with view,
> learning,
> knowledge,
> habit or practice.
> Nor is it found by a person
> through lack of view,
> of learning,
> of knowledge,
> of habit or practice.
> Letting these go, without grasping,
> at peace,
> independent,
> one wouldn't long for becoming.

The pun lies in the fact that the words in the instrumental case in the first sentence—translated above as *in connection with*—can also mean *in terms of* and *by means of*. Thus the first sentence of the Buddha's answer could mean either:

> One doesn't speak of purity
> in terms of
> view,
> learning,
> knowledge,
> habit or practice.

Or:

> One doesn't speak of purity
> by means of
> view,
> learning,
> knowledge,
> habit or practice.

The Buddha apparently means this sentence in the first sense, but Māgandiya interprets it in the second. This, however, conflicts with the Buddha's statement in the sentence that follows it. Thus Māgandiya complains that the Buddha's statement is nonsense. However, given that Māgandiya originally asked for a description of inner peace and not for directions on how to get there, he should have taken the statement in its first sense, which would have made a perfectly reasonable point: The goal is not to be defined in terms of view, learning, knowledge, habit or practice, even though it cannot be attained without these things. And the Buddha, by expressing his answer in this fashion, is not only *stating* that language is inadequate to define the goal; he is also *showing,* through his use of a pun, that language is too slippery to reliably express truths of this sort.

In addition to avoiding any attempt to define the unconditioned goal in terms of language, the Buddha also refrained from defining things in general in terms of their essences. Whereas Socrates wanted his definitions to arrive at essences—the "bee-ness," in one of his analogies, that makes every bee a bee—the Buddha provided definitions to clarify the categories of right view simply with an eye to their utility. In some cases, this meant giving formal definitions, but in others it meant defining nouns with verbs [§38], or giving a list of examples or gradations [§33; §90]—types of definition that Socrates abhorred because they didn't get at the essence of the thing defined. For the Buddha, however, these sorts of definitions were perfectly adequate because they provided enough functional knowledge for use on the path. Because his approach was utilitarian and pragmatic, he neither affirmed nor denied the existence of essences. They were simply irrelevant to his program. Thus the later Buddhist scholars who tried to use his teachings to affirm or

deny the existence of such essences were applying inappropriate attention to his instructions.

The Buddha's words to Māgandiya also show that any interpretation of the Buddha's categorical teachings as the viewpoint of the awakened mind are similarly misguided, for the ultimate inner peace is not to be defined in terms of view. Even Anāthapiṇḍika, a stream-winner—and thus one "consummate in view" [§143]—did not claim to know fully the views of the Buddha or his fully awakened disciples [§182]. SN 22:122 [§24] states that arahants should view the five aggregates in such a way that affirms dispassion, but this is not to say that this is the inherent view of the awakened mind. As the discourse says, it is simply a way for them to maintain a pleasant abiding along with mindfulness and alertness. AN 4:24 [§46], in explaining the way in which an awakened one is "Such" with regard to all knowledge, asserts that although the awakened one knows everything that can be "seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect," none of this knowledge is "established" in the awakened mind. Even the knowledge and vision of release is distinct from the release itself (AN 10:70). Thus any attempt to define awakening in terms of the Buddha's categorical answers—or to clone awakening by forcing them on the mind as the content of the awakened mindset—is misguided and counterproductive, for it mistakes the path for the goal.

Another example of inappropriate attention applied to the Buddha's categorical answers is the attempt of later Buddhist commentators to formulate a terminology of ultimate realities based on the Buddha's teachings. A simple illustration will show that, in doing so, they were misreading the Buddha's intentions.

In the first noble truth, the Buddha analyzed stress in terms of the five clinging-aggregates: the form clinging-aggregate, feeling clinging-aggregate, perception clinging-aggregate, fabrications clinging-aggregate, and consciousness clinging-aggregate. Given that these five categories are found in the first noble truth, the duty with regard to them is to comprehend them so as to give rise to dispassion. One way of doing this is to see that, because they are inconstant, they are stressful; because they are stressful, they do not deserve to be viewed as "me," "myself," or "what

I am." The purpose of this contemplation is to induce the dispassion that leads to release.

Later commentators, however, took these aggregates to be the Buddha's definition of what, in ultimate terms, a person *is*. This was a mistake on two counts. To begin with, the Buddha never defines in ultimate terms what a person is—to define oneself, remember, is to limit oneself [§200]—and he expressly states that one should not regard these clinging-aggregates as "what I am" [§140]. Second, in his definition of right view in SN 12:15 [§172], he describes a stage in the practice where, after one has watched the arising and passing away of the world—i.e., the factors of dependent co-arising, which include the aggregates—one drops all reference to these factors, along with ideas of "existence" and "non-existence," and views whatever arises simply as stress arising, whatever passes away simply as stress passing away. Here, "whatever arises and passes away" would cover not only the first noble truth, but the second and fourth as well. Thus, at this advanced stage of right view, concepts of "four noble truths" get dropped along with "aggregates." What this means is that "aggregates" and "noble truths" function as concepts useful at a certain point in the path, but are then dropped as one comes closer to awakening. They are not meant to be viewed as "ultimate realities" in and of themselves.

Thus the Buddha's general use of the path analogy indicates that the views he taught as part of the path are not "knowledge" in Socrates' sense of the term. At the same time, they are not an expression of reality as viewed from an awakened perspective. Instead of being ultimate truths, they are instrumental truths: correct opinions that serve a function when they are appropriate, to be abandoned when they have served that function, and to be replaced by other truths more appropriate to later stages of the path. Ultimately all views are abandoned when unbinding is touched. Although the Buddha in Sn 4:9, above, seems to deny that this touching can be described as "knowledge" *(ñāṇa)*—apparently meaning knowledge *about* something—in other instances he uses another word for knowing—*aññā*—to indicate that it is a direct knowing of another sort entirely: a "seeing with the body" (Dhp 259) on a dimension apart from the ordinary dimensions of the six senses [§205]. Knowledge is required to achieve this knowing, and knowledge follows on it [§79, §163], but the

knowing and the knowledge are two different things. Knowing is the goal; knowledge, merely instrumental.

(2) In MN 107, however, the Buddha uses the path analogy in a more specific way to convey a different point: that people who do not follow his instructions go astray from the goal. The implication of this version of the analogy is that there is one goal and one right path to it—another distinctive feature of the Buddha's pragmatism. We have already noted that his very high standards for "what works"—i.e., what works in gaining total release—helped him to avoid the complacency that marks some of the lazier forms of pragmatism; he also realized that what worked for him didn't work *only* for him. "What works" is not simply a matter of personal preference. Even though the truths of right view are instrumental rather than ultimate, they are still categorical: true for all.

> "What do you think, brahman? Are you skilled in the road leading to Rājagaha?"
> "Yes, sir, I am skilled in the road leading to Rājagaha."
> "Now, what do you think? There's the case where a man would come, wanting to go to Rājagaha. Having come to you, he would say, 'I want to go to Rājagaha. Tell me the way to Rājagaha.' You would tell him, 'Well, my good man, this road goes to Rājagaha. Go along it for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a village named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a town named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see Rājagaha with its lovely parks, lovely forests, lovely meadows, lovely ponds.' [But] having been thus exhorted & instructed by you, he would take a wrong road and arrive out west.
> "Then a second man would come, wanting to go to Rājagaha. Having come to you, he would say, 'I want to go to Rājagaha. Tell me the way to Rājagaha.' You would tell him, 'Well, my good man, this road goes to Rājagaha. Go along it for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a village named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a town named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see Rājagaha with its lovely parks, lovely forests, lovely meadows, lovely ponds. Having been thus exhorted & instructed by

you, he would arrive safely at Rājagaha. Now, what is the reason, what is the cause—when Rājagaha is there, and the road leading to Rājagaha is there, and you are there as the guide—that when they are thus exhorted & instructed by you, the first man takes the wrong road and arrives out west, while the second man arrives safely at Rājagaha?"
"What can I do about that, Master Gotama? I'm [just] the one who shows the way."
"In the same way, brahman—when unbinding is there, and the path leading to unbinding is there, and I am there as the guide—when my disciples are thus exhorted & instructed by me, some attain unbinding, the absolute conclusion, and some don't. What can I do about that, brahman? The Tathāgata is [just] the one who shows the way." — *MN 107*

In showing the way, the Buddha was not simply offering a personal preference about how to practice. He was pointing out the truth. If his listeners did not follow his instructions, they would actually get lost. As they listened to his teachings, right view might have the status of opinion in their minds, but that was not its status in his, for he based his teachings on his own confirmed knowledge of what does and doesn't work in attaining release. The fact that he didn't force his listeners to adopt right view doesn't mean that he endorsed other views. As he stated in DN 16 [§151], there are no awakened persons in a teaching that doesn't contain the noble eightfold path; in SN 48:53, he stated that one of the realizations of stream-entry—the first level of awakening—is this:

"Furthermore, the monk who is a learner [one who has attained any of the first three levels of awakening] reflects, 'Is there outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] any contemplative or brahman who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One?' And he discerns, 'No, there is no contemplative or brahman outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One.' This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that 'I am a learner.'" — *SN 48:53*

In Sn 4:12 [§48] the Buddha makes a similar point, that the truth is one. Other truths that deviate from right view are simply the personal opinions of those who state them, but the activity of actually attaining release confirms that they have no status as truths. In MN 126 [§67] he illustrates this point with similes, stating that anyone who tries to attain release with views other than right view is like a person who tries to churn butter from water, to squeeze sesame oil from gravel, or to get milk from a cow by twisting its horn.

So even though the Buddha could not provide his listeners with direct knowledge of unbinding, he could provide them with reliable guidance on how to get there. And given the nature of his guidance—as instrumental but categorical truths—the question is not how a comprehensive view of reality can be constructed from his categorical statements, or how his statements can be made to fit one's own preferences or preconceived notions, but how to put aside one's preferences and apply those categorical statements in pursuit of the path. Because the path has many stages, with many levels of right view, one of the functions of appropriate attention after listening to the Buddha's words is to view his categorical answers as an array of tools, and to ask oneself which tool is suitable for one's practice at any given moment.

In the Buddha's time, there were cases where his listeners did not have to ask themselves this question, for the Buddha personally taught them a level of Dhamma suited to their immediate needs. This is especially clear in the cases where his listeners gained stream-entry or total release either while listening to his categorical answers, or—taking them away to practice—shortly thereafter. It's also shown in the many instances where his listeners, on hearing his categorical answers, took refuge in the Triple Gem.

But even during his lifetime there were those who had to sift through his teachings to find the ones appropriate for them. And this is our position at present. To do this skillfully requires a clear awareness of oneself—an awareness that can be gained only through the strategy of cross-questioning one's attitudes and states of mind. This may be one of the reasons why the Buddha, in addition to teaching his listeners how to ask questions deserving categorical answers, also encouraged them in the strategy of cross-questioning so that they would use his categorical

answers in an appropriate way. This is a topic to which we will return in Chapters Five and Six, but here we can simply note that this strategy of cross-questioning oneself is what takes the Buddha's categorical answers —which were designed to be true and beneficial for all times, and which are now always readily available—and makes them timely in a way specific to now.

READINGS

CATEGORICAL TEACHINGS

§ 20. When this was said, one of the wanderers said to Vajjiya Māhita the householder, "Now wait a minute, householder. This contemplative Gotama whom you praise is a nihilist, one who doesn't declare anything."

"I tell you, venerable sirs, that the Blessed One righteously declares that 'This is skillful.' He declares that 'This is unskillful.' Declaring that 'This is skillful' and 'This is unskillful,' he is one who has declared [a teaching]. He is not a nihilist, one who doesn't declare anything."

When this was said, the wanderers fell silent, abashed, sitting with their shoulders drooping, their heads down, brooding, at a loss for words. Vajjiya Māhita the householder, perceiving that the wanderers were silent, abashed... at a loss for words, got up & went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One the entirety of his discussion with the wanderers.

[The Blessed One said,] "Well done, householder. Well done. That is how you should periodically & righteously refute those foolish men."
— *AN 10:94 [See also §26; §80]*

§ 21. As Ven. Ānanda was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "I say categorically, Ānanda, that bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct should not be done."

"Given that the Blessed One has declared, lord, that bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct should not be done, what drawbacks can one expect when doing what should not be done?"

"... One can fault oneself; observant people, on close examination, criticize one; one's bad reputation gets spread about; one dies confused; and—with the breakup of the body, after death—one reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell....

"I say categorically, Ānanda, that good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct should be done."

"Given that the Blessed One has declared, lord, that good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct should be done, what rewards can one expect when doing what should be done?"

"... One doesn't fault oneself; observant people, on close examination, praise one; one's good reputation gets spread about; one dies unconfused; and—with the breakup of the body, after death—one reappears in a good destination, in a heavenly world." — *AN 2:18*

§ 22. Then two or three days later, Citta the elephant trainer's son and Poṭṭhapāda the wanderer went to the Blessed One. On their arrival, Citta bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side, while Poṭṭhapāda the wanderer greeted the Blessed One courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "The other day, not long after the Blessed One had left, the wanderers, with sneering words, jeered at me from all sides: 'So, whatever Gotama the contemplative says, Sir Poṭṭhapāda rejoices in his every word: "So it is, Blessed One. So it is, O One Well-gone." But we don't understand Gotama the contemplative as having taught any categorical teaching that *"The cosmos is eternal,"* or *"The cosmos is not eternal,"* or *"The cosmos is finite,"* or *"The cosmos is infinite,"* or *"The soul is the same thing as the body,"* or *"The soul is one thing and the body another,"* or *"After death a Tathāgata exists,"* or *"After death a Tathāgata does not exist,"* or *"After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,"* or *"After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist."'*

"When this was said, I replied to the wanderers, 'I too don't understand Gotama the contemplative as having taught any categorical teaching that *"The cosmos is eternal,"* or *"The cosmos is not eternal,"*... or *"After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist."* But the contemplative Gotama describes a genuine, authentic, and accurate practice, grounded in the Dhamma and consonant with the Dhamma.

And when a genuine, authentic, & accurate practice, grounded in the Dhamma and consonant with the Dhamma is being explained, why shouldn't a knowledgeable person such as myself rejoice in the well-spokenness of Gotama the contemplative's well-spoken words?'"

[The Buddha:] "Poṭṭhapāda, all those wanderers are blind and have no eyes. You alone among them have eyes. I have taught and declared some teachings to be categorical, and some teachings to be non-categorical. And which are the teachings that I have taught and declared to be non-categorical? *'The cosmos is eternal'* I have taught and declared to be a non-categorical teaching. *'The cosmos is not eternal'... 'The cosmos is finite'... 'The cosmos is infinite'... 'The soul & the body are the same'... 'The soul is one thing and the body another'... 'After death a Tathāgata exists'... 'After death a Tathāgata does not exist'... 'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist'... 'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist'* I have taught and declared to be a non-categorical teaching. And why have I taught and declared these teachings to be non-categorical? Because they are not conducive to the goal, are not conducive to the Dhamma, are not basic to the holy life. They don't lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. That's why I have taught and declared them to be non-categorical.

"And which have I taught and declared to be categorical teachings? *'This is stress'* I have taught and declared to be a categorical teaching. *'This is the origination of stress'... 'This is the cessation of stress'... 'This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress'* I have taught and declared to be a categorical teaching. And why have I taught and declared these teachings to be categorical? Because they are conducive to the goal, conducive to the Dhamma, and basic to the holy life. They lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. That's why I have taught and declared them to be categorical." — *DN 9*

APPROPRIATE ATTENTION

§ 23. "There are qualities that act as a foothold for uncertainty. To foster inappropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of

unarisen uncertainty, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen....

"There are qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen investigation of qualities as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of investigation of qualities as a factor for awakening once it has arisen...

"To foster appropriate attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen uncertainty, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen....

"Not fostering attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen investigation of qualities as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening once it has arisen." — *SN 46:51*

§ 24. [Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "Sāriputta my friend, which things should a virtuous monk attend to in an appropriate way?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "A virtuous monk, Koṭṭhita my friend, should attend in an appropriate way to the five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. Which five? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate. A virtuous monk should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a virtuous monk, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of stream-entry."

[Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "Then which things should a monk who has attained stream-entry attend to in an appropriate way?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "A monk who has attained stream-entry should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained stream-entry, attending in an appropriate way to these

five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of once-returning."

[Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "Then which things should a monk who has attained once-returning attend to in an appropriate way?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "A monk who has attained once-returning should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained once-returning, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of non-returning."

[Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "Then which things should a monk who has attained non-returning attend to in an appropriate way?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "A monk who has attained non-returning should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained non-returning, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of arahantship."

[Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "Then which things should an arahant attend to in an appropriate way?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "An arahant should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. Although, for an arahant, there is nothing further to do, and nothing to add to what has been done, still these things—when developed & pursued—lead both to a pleasant abiding in the here & now, and to mindfulness & alertness." — *SN 22:122*

§ 25. "There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person... doesn't discern which ideas are fit for attention, or which ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he doesn't attend to ideas fit for attention, and attends [instead] to ideas unfit for attention. And which are the ideas unfit for attention that he attends to? Whichever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen fermentation of sensuality

arises, and the arisen fermentation of sensuality increases; the unarisen fermentation of becoming... the unarisen fermentation of ignorance arises, and the arisen fermentation of ignorance increases.... This is how he attends inappropriately: 'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?' Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?'

"As he attends inappropriately in this way, one of six kinds of view arises in him: The view *I have a self* arises in him as true & established, or the view *I have no self*[1] ... or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive self*... or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive not-self*... or the view *It is precisely by means of not-self that I perceive self*[2] arises in him as true & established, or else he has a view like this: *This very self of mine—the knower that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & bad actions—is the self of mine that is constant, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will endure as long as eternity.* This is called a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is not freed, I tell you, from stress.

"The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones... discerns which ideas are fit for attention, and which ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he doesn't attend to ideas unfit for attention, and attends [instead] to ideas fit for attention.... And which are the ideas fit for attention that he attends to? Whichever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen fermentation of sensuality doesn't arise, and the arisen fermentation of sensuality is abandoned; the unarisen fermentation of becoming... the unarisen fermentation of ignorance doesn't arise, and the arisen fermentation of ignorance is abandoned.... He attends appropriately, *This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.* As he

attends appropriately in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: self-identity-view, uncertainty, and grasping at habits & practices."— *MN 2*

NOTES

1. The Pali for these first two views is *Atthi me attā* and *N'atthi me attā*. Some translators have rendered these sentences as, "Self exists for me," and, "No self exists for me." These renderings, however, are unidiomatic and would not naturally come from trying to answer the questions, "Am I?" and "Am I not?" Thus it seems preferable to render them in line with the fact that Pali uses the grammatical construction of the verb "to be" *(atthi)* plus the genitive of I/me/mine *(me)* to say, "I have."

2. Examples of these views can be found in Western philosophy. For example, the view that *self can be perceived by means of self* can be illustrated with the views of Leibniz, that the self has an inherent knowledge of itself as part of its nature; or of Fichte, that the self has an immediate intuition of itself in the freedom of its actions. The view that *self is perceived by means of not-self* can be illustrated by Kant's view that the self cannot be directly perceived but can be known indirectly as a formal necessity for the coherence of experience. The view that *not-self is perceived by means of self* can be illustrated by Leibniz's view that all the self's ideas of an external world are caused, not by an external world, but by the self's own activities.

SKILLFUL & UNSKILLFUL ACTIONS

§ 26. "Abandon what is unskillful, monks. It is possible to abandon what is unskillful. If it were not possible to abandon what is unskillful, I would not say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' But because it is possible to abandon what is unskillful, I say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' If this abandoning of what is unskillful were conducive to harm & pain, I would not say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' But because this abandoning of what is unskillful is conducive to benefit & happiness, I say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.'

"Develop what is skillful, monks. It is possible to develop what is skillful. If it were not possible to develop what is skillful, I would not say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' But because it is possible to develop what is skillful, I say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' If this development of what is skillful were conducive to harm & pain, I would not say to you, 'Develop

what is skillful.' But because this development of what is skillful is conducive to benefit & happiness, I say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.'" — *AN 2:19*

§ 27. "When a disciple of the noble ones discerns what is unskillful, discerns the root of what is unskillful, discerns what is skillful, and discerns the root of what is skillful, it is to that extent that he is a person of right view, one whose view is made straight, who is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma, and who has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And which is unskillful? Taking life is unskillful, taking what is not given... sexual misconduct... lying... abusive speech... divisive tale-bearing[1]... idle chatter is unskillful. Covetousness... ill will... wrong views are unskillful. These things are called unskillful.

"And which are the roots of what is unskillful? Greed is a root of what is unskillful, aversion is a root of what is unskillful, delusion is a root of what is unskillful. These are called the roots of what is unskillful.

"And which is skillful? Abstaining from taking life is skillful, abstaining from taking what is not given... from sexual misconduct... from lying... from abusive speech... from divisive tale-bearing... abstaining from idle chatter is skillful. Lack of covetousness... lack of ill will... right views are skillful. These things are called skillful.

"And which are the roots of what is skillful? Lack of greed is a root of what is skillful, lack of aversion... lack of delusion is a root of what is skillful. These are called the roots of what is skillful." — *MN 9*

NOTE: 1. This term is sometimes wrongly translated as "slander." However, slander usually entails falsehood, whereas examples given both in the discourses and the Vinaya show that this term denotes true statements meant to discredit one person in the eyes of another.

§ 28. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Pāvā in Cunda the silversmith's mango grove. Then Cunda the silversmith went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Cunda, of whose rites of purification do you approve?"

“The brahmans of the Western lands, lord—those who carry water pots, wear garlands of water plants, worship fire, & purify with water: they have declared purification rites of which I approve.”

“And which kind of purification rites have they declared, those brahmans of the Western lands who carry water pots, wear garlands of water plants, worship fire, & purify with water?”

“There is the case where the brahmans of the Western lands… get their disciples to undertake their practice thus: ‘Come, now, my good man: Get up at the proper time from your bed and touch the earth. If you don’t touch the earth, touch wet cow dung. If you don’t touch wet cow dung, touch green grass. If you don’t touch green grass, worship a fire. If you don’t worship a fire, pay homage to the sun with clasped hands. If you don’t pay homage to the sun with clasped hands, go down into the water three times by nightfall.’ These are the purification rites declared by the brahmans of the Western lands… of which I approve.”

“Cunda, the purification rites declared by the brahmans of the Western lands… are one thing; the purification in the Vinaya of the noble ones is something else entirely.”

“But how is there purification in the Vinaya of the noble ones, venerable sir? It would be good if the Blessed One would teach me how there is purification in the Vinaya of the noble ones.”

“Very well then, Cunda, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” Cunda the silversmith responded.

The Blessed One said, “There are three ways in which one is made impure by bodily action, four ways in which one is made impure by verbal action, and three ways in which one is made impure by mental action.

UNSKILLFUL BODILY ACTION

“And how is one made impure in three ways by bodily action? There is the case where a certain person takes life, is brutal, bloody-handed, devoted to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings. He takes what is not given. He takes, in the manner of a thief, things in a village or a wilderness that belong to others and have not been given by them. He engages in sexual misconduct. He gets sexually involved with those who are protected by their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters,

their relatives, or their Dhamma; those with husbands, those who entail punishments, or even those crowned with flowers by another man. This is how one is made impure in three ways by bodily action.

UNSKILLFUL VERBAL ACTION

"And how is one made impure in four ways by verbal action? There is the case where a certain person engages in false speech. When he has been called to a town meeting, a group meeting, a gathering of his relatives, his guild, or of the royalty [i.e., a royal court proceeding], if he is asked as a witness, 'Come & tell, good man, what you know': If he doesn't know, he says, 'I know.' If he does know, he says, 'I don't know.' If he hasn't seen, he says, 'I have seen.' If he has seen, he says, 'I haven't seen.' Thus he consciously tells lies for his own sake, for the sake of another, or for the sake of a certain reward. He engages in divisive speech. What he has heard here he tells there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he tells here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus breaking apart those who are united and stirring up strife between those who have broken apart, he loves factionalism, delights in factionalism, enjoys factionalism, speaks things that create factionalism. He engages in abusive speech. He speaks words that are harsh, cutting, bitter to others, abusive of others, provoking anger and destroying concentration. He engages in idle chatter. He speaks out of season, speaks what isn't factual, what isn't in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, & the Vinaya, words that are not worth treasuring. This is how one is made impure in four ways by verbal action.

UNSKILLFUL MENTAL ACTION

"And how is one made impure in three ways by mental action? There is the case where a certain person is covetous. He covets the belongings of others, thinking, 'O, that what belongs to others would be mine!' He bears ill will, corrupt in the resolves of his heart: 'May these beings be killed or cut apart or crushed or destroyed, or may they not exist at all!' He has wrong view, is warped in the way he sees things: 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no contemplatives or brahmans who,

faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is how one is made impure in three ways by mental action.

"These, Cunda, are the ten courses of unskillful action. When a person is endowed with these ten courses of unskillful action, then even if he gets up at the proper time from his bed and touches the earth, he is still impure. If he doesn't touch the earth, he is still impure. If he touches wet cow dung, he is still impure. If he doesn't touch wet cow dung, he is still impure. If he touches green grass... If he doesn't touch green grass... If he worships a fire... If he doesn't worship a fire... If he pays homage to the sun with clasped hands... If he doesn't pay homage to the sun with clasped hands... If he goes down into the water three times by nightfall... If he doesn't go down into the water three times by nightfall, he is still impure. Why is that? Because these ten courses of unskillful action are impure and cause impurity. Furthermore, as a result of being endowed with these ten courses of unskillful action, [rebirth in] hell is declared, [rebirth in] an animal womb is declared, [rebirth in] the realm of hungry shades is declared—that or any other bad destination.

"Now, Cunda, there are three ways in which one is made pure by bodily action, four ways in which one is made pure by verbal action, and three ways in which one is made pure by mental action.

SKILLFUL BODILY ACTION

"And how is one made pure in three ways by bodily action? There is the case where a certain person, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He does not take, in the manner of a thief, things in a village or a wilderness that belong to others and have not been given by them. Abandoning sexual misconduct, he abstains from sexual misconduct. He does not get sexually involved with those who are protected by their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their relatives, or their Dhamma; those with husbands, those who entail punishments, or even those crowned with flowers by another man. This is how one is made pure in three ways by bodily action.

SKILLFUL VERBAL ACTION

"And how is one made pure in four ways by verbal action? There is the case where a certain person, abandoning false speech, abstains from false speech. When he has been called to a town meeting, a group meeting, a gathering of his relatives, his guild, or of the royalty, if he is asked as a witness, 'Come & tell, good man, what you know': If he doesn't know, he says, 'I don't know.' If he does know, he says, 'I know.' If he hasn't seen, he says, 'I haven't seen.' If he has seen, he says, 'I have seen.' Thus he doesn't consciously tell a lie for his own sake, for the sake of another, or for the sake of any reward. Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world. Abandoning divisive speech, he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord. Abandoning abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing & pleasing to people at large. Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, & the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal. This is how one is made pure in four ways by verbal action.

SKILLFUL MENTAL ACTION

"And how is one made pure in three ways by mental action? There is the case where a certain person is not covetous. He does not covet the belongings of others, thinking, 'O, that what belongs to others would be mine!' He bears no ill will and is not corrupt in the resolves of his heart. [He thinks,] 'May these beings be free from animosity, free from oppression, free from trouble, and may they look after themselves with ease!' He has right view and is not warped in the way he sees things: 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world.

There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are contemplatives & brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is how one is made pure in three ways by mental action.

"These, Cunda, are the ten courses of skillful action. When a person is endowed with these ten courses of skillful action, then even if he gets up at the proper time from his bed and touches the earth, he is still pure. If he doesn't touch the earth, he is still pure. If he touches wet cow dung, he is still pure. If he doesn't touch wet cow dung, he is still pure. If he touches green grass... If he doesn't touch green grass... If he worships a fire... If he doesn't worship a fire... If he pays homage to the sun with clasped hands... If he doesn't pay homage to the sun with clasped hands... If he goes down into the water three times by nightfall... If he doesn't go down into the water three times by nightfall, he is still pure. Why is that? Because these ten courses of skillful action are pure and cause purity. Furthermore, as a result of being endowed with these ten courses of skillful action, [rebirth among] the devas is declared, [rebirth among] human beings is declared—that or any other good destination."

When this was said, Cunda the silversmith said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, venerable sir! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life." — *AN 10:165*

§ 29. "Now which are unskillful habits? Unskillful bodily actions, unskillful verbal actions, evil means of livelihood. These are called unskillful habits. Which is the cause of unskillful habits? Their cause is stated, and they are said to be mind-caused. Which mind?—for the mind has many modes & permutations. Any mind with passion, aversion, or delusion: That is the cause of unskillful habits. Now where do unskillful habits cease without trace? Their cessation has been stated: There is the case where a monk abandons wrong bodily conduct & develops right

bodily conduct, abandons wrong verbal conduct & develops right verbal conduct, abandons wrong livelihood & maintains his life with right livelihood. This is where unskillful habits cease without trace. And which sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful habits? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful habits.

"And which are skillful habits? Skillful bodily actions, skillful verbal actions, purity of livelihood. These are called skillful habits. Which is the cause of skillful habits? Their cause too has been stated, and they are said to be mind-caused. Which mind?—for the mind has many modes & permutations. Any mind without passion, without aversion, without delusion: That is the cause of skillful habits. Now where do skillful habits cease without trace? Their cessation too has been stated: There is the case where a monk is virtuous, but not fashioned of virtue. He discerns, as it actually is, the release of awareness & release of discernment where his skillful habits cease without trace. And which sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful habits? There is the case where a monk generates desire... for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the... development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful habits.

"And which are unskillful resolves? Being resolved on sensuality, on ill will, on harmfulness. These are called unskillful resolves. Which is the cause of unskillful resolves? Their cause too has been stated, and they are said to be perception-caused. Which perception?—for perception has many modes & permutations. Any sensuality-perception, ill will-perception, or harmfulness-perception: That is the cause of unskillful resolves. Now where do unskillful resolves cease without trace? Their

cessation too has been stated: There is the case where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is where unskillful resolves cease without trace. And which sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves? There is the case where a monk generates desire... for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the... development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves.

"And which are skillful resolves? Being resolved on renunciation (freedom from sensuality), on non-ill will, on harmlessness. These are called skillful resolves. Which is the cause of skillful resolves? Their cause too has been stated, and they are said to be perception-caused. Which perception?—for perception has many modes & permutations. Any renunciation-perception, non-ill will-perception, or harmlessness-perception: That is the cause of skillful resolves. Now where do skillful resolves cease without trace? Their cessation too has been stated: There is the case where a monk, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. This is where skillful resolves cease without trace. And which sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves? There is the case where a monk generates desire...for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen...for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen...for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the... development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves." — *MN 78*

§ 30. "Now, what is old kamma? The eye is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. The ear... The nose... The tongue... The body... The intellect is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. This is called old kamma.

"And what is new kamma? Whatever kamma one does now with the body, with speech, or with the intellect: This is called new kamma."
— *SN 35:145*

§ 31. "Monks, these four types of kamma have been directly known, verified, & announced by me. Which four? There is kamma that is dark with dark result. There is kamma that is bright with bright result. There is kamma that is dark & bright with dark & bright result. There is kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of kamma.

"And which kamma is dark with dark result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates an injurious bodily fabrication, fabricates an injurious verbal fabrication, fabricates an injurious mental fabrication. Having fabricated an injurious bodily fabrication, having fabricated an injurious verbal fabrication, having fabricated an injurious mental fabrication, he rearises in an injurious world. On rearising in an injurious world, he is there touched by injurious contacts. Touched by injurious contacts, he experiences feelings that are exclusively painful, like those of the beings in hell. This is called kamma that is dark with dark result.

"And which kamma is bright with bright result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates a non-injurious bodily fabrication... a non-injurious verbal fabrication .. a non-injurious mental fabrication.... He rearises in a non-injurious world.... There he is touched by non-injurious contacts.... He experiences feelings that are exclusively pleasant, like those of the Beautiful Black Devas. This is called kamma that is bright with bright result.

"And which kamma is dark & bright with dark & bright result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates a bodily fabrication that is injurious & non-injurious... a verbal fabrication that is injurious & non-injurious... a mental fabrication that is injurious & non-injurious.... He rearises in an injurious & non-injurious world.... There he is touched by injurious & non-injurious contacts.... He experiences injurious & non-injurious feelings, pleasure mingled with pain, like those of human beings, some devas, and some beings in the lower realms. This is called kamma that is dark & bright with dark & bright result.

“And which kamma is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of kamma? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is called kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of kamma.

“These, monks, are the four types of kamma directly known, verified, & announced by me.” — *AN 4:237*

§ 32. “‘Kamma should be known. The cause by which kamma comes into play should be known. The diversity in kamma should be known. The result of kamma should be known. The cessation of kamma should be known. The path of practice for the cessation of kamma should be known.’ Thus it has been said. In reference to what was it said?

“Intention, I tell you, is kamma. Intending, one does kamma by way of body, speech, & intellect.

“And which is the cause by which kamma comes into play? Contact is the cause by which kamma comes into play.

“And which is the diversity in kamma? There is kamma to be experienced in hell, kamma to be experienced in the realm of common animals, kamma to be experienced in the realm of the hungry shades, kamma to be experienced in the human world, kamma to be experienced in the world of the devas. This is called the diversity in kamma.

“And which is the result of kamma? The result of kamma is of three sorts, I tell you: that which arises right here & now, that which arises later [in this lifetime], and that which arises following that. This is called the result of kamma.

“And which is the cessation of kamma? From the cessation of contact is the cessation of kamma; and precisely this noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—is the way leading to the cessation of kamma.

“Now when a disciple of the noble ones discerns kamma in this way, the cause by which kamma comes into play in this way, the diversity of kamma in this way, the result of kamma in this way, the cessation of kamma in this way, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of

kamma in this way, then he discerns this penetrative holy life as the cessation of kamma." — *AN 6:63*

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

§ 33. "[1] Now which is the noble truth of stress? Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful; separation from the loved is stressful; not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

"And which is *birth?* Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of [sense] spheres of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

"And which is aging? Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging.

"And which is death? Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.

"And which is sorrow? Whatever sorrow, sorrowing, sadness, inward sorrow, inward sadness of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called sorrow.

"And which is lamentation? Whatever crying, grieving, lamenting, weeping, wailing, lamentation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called lamentation.

"And which is pain? Whatever is experienced as bodily pain, bodily discomfort, pain or discomfort born of bodily contact, that is called pain.

"And which is distress? Whatever is experienced as mental pain, mental discomfort, pain or discomfort born of mental contact, that is called distress.

"And which is despair? Whatever despair, despondency, desperation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called despair.

"And which is the stress of association with the unbeloved? There is the case where undesirable, unpleasing, unattractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations occur to one; or one has connection, contact, relationship, interaction with those who wish one ill, who wish for one's harm, who wish for one's discomfort, who wish one no security from the yoke. This is called the stress of association with the unbeloved.

"And which is the stress of separation from the loved? There is the case where desirable, pleasing, attractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations do not occur to one; or one has no connection, no contact, no relationship, no interaction with those who wish one well, who wish for one's benefit, who wish for one's comfort, who wish one security from the yoke, nor with one's mother, father, brother, sister, friends, companions, or relatives. This is called the stress of separation from the loved.

"And which is the stress of not getting what is wanted? In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted. In beings subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and may aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted.

"And which are the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: These are called the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful.

"This is called the noble truth of stress.

"[2] And which is the noble truth of the origination of stress? The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., sensuality-craving, becoming-craving, and non-becoming-craving.

"And where does this craving, when arising, arise? And where, when dwelling, does it dwell? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the

world: That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

"And which is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

"The ear.... The nose.... The tongue.... The body.... The intellect....

"Forms.... Sounds.... Aromas.... Tastes.... Tactile sensations.... Ideas....

"Eye-consciousness.... Ear-consciousness.... Nose-consciousness.... Tongue-consciousness.... Body-consciousness.... Intellect-consciousness....

"Eye-contact.... Ear-contact.... Nose-contact.... Tongue-contact.... Body-contact.... Intellect-contact....

"Feeling born of eye-contact.... Feeling born of ear-contact.... Feeling born of nose-contact.... Feeling born of tongue-contact.... Feeling born of body-contact.... Feeling born of intellect-contact....

"Perception of forms.... Perception of sounds.... Perception of aromas.... Perception of tastes.... Perception of tactile sensations.... Perception of ideas....

"Intention for forms.... Intention for sounds.... Intention for aromas.... Intention for tastes.... Intention for tactile sensations.... Intention for ideas....

"Craving for forms.... Craving for sounds.... Craving for aromas.... Craving for tastes.... Craving for tactile sensations.... Craving for ideas....

"Thought directed at forms.... Thought directed at sounds.... Thought directed at aromas.... Thought directed at tastes.... Thought directed at tactile sensations.... Thought directed at ideas....

"Evaluation of forms.... Evaluation of sounds.... Evaluation of aromas.... Evaluation of tastes.... Evaluation of tactile sensations.... Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

"This is called the noble truth of the origination of stress.

"[3] And which is the noble truth of the cessation of stress? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

“And where, when being abandoned, is this craving abandoned? And where, when ceasing, does it cease? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the world: That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

“And which is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

“The ear.... The nose.... The tongue.... The body.... The intellect....

“Forms.... Sounds.... Aromas.... Tastes.... Tactile sensations.... Ideas....

“Eye-consciousness.... Ear-consciousness.... Nose-consciousness.... Tongue-consciousness.... Body-consciousness.... Intellect-consciousness....

“Eye-contact.... Ear-contact.... Nose-contact.... Tongue-contact.... Body-contact.... Intellect-contact....

“Feeling born of eye-contact.... Feeling born of ear-contact.... Feeling born of nose-contact.... Feeling born of tongue-contact.... Feeling born of body-contact.... Feeling born of intellect-contact....

“Perception of forms.... Perception of sounds.... Perception of aromas.... Perception of tastes.... Perception of tactile sensations.... Perception of ideas....

“Intention for forms.... Intention for sounds.... Intention for aromas.... Intention for tastes.... Intention for tactile sensations.... Intention for ideas....

“Craving for forms.... Craving for sounds.... Craving for aromas.... Craving for tastes.... Craving for tactile sensations.... Craving for ideas....

“Thought directed at forms.... Thought directed at sounds.... Thought directed at aromas.... Thought directed at tastes.... Thought directed at tactile sensations.... Thought directed at ideas....

“Evaluation of forms.... Evaluation of sounds.... Evaluation of aromas.... Evaluation of tastes.... Evaluation of tactile sensations.... Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

“This is called the noble truth of the cessation of stress.

"[4] And which is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress? Precisely this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"And which is right view? Knowledge with reference to stress, knowledge with reference to the origination of stress, knowledge with reference to the cessation of stress, knowledge with reference to the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view.

And which is right resolve? Resolve for renunciation, for freedom from ill will, for harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

"And which is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.

"And which is right action? Abstaining from taking life, from stealing, & from sexual misconduct: This is called right action.

"And which is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood. This is called right livelihood.

"And which is right effort? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This is called right effort.

"And which is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness.

"And which is right concentration? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion,

accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joys & distresses—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration.

"This is called the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress." — *DN 22*

§ 34. "Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: 'This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended' ... 'This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned' ... 'This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be directly experienced' ... 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed.'" — *SN 56:11*

§ 35. "And which qualities are to be comprehended through direct knowledge? 'The five clinging-aggregates,' should be the reply. Which five? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate. These are the qualities that are to be comprehended through direct knowledge.

"And which qualities are to be abandoned through direct knowledge? Ignorance & craving for becoming: these are the qualities that are to be abandoned through direct knowledge.

"And which qualities are to be developed through direct knowledge? Tranquility & insight: these are the qualities that are to be developed through direct knowledge.

"And which qualities are to be realized through direct knowledge? Clear knowing & release: these are the qualities that are to be realized through direct knowledge." — *MN 149*

§ 36. “And which is comprehension? Any ending of passion, ending of aversion, ending of delusion. This is called comprehension.” — *SN 22:23*

§ 37. “For a monk practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, this is what accords with the Dhamma: that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to form, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to feeling, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to perception, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to fabrications, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to consciousness. As he keeps cultivating disenchantment with regard to form… feeling… perception… fabrications… consciousness, he comprehends form… feeling… perception… fabrications… consciousness. As he comprehends form… feeling… perception… fabrications… consciousness, he is released from form… feeling… perception… fabrications… consciousness. He is released from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.” — *SN 22:39*

§ 38. “And why do you call it ‘form’ *(rūpa)?* Because it is afflicted *(ruppati),* thus it is called ‘form.’ Afflicted with what? With cold & heat & hunger & thirst, with the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles. Because it is afflicted, it is called form.

“And why do you call it ‘feeling’? Because it feels, thus it is called ‘feeling.’ What does it feel? It feels pleasure, it feels pain, it feels neither-pleasure-nor-pain. Because it feels, it is called feeling.

“And why do you call it ‘perception’? Because it perceives, thus it is called ‘perception.’ What does it perceive? It perceives blue, it perceives yellow, it perceives red, it perceives white. Because it perceives, it is called perception.

“And why do you call them ‘fabrications’? Because they fabricate fabricated things, thus they are called ‘fabrications.’ What do they fabricate as fabricated things? For the sake of form-ness, they fabricate form as a fabricated thing. For the sake of feeling-ness, they fabricate feeling as a fabricated thing. For the sake of perception-hood… For the sake of fabrication-hood… For the sake of consciousness-hood, they

fabricate consciousness as a fabricated thing. Because they fabricate fabricated things, they are called fabrications.[1]

"And why do you call it 'consciousness'? Because it cognizes, thus it is called consciousness. What does it cognize? It cognizes what is sour, bitter, pungent, sweet, alkaline, non-alkaline, salty, & unsalty.[2] Because it cognizes, it is called consciousness." — *SN 22:79*

NOTES

1. In other words, the intentional activity of fabrication is what turns the kammic potential for any of the aggregates into the actual experience of the aggregates. This is what allows for the fact that, with the ending of present intention in the moment of awakening, all experience of the aggregates falls away. With the resumption of intention, the awakened person relates to the aggregates in full knowledge. If the awakening is full—i.e., that of an arahant—this knowledge is totally free from clinging and craving.

2. Notice that the example for perception uses the more active sensory process of sight, whereas the example for consciousness uses the more passive sensory process of taste.

§ 39. "Now which, monks, is noble right concentration with its supports & requisite conditions? Any singleness of mind equipped with these seven factors—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, & right mindfulness—is called noble right concentration with its supports & requisite conditions.

"[1] Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong view as wrong view, and right view as right view. This is one's right view. And which is wrong view? 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no contemplatives or brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is wrong view.

"And which is right view? Right view, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right view with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right view, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"And which is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are contemplatives & brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions.

"And which is the right view that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The discernment, the faculty of discernment, the strength of discernment, analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, the path factor of right view[1] in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is free from fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right view that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"One makes an effort for the abandoning of wrong view & for entering into right view: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong view & to enter & remain in right view: This is one's right mindfulness.[2] Thus these three qualities—right view, right effort, & right mindfulness—run & circle around right view.

"[2] Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong resolve as wrong resolve, and right resolve as right resolve. This is one's right view. And which is wrong resolve? Being resolved on sensuality, on ill will, on harmfulness. This is wrong resolve.

"And which is right resolve? Right resolve, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right resolve with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right resolve, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"And which is the right resolve that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for freedom from ill will, resolve for harmlessness. This is the right resolve that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions.

"And which is the right resolve that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The thinking, directed thinking,

resolve, mental fixity, mental transfixion, focused awareness, & verbal fabrications in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right resolve that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

"One makes an effort for the abandoning of wrong resolve & for entering right resolve: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong resolve & to enter & remain in right resolve: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities—right view, right effort, & right mindfulness—run & circle around right resolve.

"[3] Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong speech as wrong speech, and right speech as right speech. This is one's right view. And which is wrong speech? Lying, divisive tale-bearing, abusive speech, & idle chatter. This is wrong speech.

"And which is right speech? Right speech, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right speech with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right speech, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"And which is the right speech that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? Abstaining from lying, from divisive tale-bearing, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter. This is the right speech that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions.

"And which is the right speech that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The abstaining, desisting, abstinence, avoidance of the four forms of verbal misconduct in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right speech that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"One makes an effort for the abandoning of wrong speech & for entering right speech: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong speech & to enter & remain in right speech: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities—right view, right effort, & right mindfulness—run & circle around right speech.

"[4] Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong action as wrong action, and right action

as right action. This is one's right view. And which is wrong action? Killing, taking what is not given, illicit sex. This is wrong action.

"And which is right action? Right action, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right action with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right action, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"And which is the right action that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? Abstaining from killing, from taking what is not given, & from illicit sex. This is the right action that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions.

"And which is the right action that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The abstaining, desisting, abstinence, avoidance of the three forms of bodily misconduct in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right action that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"One makes an effort for the abandoning of wrong action & for entering into right action: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong action & to enter & remain in right action: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities—right view, right effort, & right mindfulness—run & circle around right action.

"[5] Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong livelihood as wrong livelihood, and right livelihood as right livelihood. This is one's right view. And which is wrong livelihood? Scheming, persuading, hinting, belittling, & pursuing gain with gain. This is wrong livelihood.

"And which is right livelihood? Right livelihood, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right livelihood with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right livelihood, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"And which is the right livelihood that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abandons wrong livelihood and maintains his life with right livelihood. This is the right livelihood that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions.

"And which is the right livelihood that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The abstaining, desisting, abstinence, avoidance of wrong livelihood in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right livelihood that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"One makes an effort for the abandoning of wrong livelihood & for entering into right livelihood: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong livelihood & to enter & remain in right livelihood: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities—right view, right effort, & right mindfulness—run & circle around right livelihood.

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? In one of right view, right resolve comes into being. In one of right resolve, right speech comes into being. In one of right speech, right action.... In one of right action, right livelihood.... In one of right livelihood, right effort.... In one of right effort, right mindfulness.... In one of right mindfulness, right concentration.... In one of right concentration, right knowledge.... In one of right knowledge, right release comes into being. Thus the learner is endowed with eight factors, and the arahant with ten.

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? In one of right view, wrong view is abolished. The many evil, unskillful qualities that come into play with wrong view as their condition are also abolished, while the many skillful qualities that have right view as their condition go to the culmination of their development. In one of right resolve, wrong resolve is abolished.... In one of right speech, wrong speech is abolished.... In one of right action, wrong action is abolished.... In one of right livelihood, wrong livelihood is abolished.... In one of right effort, wrong effort is abolished.... In one of right mindfulness, wrong mindfulness is abolished.... In one of right concentration, wrong concentration is abolished.... In one of right knowledge, wrong knowledge is abolished.... In one of right release, wrong release is abolished. The many evil, unskillful qualities that come into play with wrong release as their condition are also abolished, while the many skillful qualities that have right release as their condition go to the culmination of their development.

"Thus, monks, there are twenty factors siding with skillfulness, and twenty with unskillfulness." — *MN 117*

NOTES

1. These various factors are all equivalent to knowledge in terms of the four noble truths. The relationship between these four truths and the issue of skillful and unskillful action is shown in the fact that SN 46:51 [§23] notes that analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening is fed by paying appropriate attention to qualities as to whether they are skillful or unskillful.

2. Notice that mindfulness plays an active role here and with all the path factors. It is not simply a receptive acceptance of wrong and right views. Instead —in its canonical sense of keeping something in mind—it keeps remembering to abandon the factors of the wrong path, and to enter and remain in the factors of the right path.

DEPENDENT CO-ARISING

§ 40. "And which is the noble method that he/she [a stream-winner] has rightly seen & rightly ferreted out through discernment?"

"There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones notices:

"When this is, that is.
"From the arising of this comes the arising of that.
"When this isn't, that isn't.
"From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.[1]

"In other words:

"From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications...

"From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

"From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications... From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"This is the noble method that he/she has rightly seen & rightly ferreted out through discernment." — *AN 10:92*

NOTE: 1. This set of principles is called *idappaccayatā,* this/that conditionality. See §19, note 1.

§ 41. Staying at Sāvatthī.... "Monks, I will describe & analyze dependent co-arising for you.

"Which dependent co-arising?

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging.

From clinging as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now, which *aging-&-death?* Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging. Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.

"And which *birth?* Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of sense media of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

"And which *becoming?* These three becomings: sensuality-becoming, form-becoming, & formless-becoming. This is called becoming.

"And which *clinging?* These four clingings: sensuality-clinging, view-clinging, habit-&-practice-clinging, and self-doctrine-clinging. This is called clinging.

"And which *craving?* These six cravings: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for smells, craving for tastes, craving for tactile sensations, craving for ideas. This is called craving.

"And which *feeling?* These six feelings: feeling born from eye-contact, feeling born from ear-contact, feeling born from nose-contact, feeling born from tongue-contact, feeling born from body-contact, feeling born from intellect-contact. This is called feeling.

"And which *contact?* These six contacts: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, intellect-contact. This is called contact.

"And which *six sense media?* These six sense media: the eye-medium, the ear-medium, the nose-medium, the tongue-medium, the body-medium, the intellect-medium. These are called the six sense media.

"And which *name-&-form?* Feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: This is called name. The four great elements, and the form dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This name & this form are called name-&-form.

"And which *consciousness?* These six consciousnesses: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness.

"And which *fabrications?* These three fabrications: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, mental fabrications. These are called fabrications.

"And which *ignorance?* Not knowing in terms of stress, not knowing in terms of the origination of stress, not knowing in terms of the cessation of stress, not knowing in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called ignorance.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the

cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging. From the cessation of clinging comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering." — *SN 12:2*

§ 42. "Now, which is ignorance? Which is the origination of ignorance? Which is the cessation of ignorance? Which is the way of practice leading to the cessation of ignorance?

"Any lack of knowledge with reference to stress, any lack of knowledge with reference to the origination of stress, any lack of knowledge with reference to the cessation of stress, any lack of knowledge with reference to the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called ignorance.

"From the origination of fermentation comes the origination of ignorance. From the cessation of fermentation comes the cessation of ignorance. And the way of practice leading to the cessation of ignorance is precisely this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration....

"And which is fermentation? Which is the origination of fermentation? Which is the cessation of fermentation? Which is the way of practice leading to the cessation of fermentation?

"There are these three fermentations: the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming, the fermentation of ignorance. This is called fermentation.

"From the origination of ignorance comes the origination of fermentation. From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fermentation. And the way of practice leading to the cessation of fermentation is precisely this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration." — *MN 9*

RECOMMENDED QUESTIONS

§ 43. “This is the way leading to discernment: when visiting a contemplative or brahman, to ask: ‘What is skillful, venerable sir? What is unskillful? What is blameworthy? What is blameless? What should be cultivated? What should not be cultivated? What, having been done by me, will be for my long-term harm & suffering? Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?’” — *MN 135*

§ 44. “The individual who has attained internal tranquility of awareness, but not insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, should approach an individual who has attained insight into phenomena through heightened discernment and ask him, ‘How should fabrications be regarded? How should they be investigated? How should they be seen with insight?’ The other will answer in line with what he has seen & experienced: ‘Fabrications should be regarded in this way. Fabrications should be investigated in this way. Fabrications should be seen in this way with insight.’ Then eventually he [the first] will become one who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.

“As for the individual who has attained insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, but not internal tranquility of awareness, he should approach an individual who has attained internal tranquility of awareness… and ask him, ‘How should the mind be steadied? How should it be made to settle down? How should it be unified? How should it be concentrated?’ The other will answer in line with what he has seen & experienced: ‘The mind should be steadied in this way. The mind should be made to settle down in this way. The mind should be unified in this way. The mind should be concentrated in this way.’ Then eventually he [the first] will become one who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.” — *AN 4:94*

VIEWS & AWAKENING

§ 45.

Simply talking a lot
doesn't maintain the Dhamma.
Whoever
—although he's heard next to nothing—
    sees Dhamma through his body,
    is not heedless of Dhamma:
he's one who maintains the Dhamma. — *Dhp 259*

§ 46. The Blessed One said, "Monks, whatever in the cosmos—with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, its generations with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & common people—is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect: That do I know. Whatever in the cosmos—with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, its generations with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & common people—is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect: That I directly know. That has been realized by the Tathāgata, but in the Tathāgata[1] it has not been established.

"If I were to say, 'I don't know whatever in the cosmos... is seen, heard, sensed, cognized... pondered by the intellect,' that would be a falsehood in me. If I were to say, 'I both know and don't know whatever in the cosmos... is seen, heard, sensed, cognized... pondered by the intellect,' that would be just the same. If I were to say, 'I neither know nor don't know whatever in the cosmos... is seen, heard, sensed, cognized... pondered by the intellect,' that would be a fault in me.

"Thus the Tathāgata, when seeing what is to be seen, doesn't construe an [object as] seen, doesn't construe an unseen, doesn't construe an [object] to-be-seen, doesn't construe a seer.

"When hearing.... When sensing....

"When cognizing what is to be cognized, he doesn't construe an [object as] cognized, doesn't construe an uncognized, doesn't construe an [object] to-be-cognized, doesn't construe a cognizer.

Thus the Tathāgata—being the same with regard to all phenomena that can be seen, heard, sensed, & cognized—is 'Such.' And I tell you: There's no other Such higher or more sublime.

"Whatever is seen or heard or sensed

and fastened onto as true by others,
One who is Such—among the self-fettered—
wouldn't further claim to be true or even false.
"Having seen well in advance that arrow
where generations are fastened & hung
—'I know, I see, that's just how it is!'—
there's nothing of the Tathāgata fastened." — *AN 4:24*

NOTE: 1. Reading *tathāgate* with the Thai edition. See MN 58 [§93], note 1. See also §196.

§ 47.

Māgandiya:

Sage, you speak
without grasping
at any preconceived judgments.
This 'inner peace':
What does it mean?
How is it,
by an enlightened person,
proclaimed?

The Buddha:

He doesn't speak of purity
in connection with view,
learning,
knowledge,
habit or practice.
Nor is it found by a person
through lack of view,
of learning,
of knowledge,
of habit or practice.
Letting these go, without grasping,
at peace,
independent,

one wouldn't long for becoming.

Māgandiya:

If he doesn't speak of purity
in connection with view,
learning,
knowledge,
habit or practice;
and it isn't found by a person
through lack of view,
of learning,
of knowledge,
of habit or practice,
it seems to me that this teaching's
confused,
for some assume a purity
in terms of
—by means of—
a view.

The Buddha:

Asking questions
dependent on view,
you're confused
by what you have grasped.
And so you don't glimpse
even
the slightest
notion
[of what I am saying].
That's why you think
it's confused.
Whoever construes
'equal,'
'superior,' or

‘inferior,’
by that he’d dispute;
whereas to one unaffected
by these three,
‘equal,’
‘superior,’
do not occur.
Of what would the brahman say ‘true’
or ‘false,’
disputing with whom:
he in whom ‘equal,’ ‘unequal’ are not. — *Sn 4:9*

§ 48.

“What some say is true
—‘That’s how it is’—
others say is ‘falsehood, a lie.’
Thus quarreling, they dispute.
Why can’t contemplatives
say one thing & the same?”

“The truth is one,
there is no second
about which a person who knows it
would argue with one who knows.
Contemplatives promote
their various personal truths,
that’s why they don’t say
one thing & the same.”

“But why do they say
various truths,
those who say they are skilled?
Have they learned many various truths
or do they follow conjecture?”

“Apart from their perception
there are no
many
various

constant truths
in the world." — *Sn 4:12*

§ 49. "His release, being founded on truth, doesn't fluctuate, for whatever is deceptive is false; unbinding—the undeceptive—is true. Thus a monk so endowed is endowed with the highest determination for truth, for this—unbinding, the undeceptive—is the highest noble truth." — *MN 140*

PAPAÑCA

§ 50. Ven. MahāKaccāyana said this: "Concerning the brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he went into his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning—i.e., 'If, with regard to the cause whereby the perceptions & categories of objectification assail a person, there is nothing there to relish, welcome, or remain fastened to, then that is the end of the obsessions of passion, the obsessions of resistance, the obsessions of views, the obsessions of uncertainty, the obsessions of conceit, the obsessions of passion for becoming, & the obsessions of ignorance. That is the end of taking up rods & bladed weapons, of arguments, quarrels, disputes, accusations, divisive tale-bearing, & false speech. That is where these evil, unskillful things cease without remainder'—I understand the detailed meaning to be this:

"Dependent on eye & forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as a requisite condition, there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives [labels, assigns a meaning in the mind]. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one objectifies. Based on what a person objectifies, the perceptions & categories of objectification assail him/her with regard to past, present, & future forms cognizable via the eye.

"Dependent on ear & sounds, ear-consciousness arises....

"Dependent on nose & aromas, nose-consciousness arises....

"Dependent on tongue & flavors, tongue-consciousness arises....

"Dependent on body & tactile sensations, body-consciousness arises....

"Dependent on intellect & ideas, intellect-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as a requisite condition,

there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one objectifies. Based on what a person objectifies, the perceptions & categories of objectification assail him/her with regard to past, present, & future ideas cognizable via the intellect.

"Now, when there is the eye, when there are forms, when there is eye-consciousness, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of contact. When there is a delineation of contact, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of feeling. When there is a delineation of feeling, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of perception. When there is a delineation of perception, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of thinking. When there is a delineation of thinking, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of being assailed by the perceptions & categories of objectification.

"When there is the ear....

"When there is the nose....

"When there is the tongue....

"When there is the body....

"When there is the intellect, when there are ideas, when there is intellect-consciousness, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of contact. When there is a delineation of contact, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of feeling. When there is a delineation of feeling, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of perception. When there is a delineation of perception, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of thinking. When there is a delineation of thinking, it is possible that one will delineate a delineation of being assailed by the perceptions & categories of objectification.

"Now, when there is no eye, when there are no forms, when there is no eye-consciousness, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of contact. When there is no delineation of contact, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of feeling. When there is no delineation of feeling, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of perception. When there is no delineation of perception, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of thinking. When there is no delineation of thinking, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of being assailed by the perceptions & categories of objectification.

“When there is no ear....

“When there is no nose....

“When there is no tongue....

“When there is no body....

“When there is no intellect, when there are no ideas, when there is no intellect-consciousness, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of contact. When there is no delineation of contact, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of feeling. When there is no delineation of feeling, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of perception. When there is no delineation of perception, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of thinking. When there is no delineation of thinking, it is impossible that one will delineate a delineation of being assailed by the perceptions & categories of objectification.” — *MN 18*

§ 51.

“For one arriving at what
does form disappear?
How do pleasure & pain disappear?
Tell me this.
My heart is set
on knowing how
they disappear.”

“One not percipient of perceptions
not percipient of special perceptions,
not unpercipient,
nor percipient of what’s disappeared:
for one arriving at this,
form disappears—
for objectification-classifications
have their cause in perception.” — *Sn 4:11*

§ 52.

“I ask the kinsman of the Sun, the great seer,
about seclusion & the state of peace.

Seeing in what way is a monk unbound,
clinging to nothing in the world?"

The Buddha:

"He should put an entire stop
to the root of objectification-classifications:
'I am the thinker.'
He should train, always mindful,
to subdue any craving inside him.
Whatever truth he may know,
within or without,
he shouldn't get entrenched
in connection with it,
for that isn't called
unbinding by the good.

He shouldn't, because of it, think himself
better,
lower, or
equal.
Touched by contact in various ways,
he shouldn't keep conjuring self.
Stilled right within,
a monk shouldn't seek peace from another,
from anything else.
For one stilled right within,
there's nothing embraced,
so how rejected?

As in the middle of the sea
it is still,
with no waves upwelling,
so the monk—unperturbed, still—
should not swell himself
anywhere." — *Sn 4:14*

§ 53. "There is the case, monks, where a certain contemplative or brahman, with the relinquishing of speculations about the past and the

relinquishing of speculations about the future, from being totally not determined on the fetters of sensuality, and from the surmounting of the rapture of seclusion [in the first jhāna], of unworldly pleasure, & of the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain [in the fourth jhāna], thinks, 'I am at peace, I am unbound, I am without clinging/ sustenance!'

"With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns: 'This venerable contemplative or brahman, with the relinquishing of speculations about the past... thinks, "I am at peace, I am unbound, I am without clinging/sustenance!" Yes, he affirms a practice conducive to unbinding. But still he clings, clinging to a speculation about the past or... a speculation about the future... or a fetter of sensuality... or the rapture of seclusion... or unworldly pleasure... or a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. And the fact that he thinks, "I am at peace, I am unbound, I am without clinging/sustenance!"—that in itself points to his clinging.'

"With regard to this—fabricated, gross—there is still the cessation of fabrications. Knowing, 'There is that,' seeing the escape from it, the Tathāgata has gone beyond it." — *MN 102*

Chapter Four

Analytical Answers

The Canon contains many discourses where the Buddha and his disciples provide detailed analyses of important topics. The chapter of twelve analysis *(vibhaṅga)* discourses in the Majjhima Nikāya, and the analysis discourses for each of the seven sets in the wings to awakening *(bodhipakkhiya-dhamma)* in the Saṁyutta Nikāya, are only a few prominent examples of a common format. The speaker starts with a topic or statement, and then gives a detailed explanation of all its important terms.

However, when the Buddha explicitly states that a question deserves an analytical *(vibhajja)* answer, he is speaking of a somewhat different approach. This sort of question is one that addresses a valid issue but, coming from mistaken assumptions, analyzes the issue either in inappropriate terms or in too few variables to do it justice. An analytical answer in this case is one that recognizes those mistaken assumptions and so reframes the issue appropriately before giving a categorical answer.

As the passages collected in this chapter show, there are times when the Buddha treats declarative statements as if they too were questions deserving this sort of response. The following chapters will also contain examples of statements that the Buddha treats as if they were questions deserving cross-questioning or being put aside. This shows that his skill in questions involves seeing not just the assumption behind a question, but also the question behind a statement.

Of the four categories of questions, this is the one with the fewest examples in the discourses, and the examples all center on a common theme: a misunderstanding of skillful and unskillful action. Thus this is the easiest strategy to understand. But a survey of how the Buddha and his disciples use this strategy yields some surprises, for their approach to

questions of this sort challenges a number of views about the Dhamma that are currently widespread.

In surveying the Canon's examples of questions deserving analytical answers, we find that they grow from seven types of misunderstanding about skillful and unskillful action:

1) The question in MN 126 [§67] comes from the assumption that kamma is barren, that the holy life bears no fruit even if one practices with a strong wish for results. The correct analytical response shows that the *method* employed in following the holy life is what matters, not the presence or absence of a wish.

2) The question in DN 12 [§68] comes from the assumption that the workings of kamma make it impossible to teach others, for—arguing from the principle that each person has his or her own kamma—one person cannot do anything for another. Thus those who try to teach others are to be criticized for creating a new bond for themselves. The correct analytical response asserts that it is possible to help others through teaching them, and that teachers are to be criticized only if they haven't reached the Dhamma they teach or if their students don't pay attention to or follow their instructions.

3) The question in SN 42:9 [§70] takes a materialistic and exclusively this-life perspective on what sort of behavior is beneficial or harmful. The two-pronged question asked of the Buddha comes from assuming that families are harmed if they are encouraged to be generous during a famine. The correct analytical response shows that generosity leads to genuine long-term well-being for families, and that their genuine ruin comes from any of eight other factors, none of which include generosity.

4) The largest group of examples under this category consists of questions that assume a particular practice or way of life to be beneficial or unbeneficial across the board. These practices include the householder life [§60], the life gone forth [§62], ascetic practices [§61, §63], meditative absorption [§64], pleasing words, and unpleasing words [§69]. The correct analytical response shows that each of these practices is to be judged, not categorically as good or bad, but as to whether it is conducted in a way that yields beneficial or unbeneficial results. In other words, the variables cited in the question are insufficient to pass valid judgment, and so the analytical answer introduces additional variables to do justice to

the issue at hand. Included in this group is a discourse [§61] whose analytical answer contains a long exposition on the first two paragraphs in the Buddha's first sermon, rating different ways of life that pursue the extremes deviating from the middle way. This discourse underlines the point made in Chapter Two that the first two paragraphs in the Buddha's first sermon constitute an analytical answer to a question for which his listeners had assumed they knew the categorical answer.

5) In MN 90 [§103], a similar question is posed as to as to whether anything distinguishes the four social castes with regard to the life after death. This question is sparked by the assertion made by brahmans that one's social caste in this lifetime will be maintained in all future lives. The correct analytical answer shows that one's future course is determined by one's capacity for exertion—analyzed into five factors—and one's actual use of that capacity, whereas one's current caste is a totally irrelevant factor.

6) In a discourse of a similar sort [§65]—dealing with categories for judging individuals—three arahants discuss the relationship of three types of temperament to the preliminary stages of awakening: Which is the most sublime, an individual whose first stage of awakening is dominated by conviction, by concentration, or by discernment? They then take the question to the Buddha, who states that there is no categorical answer to this question, and that the individuals should instead be judged in ascending order as to whether they are once-returners, non-returners, or on the path to arahantship. In other words, individuals are to be judged not on temperament, but on the level of their attainment.

7) The question in MN 136 [§66] is perhaps the most interesting of the lot. A wanderer, asserting that he understands the Buddha as teaching that only mental action is fruitful, asks a junior monk: What does one experience on performing a bodily, verbal, or mental action? The monk answers that one experiences stress. As another monk later explains, this answer could be justified with reference to the statement that all feelings are stressful [§140], but the Buddha rebukes both monks, saying that the original question had to do with the three kinds of feeling: pleasant, painful, and neither pleasant nor painful. Thus the junior monk's categorical response was incorrect because it assumed that a teaching

appropriate for one context would apply to another context where it actually doesn't.

As we will see in Chapter Six, the statement that all feelings are stressful is meant to be applied in a systematic practice of self cross-examination aimed at the ending of clinging, an advanced stage in the practice requiring an advanced level of right view. The context here, however, is simply a basic understanding of the relationship between kamma and feeling at a more preliminary stage, where the concepts of skillful and unskillful are not yet mastered and where the mundane level of right view has to be applied. To assert at this stage that all actions lead to the same result—stress—would discourage the listener from developing skillful kamma and abandoning unskillful kamma.

After making this point, the Buddha then proceeds to give an analysis discourse that goes into detail far beyond the relationship of kamma to the three types of feeling, touching on how actions may take several lifetimes to show their effect, how a skillful or unskillful action can have its results delayed by the effects of an earlier or later action of the opposite sort, and how a person with a limited ability to see beings dying and being reborn would misunderstand the actual workings of kamma—to say nothing of a person with no such abilities at all.

As we survey the range of questions deserving analytical answers, we see that they highlight five important points in the Buddha's teaching that are often misunderstood or underappreciated at present.

The first is that the Buddha had no qualms about judging people and their way of life [§§54-58, §126]. In fact, given that admirable friendship is a basic prerequisite to the practice (SN 45:2), the ability to judge whether a person's behavior is admirable is of primary importance for anyone hoping to follow the path. Because this is such an important part of the practice, and because it is so difficult to judge people accurately, the Buddha advises devoting time and one's full powers of observation to passing judgment, thus taking care to be judicious rather than judgmental [§55]. In judging a person's way of life, one is not passing final judgment on that person's worth; one is simply trying to decide whether his or her example should be followed and extolled to others. In this way, judgment is not an unkind or hurtful action; instead, it is a necessary element in the development of greater skill.

This point is reflected in the Vinaya, where the monks are instructed to keep watch over one another's behavior. As we will see in Chapter Seven, if they suspect that a fellow monk has broken a rule, they are to approach him about the matter. If dissatisfied with his response, they have to meet as a full community and pass judgment on whether he has, in fact, committed an offense. If he has, and the offense is reparable, they help in his rehabilitation. If the offense is irreparable, he is automatically expelled. If it is reparable but the offender stubborn and recalcitrant, they are empowered to suspend him from the group. In this way, they ensure that the monastic Saṅgha provides an environment of admirable friends who can aid anyone desiring training, whether monastic or lay.

Thus the ability to pass fair and accurate judgment on the behavior of others is an important part of the path. However, progress on the path requires not only the ability skillfully to judge the behavior of others, but also—as we will see in Chapter Six—the ability skillfully to judge your own. MN 110 [§56] shows that these two abilities go hand in hand, in that only when you have developed integrity in your own behavior can you recognize integrity in others. Conversely, AN 8:54 [§59] shows that one of the best ways to develop integrity is to associate with admirable people and to emulate their good qualities. So to develop the path, you have to use whatever integrity you have in choosing a teacher; if you've found one, you can then develop the integrity needed to refine your powers of judgment.

It's a basic truth that if you cannot judge other people objectively, it's hard to be objective in judging yourself, for the habits of delusion obscure your awareness both of the motivations and of the results of your actions. MN 61 [§131] shows that on the question of whether actions are to be judged by their motivation or their results, the Buddha's answer was, "Both." His approach to judgment was not that of a judge in a court of law passing final judgment on a person's guilt, but of a craftsman or musician judging a work in progress. By judging the results of a past mistake, one can then adjust one's motivation to improve one's future deeds.

The need to judge others' behavior skillfully does not end with the attainment of the goal. As AN 3:68 [§118] and AN 4:111 [§98] point out, a teacher must be careful to assess who is worthy of teaching and engaging in debate, and who is not. Otherwise, time that could be well used in

teaching those responsive to the Dhamma would be wasted in fruitless arguments. Thus the ability to pass skillful judgment on behavior—one's own and that of others—is not an unkind act. Instead, it is an essential skill both while learning and while teaching the Dhamma.

The second point in the Buddha's teachings frequently misunderstood is that the distinction between *skillful* and *unskillful* is not the same as the distinction between *pleasing* and *displeasing* to others. This point is explicitly made in MN 58, which states that the Buddha's concept of skillful speech allowed for unpleasant statements. Pleasing words are not always skillful, nor are unpleasing words always unskillful. Here again, both the actual motivation behind one's words and their effect is what counts. Contrary to the popular picture of a Buddha whose words were invariably gentle and sweet, MN 58 [§69] cites an example where the Buddha found it necessary to be extremely critical and harsh: Devadatta was working toward a schism in the Saṅgha, and the Buddha had to show the other monks in no uncertain terms that Devadatta was not to be trusted. (The full story is in Cv.VII.) There are many other examples of the Buddha's harsh remarks in this book as well—for example, in §66, §71, §72, and §125. The criteria for skillful speech given in §69 show that these examples were not slips on his part; instead, they are demonstrations of how far the range of skillful action can go.

The third point is reflected in the many misunderstandings about kamma displayed in the questions gathered in this chapter, for these show that the Buddha, in formulating his teaching on kamma, was not simply following a belief already well known and widely accepted in his culture. He was saying something distinctively new: that the present is shaped not only by past actions but also by present ones, that actions could be developed as skills, and that those skills could lead all the way to the end of suffering and stress. Because this was such a new understanding of the power of action, his listeners naturally had trouble grasping both what he was saying and how its implications should be applied to the various aspects of their lives. That's why their questions concerning kamma had to be reanalyzed before they could properly be answered.

This point will be reinforced in the next chapter, where we will see that kamma is the primary topic that the Buddha approached through cross-questioning, another response-strategy designed to help clarify issues that

questioners might find hard to understand. The fact that he felt compelled to cross-question his listeners on the analogies and examples he cited to explain questions of kamma shows that he knew his teaching was new, that his listeners would have trouble understanding it, and so he needed to put forth extra effort to make it clear.

The fourth point, related to the third, is that the multiple variables needed to answer some of the questions dealing with kamma show that kamma is not as simple a process—or as simplistic a teaching—as is sometimes assumed.

The fifth point is one we have already touched on in Chapter Three: that some of the Buddha's teachings are appropriate for certain stages of the practice and not for others. The statement that all feelings are stressful is not a useful teaching for someone who still doesn't understand the basics of kamma. It's not to be taken as a first principle of the Buddha's system and applied to all questions across the board. As the Buddha noted himself in SN 22:60, if feelings were exclusively stressful, no one would be attached to them; if they were exclusively pleasant, no one would ever feel dispassion for them. Thus the skillful approach in practice is to focus on their range of pleasurable and stressful aspects when trying to develop skillful kamma and abandon unskillful kamma; and to focus exclusively on their stressful aspect when one's practice has reached a level of skill where one is ready to abandon clinging for all fabricated things. Thus when answering a question dealing with this topic, the proper response is rhetorical: to gauge the level of the listener's understanding and to formulate a response that is timely and beneficial in addition to being true.

In the course of teaching lessons about the proper understanding of skillful and unskillful action, the Buddha's analytical answers also teach some important lessons about how a skillful question should be formulated. Simply by pointing out that a question needs to be treated analytically, the Buddha is saying that the original question was unskillful. The way he analyzes the question shows, by implication, how a skillful question on the same topic should be phrased.

This sort of lesson is made even clearer in three examples where the Buddha takes pains to preface his analytical answer with a cross-question. In MN 90 [§103], the Buddha is addressing a listener—King Pasenadi—

who is generally portrayed in the Canon as honest but inept at phrasing his questions. Thus the Buddha takes pains to illustrate his analytical answers with examples and analogies that make the need for an analytical answer clear.

In the other two examples, however, the motivation behind the original question is dishonest and hard-hearted, so the Buddha gives analogies to demonstrate that fact. In DN 12 he shows in a direct way that the attack behind Lohicca's question—that a person who has achieved the goal should not teach it to others—was based on uncompassionate motives. Thus the question in and of itself was unskillful.

In MN 58 [§69] he makes a similar point, though more indirectly. Niganṭha Nāṭaputta, who had incited Prince Abhaya to ask a trick question of the Buddha, had claimed that the Buddha would end up like a person with a two-horned chestnut stuck in his throat, unable to swallow it or spit it out. The Buddha, however, taking Niganṭha Nāṭaputta's image of a dangerous object stuck in the throat, applies it to the infant sitting on the prince's lap: What would the prince do if the child got a sharp object in its mouth? The prince replies that he would remove the object, even if it meant drawing blood, out of compassion for the child. Upon receiving this answer, the Buddha states that, unlike the Niganṭhas—who were content to leave someone choking on a potentially lethal object—his desire in teaching is analogous to the prince's in removing the sharp object: to remove misunderstandings that cause suffering, out of sympathy and compassion for his listeners.

By questioning the prince in this way, the Buddha accomplishes two things. He shows that the Niganṭhas were evil in their motives and, by allowing the prince to speak of his—the prince's—compassion, he brings a potential opponent over to his side. We will discuss this use of cross-questioning as a means of flattering one's listener in the next chapter.

What these last two examples have in common is that the question in each case is unskillful not only because it was wrongly framed in formal terms, but also because it derived from unskillful—uncompassionate—intentions.

MN 58 also shows—and here it's seconded by SN 42:9 [§70]—that analytical responses are especially useful in handling trick questions. In both passages, the Buddha is presented with false dichotomies, and his

analytical responses demonstrate precisely why the dichotomies are false. In the case of MN 58, the Buddha's answer shows that the dichotomy covers only a fraction of the variables that have to be taken into account in judging right speech; in SN 42:9, he shows how the dichotomy is totally off the mark, in that it covers none of the variables that account for why families come to ruin.

The passages collected in this chapter also show how the Buddha passed some of his skill in handling questions of this sort on to his disciples. In MN 126 [§67], he approves of Ven. Bhūmija's ability to give an analytical answer to Prince Jayasena's question, and then proceeds to show how the answer would have been made more effective if accompanied by similes. As we will see in the next chapter, similes of this sort would have provided the opportunity to cross-question the prince, making him a fellow participant in the correct answer and allowing him to see more clearly how skillful that answer was.

In AN 3:79 [§62], the Buddha gives Ven. Ānanda the chance to answer a question analytically in front of a group of monks. This was most likely a lesson for them: to see how a wise disciple would handle a question of this sort. The Buddha's comment on Ven. Ānanda's discernment after the exchange emphasizes that the ability to respond skillfully to a question in this way is a sign of discernment, and that the monks should try to master this skill as an essential part of their training.

READINGS

ON JUDGING PEOPLE

§ 54. "And how is a monk one with a sense of distinctions among individuals? There is the case where people are known to a monk in terms of two categories.

"Of two people—one who wants to see noble ones and one who doesn't—the one who doesn't want to see noble ones is to be criticized for that reason; the one who does want to see noble ones is, for that reason, to be praised.

“Of two people who want to see noble ones—one who wants to hear the true Dhamma and one who doesn’t—the one who doesn’t want to hear the true Dhamma is to be criticized for that reason; the one who does want to hear the true Dhamma is, for that reason, to be praised.

“Of two people who want to hear the true Dhamma—one who listens with an attentive ear and one who listens without an attentive ear—the one who listens without an attentive ear is to be criticized for that reason; the one who listens with an attentive ear is, for that reason, to be praised.

“Of two people who listen with an attentive ear—one who, having listened to the Dhamma, remembers it, and one who doesn’t—the one who, having listened to the Dhamma, doesn’t remember it is to be criticized for that reason; the one who, having listened to the Dhamma, does remember the Dhamma is, for that reason, to be praised.

“Of two people who, having listened to the Dhamma, remember it—one who explores the meaning of the Dhamma he has remembered and one who doesn’t—the one who doesn’t explore the meaning of the Dhamma he has remembered is to be criticized for that reason; the one who does explore the meaning of the Dhamma he has remembered is, for that reason, to be praised.

“Of two people who explore the meaning of the Dhamma they have remembered—one who practices the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, having a sense of Dhamma, having a sense of meaning, and one who doesn’t—the one who doesn’t practice the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, having a sense of Dhamma, having a sense of meaning, is to be criticized for that reason; the one who does practice the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, having a sense of Dhamma, having a sense of meaning is, for that reason, to be praised.

“Of two people who practice the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, having a sense of Dhamma, having a sense of meaning—one who practices for both his own benefit and that of others, and one who practices for his own benefit but not that of others—the one who practices for his own benefit but not that of others is to be criticized for that reason; the one who practices for both his own benefit and that of others is, for that reason, to be praised.

“This is how people are known to a monk in terms of two categories. And this is how a monk is one with a sense of distinctions among

individuals." — *AN 7:64*

§ 55. "'[1] It's through living together that a person's virtue may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said?

"There is the case where one individual, through living with another, knows this: 'For a long time this person has been torn, broken, spotted, splattered in his actions. He hasn't been consistent in his actions. He hasn't practiced consistently with regard to the precepts. He is an unprincipled person, not a virtuous, principled one.' And then there is the case where one individual, through living with another, knows this: 'For a long time this person has been untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered in his actions. He has been consistent in his actions. He has practiced consistently with regard to the precepts. He is a virtuous, principled person, not an unprincipled one.' ...

"'[2] It's through dealing with a person that his purity may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said?

"There is the case where one individual, through dealing with another, knows this: 'This person deals one way when one-on-one, another way when with two, another way when with three, another way when with many. His earlier dealings do not jibe with his later dealings. He is impure in his dealings, not pure.' And then there is the case where one individual, through dealing with another, knows this: 'The way this person deals when one-on-one, is the same way he deals when with two, when with three, when with many. His earlier dealings jibe with his later dealings. He is pure in his dealings, not impure.' ...

"'[3] It's through adversity that a person's endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said?

"There is the case where a person, suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, doesn't reflect: 'That's how it is when living together in the world. That's how it is when gaining a personal identity *[atta-bhāva,* literally "self-state"]. When there is living in the world, when there is the gaining of a personal identity, these eight worldly conditions spin after the world, and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions: gain, loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, & pain.' Suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. And then there is the case where a person, suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, reflects: 'That's how it is when living together in the world. That's how it is when gaining a personal identity. When there is living in the world, when there is the gaining of a personal identity, these eight worldly conditions spin after the world, and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions: gain, loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, & pain.' Suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, he doesn't sorrow, grieve, or lament, doesn't beat his breast or become distraught....

"'[4] It's through discussion that a person's discernment may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said?

"There is the case where one individual, through discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], from the way he addresses a question, he is dull, not discerning. Why is that? He doesn't make statements that are deep, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. He cannot declare the meaning, teach it, describe it, set it forth, reveal it, explain it, or make it plain. He is dull, not discerning.' Just as if a man with good eyesight standing on the shore of a body of water were to see a small fish rise. The thought would occur to him, 'From the rise of this fish, from the break of its ripples, from its speed, it is a small fish, not a large one.' In the same way, one individual, in discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to

an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], from the way he addresses a question… he is dull, not discerning.'

"And then there is the case where one individual, through discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], from the way he addresses a question, he is discerning, not dull. Why is that? He makes statements that are deep, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. He can declare the meaning, teach it, describe it, set it forth, reveal it, explain it, & make it plain. He is discerning, not dull.' Just as if a man with good eyesight standing on the shore of a body of water were to see a large fish rise. The thought would occur to him, 'From the rise of this fish, from the break of its ripples, from its speed, it is a large fish, not a small one.' In the same way, one individual, in discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], from the way he addresses a question… he is discerning, not dull.'" — *AN 4:192*

§ 56. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother. And on that occasion—the uposatha of the fifteenth, the night of a very full moon—he was sitting out in the open with the community of monks. Then, having surveyed the silent community of monks, he addressed them: "Monks, could a person of no integrity know of a person of no integrity: 'This is a person of no integrity'?"

"No, lord."

"Good, monks. It's impossible, there's no way, that a person of no integrity would know of a person of no integrity: 'This is a person of no integrity.'

"Could a person of no integrity know of a person of integrity: 'This is a person of integrity'?"

"No, lord."

"Good, monks. It's impossible, there's no way, that a person of no integrity would know of a person of integrity: 'This is a person of integrity.'

"A person of no integrity is endowed with qualities of no integrity; he is a person of no integrity in his friendship, in the way he wills, the way

he gives advice, the way he speaks, the way he acts, the views he holds, & the way he gives a gift.

"And how is a person of no integrity endowed with qualities of no integrity? There is the case where a person of no integrity is lacking in conviction, lacking in shame, lacking in compunction; he is unlearned, lazy, of muddled mindfulness, & poor discernment. This is how a person of no integrity is endowed with qualities of no integrity."

"And how is a person of no integrity a person of no integrity in his friendship? There is the case where a person of no integrity has, as his friends & companions, those contemplatives & brahmans who are lacking in conviction, lacking in shame, lacking in compunction, unlearned, lazy, of muddled mindfulness, & poor discernment. This is how a person of no integrity is a person of no integrity in his friendship.

"And how is a person of no integrity a person of no integrity in the way he wills? There is the case where a person of no integrity wills for his own affliction, or for the affliction of others, or for the affliction of both. This is how a person of no integrity is a person of no integrity in the way he wills.

"And how is a person of no integrity a person of no integrity in the way he gives advice? There is the case where a person of no integrity gives advice for his own affliction, or for the affliction of others, or for the affliction of both. This is how a person of no integrity is a person of no integrity in the way he gives advice.

"And how is a person of no integrity a person of no integrity in the way he speaks? There is the case where a person of no integrity is one who tells lies, engages in divisive tale-bearing, engages in harsh speech, engages in idle chatter. This is how a person of no integrity is a person of no integrity in the way he speaks.

"And how is a person of no integrity a person of no integrity in the way he acts? There is the case where a person of no integrity is one who takes life, steals, engages in illicit sex. This is how a person of no integrity is a person of no integrity in the way he acts.

"And how is a person of no integrity a person of no integrity in the views he holds? There is the case where a person of no integrity is one who holds a view like this: 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There

is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no contemplatives or brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is how a person of no integrity is a person of no integrity in the views he holds.

"And how is a person of no integrity a person of no integrity in the way he gives a gift? There is the case where a person of no integrity gives a gift inattentively, not with his own hand, disrespectfully, as if throwing it away, with the view that nothing will come of it. This is how a person of no integrity is a person of no integrity in the way he gives a gift.

"This person of no integrity—thus endowed with qualities of no integrity; a person of no integrity in his friendship, in the way he wills, the way he gives advice, the way he speaks, the way he acts, the views he holds, & the way he gives a gift—with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in the destination of people of no integrity. And what is the destination of people of no integrity? Hell or the animal womb.

"Now, monks, could a person of integrity know of a person of no integrity: 'This is a person of no integrity'?"

"Yes, lord."

"Good, monks. It is possible that a person of integrity would know of a person of no integrity: 'This is a person of no integrity.'

"Could a person of integrity know of a person of integrity: 'This is a person of integrity'?"

"Yes, lord."

"Good, monks. It is possible that a person of integrity would know of a person of integrity: 'This is a person of integrity.'

"A person of integrity is endowed with qualities of integrity; he is a person of integrity in his friendship, in the way he wills, the way he gives advice, the way he speaks, the way he acts, the views he holds, & the way he gives a gift.

"And how is a person of integrity endowed with qualities of integrity? There is the case where a person of integrity is endowed with conviction, shame, compunction; he is learned, with aroused persistence, unmuddled mindfulness, & good discernment. This is how a person of integrity is endowed with qualities of integrity."

"And how is a person of integrity a person of integrity in his friendship? There is the case where a person of integrity has, as his friends & companions, those contemplatives & brahmans who are endowed with conviction, shame, compunction; who are learned, with aroused persistence, unmuddled mindfulness, & good discernment. This is how a person of integrity is a person of integrity in his friendship.

"And how is a person of integrity a person of integrity in the way he wills? There is the case where a person of integrity wills neither for his own affliction, nor for the affliction of others, nor for the affliction of both. This is how a person of integrity is a person of integrity in the way he wills.

"And how is a person of integrity a person of integrity in the way he gives advice? There is the case where a person of integrity gives advice neither for his own affliction, nor for the affliction of others, nor for the affliction of both. This is how a person of integrity is a person of integrity in the way he gives advice.

"And how is a person of integrity a person of integrity in the way he speaks? There is the case where a person of integrity is one who refrains from lies, refrains from divisive tale-bearing, refrains from harsh speech, refrains from idle chatter. This is how a person of integrity is a person of integrity in the way he speaks.

"And how is a person of integrity a person of integrity in the way he acts? There is the case where a person of integrity is one who refrains from taking life, refrains from stealing, refrains from illicit sex. This is how a person of integrity is a person of integrity in the way he acts.

"And how is a person of integrity a person of integrity in the views he holds? There is the case where a person of integrity is one who holds a view like this: 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are contemplatives & brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is how a person of integrity is a person of integrity in the views he holds.

"And how is a person of integrity a person of integrity in the way he gives a gift? There is the case where a person of integrity gives a gift

attentively, with his own hand, respectfully, not as if throwing it away, with the view that something will come of it. This is how a person of integrity is a person of integrity in the way he gives a gift.

"This person of integrity—thus endowed with qualities of integrity; a person of integrity in his friendship, in the way he wills, the way he gives advice, the way he speaks, the way he acts, the views he holds, & the way he gives a gift—with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in the destination of people of integrity. And what is the destination of people of integrity? Greatness among devas or among human beings."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words. — *MN 110*

§ 57. "Now, what is the level of a person of no integrity? A person of no integrity is ungrateful, does not acknowledge the help given to him. This ingratitude, this lack of acknowledgment is second nature among rude people. It is entirely on the level of people of no integrity. A person of integrity is grateful & acknowledges the help given to him. This gratitude, this acknowledgment is second nature among admirable people. It is entirely on the level of people of integrity." — *AN 2:31*

§ 58. "Monks, a person endowed with these four qualities can be known as 'a person of no integrity.' Which four?

"There is the case where a person of no integrity, when unasked, reveals another person's bad points, to say nothing of when asked. Furthermore, when asked, when pressed with questions, he is one who speaks of another person's bad points in full & in detail, without omission, without holding back. Of this person you may know, 'This venerable one is a person of no integrity.'

"Then again, a person of no integrity, when asked, doesn't reveal another person's good points, to say nothing of when unasked. Furthermore, when asked, when pressed with questions, he is one who speaks of another person's good points not in full, not in detail, with omissions, holding back. Of this person you may know, 'This venerable one is a person of no integrity.'

"Then again, a person of no integrity, when asked, doesn't reveal his own bad points, to say nothing of when unasked. Furthermore, when

asked, when pressed with questions, he is one who speaks of his own bad points not in full, not in detail, with omissions, holding back. Of this person you may know, 'This venerable one is a person of no integrity.'

"Then again, a person of no integrity, when unasked, reveals his own good points, to say nothing of when asked. Furthermore, when asked, when pressed with questions, he is one who speaks of his own good points in full & in detail, without omissions, without holding back. Of this person you may know, 'This venerable one is a person of no integrity.'

"Monks, a person endowed with these four qualities can be known as 'a person of no integrity.'

"Now, a person endowed with these four qualities can be known as 'a person of integrity.' Which four?

"There is the case where a person of integrity, when asked, doesn't reveal another person's bad points, to say nothing of when unasked. Furthermore, when asked, when pressed with questions, he is one who speaks of another person's bad points not in full, not in detail, with omissions, holding back. Of this person you may know, 'This venerable one is a person of integrity.'

"Then again, a person of integrity, when unasked, reveals another person's good points, to say nothing of when asked. Furthermore, when asked, when pressed with questions, he is one who speaks of another person's good points in full & in detail, without omissions, without holding back. Of this person you may know, 'This venerable one is a person of integrity.'

"Then again, a person of integrity, when unasked, reveals his own bad points, to say nothing of when asked. Furthermore, when asked, when pressed with questions, he is one who speaks of his own bad points in full & in detail, without omissions, without holding back. Of this person you may know, 'This venerable one is a person of integrity.'

"Then again, a person of integrity, when asked, doesn't reveal his own good points, to say nothing of when unasked. Furthermore, when asked, when pressed with questions, he is one who speaks of his own good points not in full, not in detail, with omissions, holding back. Of this person you may know, 'This venerable one is a person of integrity.'

“Monks, a person endowed with these four qualities can be known as ‘a person of integrity.’” — *AN 4:73*

§ 59. “And what is meant by admirable friendship? There is the case where a layperson, in whatever town or village he may dwell, spends time with householders or householders’ sons, young or old, who are advanced in virtue. He talks with them, engages them in discussions. He emulates consummate conviction in those who are consummate in conviction, consummate virtue in those who are consummate in virtue, consummate generosity in those who are consummate in generosity, and consummate discernment in those who are consummate in discernment. This is called admirable friendship....

“And what does it mean to be consummate in conviction? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has conviction, is convinced of the Tathāgata’s awakening: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge and conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine and human beings, awakened, blessed.’ This is called being consummate in conviction.

“And what does it mean to be consummate in virtue? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking life, abstains from stealing, abstains from illicit sexual conduct, abstains from lying, abstains from taking intoxicants that cause heedlessness. This is called being consummate in virtue.

“And what does it mean to be consummate in generosity? There is the case of a disciple of the noble ones, his awareness cleansed of the stain of miserliness, living at home, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in being magnanimous, responsive to requests, delighting in the distribution of alms. This is called being consummate in generosity.

“And what does it mean to be consummate in discernment? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising and passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress. This is called being consummate in discernment.” — *AN 8:54*

JUDGING WAYS OF LIFE

§ 60. As he was sitting to one side, Subha the brahman student, Todeyya's son, said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, the brahmans say this: 'The householder is accomplishing the Dhamma of the true way, skillful. The one gone forth is not accomplishing the Dhamma of the true way, skillful.' What does Master Gotama have to say with regard to this?"

"Here, student, I am one who speaks analytically, not one who speaks categorically. I don't praise the wrong practice of a householder or of one gone forth. For when a householder or one gone forth practices wrongly, then by reason of that wrong practice he is not accomplishing the Dhamma of the true way, skillful. I do praise the right practice of a householder or of one gone forth. For when a householder or one gone forth practices rightly, then by reason of that right practice he is accomplishing the Dhamma of the true way, skillful."

"Master Gotama, the brahmans say this: 'This householder-occupation —involving great needs, great duties, great issues, great arrangements—is of great fruit. This going-forth-occupation—involving meager needs, meager duties, meager issues, meager arrangements—is of meager fruit. What does Master Gotama have to say with regard to this?"

"Here too student, I am one who speaks analytically, not one who speaks categorically. There is the occupation involving great needs, great duties, great issues, great arrangements, that—when failing—is of meager fruit. There is the occupation involving great needs, great duties, great issues, great arrangements, that—when succeeding—is of great fruit. There is the occupation involving meager needs, meager duties, meager issues, meager arrangements, that—when failing—is of meager fruit. There is the occupation involving meager needs, meager duties, meager issues, meager arrangements, that—when succeeding—is of great fruit.

"And which is an occupation involving great needs... great arrangements that—when failing—is of meager fruit? Agriculture.... And which is an occupation involving great needs... great arrangements that—when succeeding—is of great fruit? Agriculture again.... And which is an occupation involving meager needs... meager arrangements that—when failing—is of meager fruit? Trade.... And which is an occupation involving

meager needs... meager arrangements that—when succeeding—is of great fruit? Trade again....

"Just as the agriculture-occupation is one involving great needs... great arrangements that—when failing—is of meager fruit, in the same way, the householder-occupation is one involving great needs... great arrangements that—when failing—is of meager fruit. Just as the agriculture-occupation is one involving great needs... great arrangements that—when succeeding—is of great fruit, in the same way, the householder-occupation is one involving great needs... great arrangements that—when succeeding—is of great fruit. Just as the trade-occupation is one involving meager needs... meager arrangements that—when failing—is of meager fruit, in the same way, the going-forth-occupation is one involving meager needs... meager arrangements that—when failing—is of meager fruit. Just as the trade-occupation is one involving meager needs... meager arrangements that—when succeeding—is of great fruit, in the same way, the going-forth-occupation is one involving meager needs... meager arrangements that—when succeeding—is of great fruit." — *MN 99*

§ 61. Then Rāsiya the headman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "I have heard that, 'Gotama the contemplative criticizes all asceticism, that he categorically denounces & disparages all ascetics who live the rough life.' I trust that those who say that, 'Gotama the contemplative criticizes all asceticism, that he categorically denounces & disparages all ascetics who live the rough life' do not slander the Blessed One with what is unfactual, that they declare the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, and that the legitimate implications of what they say give no grounds for criticism."

"Headman, those who say, 'Gotama the contemplative criticizes all asceticism, that he categorically denounces & disparages all ascetics who live the rough life,' are not saying what I have said, and they slander me with what is unfactual & untrue.

"Headman, there are these two extremes that are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth. Which two? That which is devoted to sensuality with reference to sensual objects: base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable; and that which is devoted to self-affliction: painful,

ignoble, unprofitable. Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realized by the Tathāgata—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

"And which is the middle way realized by the Tathāgata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding? Precisely this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the middle way realized by the Tathāgata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

[The Buddha then lists ten types of individuals who enjoy sensual pleasures:
1. One who seeks wealth unlawfully, by violence; doesn't make himself happy with it, doesn't share it with others, and doesn't make merit.
2. One who seeks wealth unlawfully, by violence; makes himself happy with it, but doesn't share it with others, and doesn't make merit.
3. One who seeks wealth unlawfully, by violence; makes himself happy with it, shares it with others, and makes merit.
4. One who seeks wealth lawfully and unlawfully, by violence and without violence; doesn't make himself happy with it, doesn't share it with others, and doesn't make merit.
5. One who seeks wealth lawfully and unlawfully, by violence and without violence; makes himself happy with it, but doesn't share it with others, and doesn't make merit.
6. One who seeks wealth lawfully and unlawfully, by violence and without violence; makes himself happy with it, shares it with others, and makes merit.
7. One who seeks wealth lawfully, without violence; doesn't make himself happy with it, doesn't share it with others, and doesn't make merit.
8. One who seeks wealth lawfully, without violence; makes himself happy with it, but doesn't share it with others, and doesn't make merit.

9. One who seeks wealth lawfully, without violence; makes himself happy with it, shares it with others, and makes merit; he uses his wealth tied to it, infatuated with it, guilty, not seeing the drawbacks, and not discerning the escape (from those drawbacks).
10. One who seeks wealth lawfully, without violence; makes himself happy with it, shares it with others, and makes merit; he uses his wealth not tied to it, not infatuated with it, guiltless, seeing the drawbacks, and discerning the escape (from those drawbacks).

The Buddha then says that these individuals are to be variously criticized to the extent that they

seek wealth unlawfully, by violence
do not make themselves happy with it
do not share it with others or make merit
use their wealth tied to it, infatuated with it, guilty, not seeing the drawbacks, and not discerning the escape.

They are to be variously praised to the extent that they

seek wealth lawfully, without violence
make themselves happy with it
share it with others or make merit
use their wealth not tied to it, uninfatuated with it, guiltless, seeing the drawbacks, and discerning the escape.

The Buddha then describes three types of ascetics living the rough life:]

"Which three? There is the case, headman, where an ascetic who lives the rough life, having—through conviction—gone forth from the home life into homelessness, (with the thought,) 'Perhaps I will attain a skilled state. Perhaps I will realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision.' He afflicts & torments himself. He doesn't attain a skilled state. He doesn't realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision.

"Furthermore, there is the case where an ascetic who lives the rough life, having—through conviction—gone forth from the home life into homelessness, (with the thought,) 'Perhaps I will attain a skilled state. Perhaps I will realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision.' He afflicts & torments himself. He attains a skilled

state. He doesn't realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision.

"Furthermore, there is the case where an ascetic who lives the rough life, having—through conviction—gone forth from the home life into homelessness, (with the thought,) 'Perhaps I will attain a skilled state. Perhaps I will realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision.' He afflicts & torments himself. He attains a skilled state. He realizes a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision.

"As for the ascetic living the rough life who afflicts & torments himself, who doesn't attain a skilled state, and doesn't realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision: This ascetic living the rough life can be criticized on three grounds. On which three grounds can he be criticized? 'He afflicts & torments himself': This is the first ground on which he can be criticized. 'He doesn't attain a skilled state': This is the second ground on which he can be criticized. 'He doesn't realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision': This is the third ground on which he can be criticized....

"As for the ascetic living the rough life who afflicts & torments himself, who attains a skilled state, but doesn't realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision: This ascetic living the rough life can be criticized on two grounds and praised on one. On which two grounds can he be criticized? 'He afflicts & torments himself': This is the first ground on which he can be criticized. 'He doesn't realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision': This is the second ground on which he can be criticized.... On which one ground can he be praised? 'He attains a skilled state': This is the one ground on which he can be praised....

"As for the ascetic living the rough life who afflicts & torments himself, who attains a skilled state, and who realizes a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision: This ascetic living the rough life can be criticized on one ground and praised on two. On which one ground can he be criticized? 'He afflicts & torments himself': This is the one ground on which he can be criticized.... On which two grounds can he be praised? 'He attains a skilled state': This is the first ground on which he can be praised. 'He realizes a superior human state, a truly noble

distinction of knowledge & vision': This is the second ground on which he can be praised." — *SN 42:12*

§ 62. Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Ānanda, every habit & practice, every life, every holy life that is followed as of essential worth: Is every one of them fruitful?"

"Lord, that is not [to be answered] with a categorical answer."

"Very well then, Ānanda, give an analytical answer."

"When—by following a life of habit & practice, a life, a holy life that is followed as of essential worth—one's unskillful qualities increase while one's skillful qualities decline: that sort of habit & practice, life, holy life that is followed as of essential worth is fruitless. But when—by following a life of habit & practice, a life, a holy life that is followed as of essential worth—one's unskillful qualities decline while one's skillful qualities increase: that sort of habit & practice, life, holy life that is followed as of essential worth is fruitful."

That is what Ven. Ānanda said, and the Teacher approved. Then Ven. Ānanda, (realizing,) "The Teacher approves of me," got up from his seat and, having bowed down to the Blessed One and circumambulating him, left.

Then not long after Ven. Ānanda had left, the Blessed One said to the monks, "Monks, Ānanda is still in training, but it would not be easy to find his equal in discernment." — *AN 3:79*

§ 63. Then Vajjiya Māhita the householder went to where the wanderers of other sects were staying. On arrival he greeted them courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the wanderers said to him, "Is it true, householder, that Gotama the contemplative criticizes all asceticism, that he categorically denounces & disparages all ascetics who live the rough life?"

"No, venerable sirs, the Blessed One doesn't criticize all asceticism, nor does he categorically denounce or disparage all ascetics who live the rough life. The Blessed One criticizes what should be criticized, and

praises what should be praised. Criticizing what should be criticized, praising what should be praised, the Blessed One is one who speaks analytically, not one who speaks categorically on this matter."

When this was said, one of the wanderers said to Vajjiya Māhita the householder, "Now wait a minute, householder. This contemplative Gotama whom you praise is a nihilist, one who doesn't declare anything."

"I tell you, venerable sirs, that the Blessed One righteously declares that 'This is skillful.' He declares that 'This is unskillful.' Declaring that 'This is skillful' and 'This is unskillful,' he is one who has declared [a teaching]. He is not a nihilist, one who doesn't declare anything."

When this was said, the wanderers fell silent, abashed, sitting with their shoulders drooping, their heads down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Vajjiya Māhita the householder, perceiving that the wanderers were silent, abashed... at a loss for words, got up & went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One the entirety of his discussion with the wanderers.

[The Blessed One said,] "Well done, householder. Well done. That is how you should periodically & righteously refute those foolish men. I don't say that all asceticism is to be pursued, nor do I say that all asceticism is not to be pursued. I don't say that all observances should be observed, nor do I say that all observances should not be observed. I don't say that all exertions are to be pursued, nor do I say that all exertions are not to be pursued. I don't say that all forfeiture should be forfeited, nor do I say that all forfeiture should not be forfeited. I don't say that all release is to be used for release, nor do I say that all release is not to be used for release.

"If, when an asceticism is pursued, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities wane, then I tell you that that sort of asceticism is not to be pursued. But if, when an asceticism is pursued, unskillful qualities wane and skillful qualities grow, then I tell you that that sort of asceticism is to be pursued.

"If, when an observance is observed, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities wane, then I tell you that that sort of observance is not to be observed. But if, when an observance is observed, unskillful qualities

wane and skillful qualities grow, then I tell you that that sort of observance is to be observed.

"If, when an exertion is pursued....

"If, when a forfeiture is forfeited....

"If, when a release is used for release, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities wane, then I tell you that that sort of release is not to be used for release. But if, when a release is used for release, unskillful qualities wane and skillful qualities grow, then I tell you that that sort of release is to be used for release."

When Vajjiya Māhita the householder had been instructed, urged, roused & encouraged by the Blessed One with a talk on Dhamma, he got up from his seat and, having bowed down to the Blessed One, left, keeping the Blessed One on his right side. Not long afterward, the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Monks, even a monk who has long penetrated the Dhamma in this Dhamma & Vinaya would do well, periodically & righteously, to refute the wanderers of other sects in just the way Vajjiya Māhita the householder has done." — *AN 10:94*

JUDGING PRACTICES

§ 64. [Vassakāra the brahman:] "Once, Ven. Ānanda, Master Gotama was staying near Vesālī in the Peaked Roofed Pavilion in the Great Wood. I went to him at the Peaked Roofed Pavilion in the Great Wood, and there he spoke in a variety of ways on mental absorption *(jhāna).* Master Gotama was both endowed with mental absorption & made mental absorption his habit. In fact, he praised mental absorption of every sort."

[Ven. Ānanda:] "It wasn't the case, brahman, that the Blessed One praised mental absorption of every sort, nor did he criticize mental absorption of every sort. And what sort of mental absorption did he not praise? There is the case where a certain person dwells with his awareness overcome by sensual passion, seized with sensual passion. He doesn't discern the escape, as it actually is present, from sensual passion once it has arisen. Making that sensual passion the focal point, he absorbs himself with it, besorbs, resorbs, & supersorbs[1] himself with it.

"He dwells with his awareness overcome by ill will....

"He dwells with his awareness overcome by sloth & drowsiness....

"He dwells with his awareness overcome by restlessness & anxiety....

"He dwells with his awareness overcome by uncertainty, seized with uncertainty. He doesn't discern the escape, as it actually is present, from uncertainty once it has arisen. Making that uncertainty the focal point, he absorbs himself with it, besorbs, resorbs, & supersorbs himself with it. This is the sort of mental absorption that the Blessed One did not praise.

"And what sort of mental absorption did he praise? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joys & distresses—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the sort of mental absorption that the Blessed One praised.

"It would seem, Ven. Ānanda, that Master Gotama criticized the mental absorption that deserves criticism, and praised that which deserves praise." — *MN 108*

NOTE: 1. These neologisms are an attempt to render the wordplay of the Pali into English. The sense is that there is a type of strong concentration involved when one is obsessed with unskillful thoughts, but that it is carried to ludicrous and unhealthy degrees.

§ 65. Then Ven. Savittha and Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita went to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, greeted him courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to Ven. Savittha, "Friend, there are these three individuals found existing in the world. Which three? The bodily witness, the one attained to view, and the one released through conviction.... Of these three, which pleases you as the most splendid & most sublime?"

"... The one released through conviction, friend. Why is that? In this individual the faculty of conviction is dominant."

Then Ven. Sāriputta said to Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita, "...Of these three, which pleases you as the most splendid & most sublime?"

"... The bodily witness, friend. Why is that? In this individual the faculty of concentration is dominant."

Then Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita said to Ven. Sāriputta, "...Of these three, which pleases you as the most splendid & most sublime?"

"... The one attained to view, friend. Why is that? In this individual the faculty of discernment is dominant."

Then Ven. Sāriputta said to Ven. Savittha and Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita, "Friends, we have each answered in line with our own understanding. Come, friends, let's go to the Blessed One and tell him about this matter. However he answers, that's how we'll remember it."

"As you say, friend," Ven. Savittha and Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita responded to Ven. Sāriputta.

Then Ven. Sāriputta, Ven. Savittha, and Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta told the Blessed One everything covered in his discussion with Ven. Savittha and Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita.

[The Blessed One said,] "It's not easy, Sāriputta, to give a categorical answer as to which of these three is the most splendid & most sublime. There's the possibility that the individual who is released through conviction is practicing the way to arahantship, while the individual who is a bodily witness is a once-returner or a non-returner, and the individual who is attained to view is a once-returner or a non-returner.

"It's not easy, Sāriputta, to give a categorical answer as to which of these three is the most splendid & most sublime. There's the possibility that the individual who is a bodily witness is practicing the way to arahantship, while the individual who is released through conviction is a once-returner or a non-returner, and the individual who is attained to view is a once-returner or a non-returner.

"It's not easy, Sāriputta, to give a categorical answer as to which of these three is the most splendid & most sublime. There's the possibility that the individual who is attained to view is practicing the way to

arahantship, while the individual who is a bodily witness is a once-returner or a non-returner, and the individual who is released through conviction is a once-returner or a non-returner.

"It's not easy, Sāriputta, to give a categorical answer as to which of these three is the most splendid & most sublime." — *AN 3:21*

KAMMA & FEELING

§ 66. As he was sitting to one side, Potaliputta the wanderer said to Ven. Samiddhi, "Face to face with Gotama the contemplative have I heard this, face to face have I learned this: 'Bodily action is barren, verbal action is barren, only mental action is true. And there is an attainment in which, on being attained, one doesn't feel anything.'"

"Don't say that, friend. Don't misrepresent the Blessed One. For it's not good to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One would not say that: 'Bodily action is barren, verbal action is barren, only mental action is true.' But there is, friend, an attainment in which, on being attained, one doesn't feel anything."

"How long has it been, friend Samiddhi, since you went forth (into homelessness)?"

"Not long, friend. Three years."

"Then what now should I say about the elder monks, when a junior monk would suppose that his Teacher is to be defended in this way? Having intentionally done an action with body, with speech, or with mind, what does one experience?"

"Having intentionally done an action with body, with speech, or with mind, one experiences stress."

Then Potaliputta the wanderer neither delighted in nor scorned Ven. Samiddhi's words. Neither delighting nor scorning, he got up from his seat and left.

[Ven. Samiddhi then went to Ven. Ānanda to report this discussion. Ven. Ānanda then went, together with Ven. Samiddhi, to see the Blessed One and told him what had happened.]

When this was said, the Blessed One said, "I do not recall even having seen Potaliputta the wanderer, much less having that sort of discussion.

And his question, which deserved an analytical answer, has been given a categorical answer by this worthless man, Samiddhi."

When this was said, Ven. Udāyin said to the Blessed One, "But what if Ven. Samiddhi was speaking in reference to this: 'Whatever is felt comes under stress'?"

When this was said, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, "Look, Ānanda, at how this worthless Udāyin interrupts. I knew just now that he would interrupt in an inappropriate way. From the very beginning, Potaliputta the wanderer was asking about the three kinds of feeling. When this worthless Samiddhi was asked by him in this way, he should have answered, 'Having intentionally done—with body, with speech, or with mind—an action that is to be experienced as pleasure, one experiences pleasure. Having intentionally done—with body, with speech, or with mind—an action that is to be experienced as pain, one experiences pain. Having intentionally done—with body, with speech, or with mind—an action that is to be experienced as neither-pleasure-nor-pain, one experiences neither-pleasure-nor-pain. Answering this way, this worthless Samiddhi would have rightly answered Potaliputta the wanderer."

[The Buddha then analyses four cases, one in which a person performs an unskillful action and after death is reborn in a bad destination, one in which a person performs an unskillful action and after death is reborn in a good destination, one in which a person abstains from unskillful action and after death is reborn in a good destination, and one which a person abstains from unskillful action and after death is reborn in a bad destination. In each case, a contemplative develops the clairvoyant ability to see this happening, and from the individual case announces that what he saw happens in all cases, and that anyone who claims otherwise is wrong. Thus in the first and third case, the contemplatives announce categorically that good and bad actions do bear results and always lead to immediate reward or retribution in the next life; in the second and fourth cases, they announce categorically that good and bad actions are barren and lead to no reward or retribution at all. The Buddha then gives an analytical explanation to cover all the four cases:]

"There are four kinds of person to be found in the world. Which four? There is the case where a certain person takes life, takes what is not given (steals), engages in illicit sex, lies, speaks divisively, speaks abusively, engages in idle chatter; is covetous, malevolent, & holds wrong views. With the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

"But there is also the case where a certain person takes life... holds wrong views, [yet] with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destinations, in a heavenly world.

"And there is the case where a certain person abstains from taking life, abstains from taking what is not given... is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds right views. With the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destinations, in a heavenly world.

"But there is also the case where a certain person abstains from taking life, abstains from taking what is not given... is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds right views, [yet] with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell....

"In the case of the person who takes life... [yet] with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, in a heavenly world: Either earlier he performed fine kamma that is to be felt as pleasant, or later he performed fine kamma that is to be felt as pleasant, or at the time of death he adopted & carried out right views. Because of that, with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destination, in a heavenly world. But as for the results of taking life... holding wrong views, he will feel them either right here & now, or later [in this lifetime], or following that....

"In the case of the person who abstains from taking life... [yet] with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell: Either earlier he performed evil kamma that is to be felt as painful, or later he performed evil kamma that is to be felt as painful, or at the time of death he adopted & carried out wrong views. Because of that, with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, in hell. But as for the results of abstaining from taking life... holding right

views, he will feel them either right here & now, or later [in this lifetime], or following that." — *MN 136*

§ 67. Then, early in the morning, Ven. Bhūmija put on his robes and, carrying his bowl & outer robe, went to the residence of Prince Jayasena [his nephew]. On arrival, he sat down on a seat made ready. Prince Jayasena went to Ven. Bhūmija and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Bhūmija, "Master Bhūmija, there are some contemplatives & brahmans who espouse this teaching, espouse this view: 'If one follows the holy life, even when having made a wish [for results], one is incapable of obtaining results. If one follows the holy life even when having made no wish, one is incapable of obtaining results. If one follows the holy life even when both having made a wish and having made no wish, one is incapable of obtaining results. If one follows the holy life even when neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, one is incapable of obtaining results.' With regard to that, what does Master Bhūmija's teacher say, what is his view, what does he declare?"

"I haven't heard this face to face with the Blessed One, prince, I haven't received this face to face with the Blessed One, but there is the possibility that the Blessed One would answer in this way: 'If one follows the holy life inappropriately, even when having made a wish [for results], one is incapable of obtaining results. If one follows the holy life inappropriately, even when having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, one is incapable of obtaining results. [But] if one follows the holy life appropriately, even when having made a wish, one is capable of obtaining results. If one follows the holy life appropriately, even when having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, one is capable of obtaining results.' I haven't heard this face to face with the Blessed One, I haven't received this face to face with the Blessed One, but there is the possibility that the Blessed One would answer in this way."

"If that is what Master Bhūmija's teacher says, if that is his view, if that is what he declares, then yes, Master Bhūmija's teacher stands, as it were,

having struck all of those many contemplatives & brahmans down by the head."

Prince Jayasena then served Ven. Bhūmija from his own dish of milk rice.

Then Ven. Bhūmija, after his meal, returning from his alms round, went to the Blessed One [and reported the entirety of his discussion with Prince Jayasena]. "Answering in this way when thus asked, lord, I trust that I am speaking in line with what the Blessed One has said, that I am not misrepresenting the Blessed One with what is unfactual, that I am answering in line with the Dhamma, and that the legitimate implications of what I say give no grounds for criticism."

"Certainly, Bhūmija, in answering in this way when thus asked, you are speaking in line with what I have said, you are not misrepresenting me with what is unfactual, and you are answering in line with the Dhamma and that the legitimate implications of what you say give no grounds for criticism. For any contemplatives or brahmans endowed with wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, & wrong concentration: If they follow the holy life even when having made a wish [for results], they are incapable of obtaining results. If they follow the holy life even when having made no wish, they are incapable of obtaining results. If they follow the holy life even when both having made a wish and having made no wish, they are incapable of obtaining results. If they follow the holy life even when neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, they are incapable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an inappropriate way of obtaining results.

"Suppose a man in need of oil, looking for oil, wandering in search of oil, would pile gravel in a tub and press it, sprinkling it again & again with water. If he were to pile gravel in a tub and press it, sprinkling it again & again with water even when having made a wish [for results]... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be incapable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an inappropriate way of obtaining results....

"Suppose a man in need of milk, looking for milk, wandering in search of milk, would twist the horn of a newly-calved cow. If he were to twist the

horn of a newly-calved cow even when having made a wish [for results]... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be incapable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an inappropriate way of obtaining results....

"Suppose a man in need of butter, looking for butter, wandering in search of butter, would sprinkle water on water in a crock and twirl it with a churn-stick. If he were to sprinkle water on water in a crock and twirl it with a churn-stick even when having made a wish [for results]... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be incapable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an inappropriate way of obtaining results....

"Suppose a man in need of fire, looking for fire, wandering in search of fire, would take a fire stick and rub it into a wet, sappy piece of wood. If he were to take a fire stick and rub it into a wet, sappy piece of wood even when having made a wish [for results]... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be incapable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an inappropriate way of obtaining results.

"In the same way, any contemplatives or brahmans endowed with wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, & wrong concentration: If they follow the holy life even when having made a wish [for results]... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, they are incapable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an inappropriate way of obtaining results.

"But as for any contemplatives or brahmans endowed with right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, & right concentration: If they follow the holy life even when having made a wish, they are capable of obtaining results. If they follow the holy life even when having made no wish, they are capable of obtaining results. If they follow the holy life even when both having made a wish and having made no wish, they are capable of obtaining

results. If they follow the holy life even when neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, they are capable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an appropriate way of obtaining results.

"Suppose a man in need of oil, looking for oil, wandering in search of oil, would pile sesame seeds in a tub and press them, sprinkling them again & again with water. If he were to pile sesame seeds in a tub and press them, sprinkling them again & again with water, even when having made a wish [for results]... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be capable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an appropriate way of obtaining results....

"Suppose a man in need of milk, looking for milk, wandering in search of milk, would pull the teat of a newly-calved cow. If he were to pull the teat of a newly-calved cow even when having made a wish [for results]... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be capable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an appropriate way of obtaining results....

"Suppose a man in need of butter, looking for butter, wandering in search of butter, would sprinkle water on curds in a crock and twirl them with a churn-stick. If he were to sprinkle water on curds in a crock and twirl them with a churn-stick even when having made a wish [for results]... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be capable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an appropriate way of obtaining results.

"Suppose a man in need of fire, looking for fire, wandering in search of fire, would take a fire stick and rub it into a dry, sapless piece of wood. If he were to take a fire stick and rub it into a dry, sapless piece of wood even when having made a wish [for results]... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be capable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an appropriate way of obtaining results.

"In the same way, any contemplatives or brahmans endowed with right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, & right concentration: If they follow the holy

life even when having made a wish [for results], they are capable of obtaining results. If they follow the holy life even when having made no wish, they are capable of obtaining results. If they follow the holy life even when both having made a wish and having made no wish, they are capable of obtaining results. If they follow the holy life even when neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, they are capable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an appropriate way of obtaining results.

"Bhūmija, if these four similes had occurred to you in the presence of Prince Jayasena, he would have naturally felt confidence in you and—feeling confidence—would have shown his confidence in you."

"But, lord, how could these four similes have occurred to me in the presence of Prince Jayasena, as they are natural to the Blessed One and have never before been heard from him?"

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Bhūmija delighted in the Blessed One's words. — *MN 126*

ON THE BUDDHA AS TEACHER

§ 68. Then the Blessed One went to the brahman Lohicca's home. On arrival, he sat down on a seat made ready. The brahman Lohicca, with his own hand, served & satisfied the Blessed One & the community of monks with choice staple & non-staple foods. Then, when the Blessed One had eaten and had removed his hand from his bowl, the brahman Lohicca took a lower seat and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it true, Lohicca, that an evil viewpoint to this effect has arisen in you: 'Suppose that a contemplative or brahman were to arrive at a skillful doctrine. Having arrived at a skillful doctrine, he should not declare it to anyone else, for what can one person do for another? It would be just the same as if, having cut through an old bond, one were to make another new bond. I say that such a thing is an evil, greedy deed, for what can one person do for another'?"

"Yes, Master Gotama."

"What do you think, Lohicca? Don't you reign over Sālavatikā?"

"Yes, Master Gotama."

“Now, suppose someone were to say, ‘The brahman Lohicca reigns over Sālavatikā. He alone should consume the fruits & revenues of Sālavatikā, and not share them with others.’ Would someone speaking in this way be a creator of obstacles for your subjects, or would he not?”

“He would be a creator of obstacles, Master Gotama.”

“And, being a creator of obstacles, would he be sympathetic for their benefit or not?”

“He would not be sympathetic for their benefit, Master Gotama.”

“And in one not sympathetic for their benefit, would his mind be established in good will for them, or in animosity?”

“In animosity, Master Gotama.”

“When the mind is established in animosity, is there wrong view or right view?”

“Wrong view, Master Gotama.”

“Now, for one of wrong view, Lohicca, I tell you, there is one of two destinations: either hell or the animal womb.

“What do you think, Lohicca? Doesn’t King Pasenadi Kosala reign over Kasi & Kosala?”

“Yes, Master Gotama.”

“Now, suppose someone were to say, ‘King Pasenadi Kosala reigns over Kasi & Kosala. He alone should consume the fruits & revenues of Kasi & Kosala, and not share them with others.’ Would someone speaking in this way be a creator of obstacles for King Pasenadi’s subjects—you & others—or would he not?”

“He would be a creator of obstacles, Master Gotama.”

“And, being a creator of obstacles, would he be sympathetic for their benefit or not?”

“He would not be sympathetic for their benefit, Master Gotama.”

“And in one not sympathetic for their benefit, would his mind be established in good will for them, or in animosity?”

“In animosity, Master Gotama.”

“When the mind is established in animosity, is there wrong view or right view?”

“Wrong view, Master Gotama.”

"Now, for one of wrong view, Lohicca, I tell you, there is one of two destinations: either hell or the animal womb.

"So then, Lohicca, if anyone were to say, 'The brahman Lohicca reigns over Sālavatikā. He alone should consume the fruits & revenues of Sālavatikā, and not share them with others,' he, speaking in this way, would be a creator of obstacles for your subjects. Being a creator of obstacles, he would not be sympathetic for their benefit. In one not sympathetic for their benefit, the mind would be established in animosity for them. When the mind is established in animosity, there is wrong view. For one of wrong view, I tell you, there is one of two destinations: either hell or the animal womb. In the same way, if anyone were to say, 'Suppose that a contemplative or brahman were to arrive at a skillful doctrine. Having arrived at a skillful doctrine, he should not declare it to anyone else, for what can one person do for another? It would be just the same as if, having cut through an old bond, one were to make another new bond. I say that such a thing is an evil, greedy deed, for what can one person do for another?'—he, speaking in this way, would be a creator of obstacles for those children of good family who, coming to the Dhamma & Vinaya revealed by the Tathāgata, attain the sort of grand distinction where they attain the fruit of stream-entry, the fruit of once-returning, the fruit of non-returning, the fruit of arahantship; and for those who ripen deva wombs for the sake of bringing about the deva state. Being a creator of obstacles, he would not be sympathetic for their benefit. In one not sympathetic for their benefit, the mind would be established in animosity for them. When the mind is established in animosity, there is wrong view. For one of wrong view, I tell you, there is one of two destinations: either hell or the animal womb.

"And if anyone were to say, 'King Pasenadi Kosala reigns over Kasi & Kosala. He alone should consume the fruits & revenues of Kasi & Kosala, and not share them with others,' he, speaking in this way, would be a creator of obstacles for King Pasenadi's subjects—you & others. Being a creator of obstacles, he would not be sympathetic for their benefit. In one not sympathetic for their benefit, the mind would be established in animosity for them. When the mind is established in animosity, there is wrong view. For one of wrong view, I tell you, there is one of two destinations: either hell or the animal womb. In the same way, if anyone

were to say, 'Suppose that a contemplative or brahman were to arrive at a skillful doctrine. Having arrived at a skillful doctrine, he should not declare it to anyone else, for what can one person do for another? It would be just the same as if, having cut through an old bond, one were to make another new bond. I say that such a thing is an evil, greedy deed, for what can one person do for another?'—he, speaking in this way, would be a creator of obstacles for those children of good family who, coming to the Dhamma & Vinaya revealed by the Tathāgata, attain the sort of grand distinction where they attain the fruit of stream-entry, the fruit of once-returning, the fruit of non-returning, the fruit of arahantship; and also for those who ripen deva wombs for the sake of bringing about the deva state. Being a creator of obstacles, he would not be sympathetic for their benefit. In one not sympathetic for their benefit, the mind would be established in animosity for them. When the mind is established in animosity, there is wrong view. For one of wrong view, I tell you, there is one of two destinations: either hell or the animal womb.

"Lohicca, there are these three sorts of teachers who are worthy of criticism in the world, and when anyone criticizes these sorts of teachers, the criticism is true, factual, righteous, & unblameworthy. Which three?

"There is the case where a certain teacher has not attained the goal of the contemplative life for which one goes forth from the home life into homelessness. He, not having attained that goal of the contemplative life, teaches his disciples, 'This is for your benefit. This is for your happiness.' His disciples don't listen, don't lend ear, don't put forth an intent for gnosis *[aññā].* They practice in a way deviating from the teacher's instructions. He should be criticized, saying, 'You, venerable sir, have not attained the goal of the contemplative life for which one goes forth from the home life into homelessness. Not having attained that goal of the contemplative life, you teach your disciples, "This is for your benefit. This is for your happiness." Your disciples don't listen, don't lend ear, don't put forth an intent for gnosis, and practice in a way deviating from the teacher's instructions. It's just as if a man were to pursue [a woman] who pulls away, or to embrace one who turns her back. I say that such a thing is an evil, greedy deed, for what can one person do for another?' This is the first teacher who is worthy of criticism in the world, and when anyone

criticizes this sort of teacher, the criticism is true, factual, righteous, & unblameworthy.

"Then there is the case where a certain teacher has not attained the goal of the contemplative life for which one goes forth from the home life into homelessness. He, not having attained that goal of the contemplative life, teaches his disciples, 'This is for your benefit. This is for your happiness.' His disciples listen, lend ear, put forth an intent for gnosis, and practice in a way not deviating from the teacher's instructions. He should be criticized, saying, 'You, venerable sir, have not attained the goal of the contemplative life for which one goes forth from the home life into homelessness. Not having attained that goal of the contemplative life, you teach your disciples, "This is for your benefit. This is for your happiness." Your disciples listen, lend ear, put forth an intent for gnosis, and practice in a way not deviating from the teacher's instructions. It's just as if a man, neglecting his own field, were to imagine that another's field should be weeded. I say that such a thing is an evil, greedy deed, for what can one person do for another?' This is the second teacher who is worthy of criticism in the world, and when anyone criticizes this sort of teacher, the criticism is true, factual, righteous, & unblameworthy.

"Then there is the case where a certain teacher has attained the goal of the contemplative life for which one goes forth from the home life into homelessness. He, having attained that goal of the contemplative life, teaches his disciples, 'This is for your benefit. This is for your happiness.' His disciples don't listen, don't lend ear, don't put forth an intent for gnosis. They practice in a way deviating from the teacher's instructions. He should be criticized, saying, 'You, venerable sir, have attained the goal of the contemplative life for which one goes forth from the home life into homelessness. Having attained that goal of the contemplative life, you teach your disciples, "This is for your benefit. This is for your happiness," but your disciples don't listen, don't lend ear, don't put forth an intent for gnosis, and practice in a way deviating from the teacher's instructions. It's just as if, having cut through an old bond, one were to make another new bond. I say that such a thing is an evil, greedy deed, for what can one person do for another?' This is the third teacher who is worthy of criticism in the world, and when anyone criticizes this sort of teacher, the criticism is true, factual, righteous, & unblameworthy."

When this was said, the brahman Lohicca said to the Blessed One, "But is there, Master Gotama, any teacher who is not worthy of criticism in the world?"

"There is, Lohicca, a teacher who is not worthy of criticism in the world."

"But which teacher, Master Gotama, is not worthy of criticism in the world?"

"There is the case, Lohicca, where a Tathāgata appears in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened. He teaches the Dhamma admirable in its beginning, admirable in its middle, admirable in its end. He proclaims the holy life both in its particulars & in its essence, entirely perfect, surpassingly pure.

"A householder or householder's son, hearing the Dhamma, gains conviction in the Tathāgata and reflects: 'Household life is confining, a dusty path. The life gone forth is like the open air. It is not easy living at home to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, like a polished shell. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?'

"So after some time he abandons his mass of wealth, large or small; leaves his circle of relatives, large or small; shaves off his hair & beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness.

"When he has thus gone forth, he lives restrained by the rules of the monastic code, seeing danger in the slightest faults. Consummate in his virtue, he guards the doors of his senses, is possessed of mindfulness & alertness, and is content....

"Endowed with this noble aggregate of virtue, this noble restraint over the sense faculties, this noble mindfulness & alertness, and this noble contentment, he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a wilderness, the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a forest grove, the open air, a heap of straw. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he sits down, crosses his legs, holds his body erect, and brings mindfulness to the fore.

"Abandoning covetousness with regard to the world, he dwells with an awareness devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness.

Abandoning ill will & anger, he dwells with an awareness devoid of ill will, sympathetic with the benefit of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of ill will & anger. Abandoning sloth & drowsiness, he dwells with an awareness devoid of sloth & drowsiness, mindful, alert, percipient of light. He cleanses his mind of sloth & drowsiness. Abandoning restlessness & anxiety, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness & anxiety. Abandoning uncertainty, he dwells having crossed over uncertainty, with no perplexity with regard to skillful qualities. He cleanses his mind of uncertainty...

"When these five hindrances are abandoned in himself, he regards it as unindebtedness, good health, release from prison, freedom, a place of security. Seeing that they have been abandoned within him, he becomes glad. Glad, he becomes enraptured. Enraptured, his body grows tranquil. His body tranquil, he is sensitive to pleasure. Feeling pleasure, his mind becomes concentrated.

"Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, he enters and remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. Just as if a skilled bathman or bathman's apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again & again with water, so that his ball of bath powder—saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within & without—would nevertheless not drip; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. When a disciple of a teacher attains this sort of grand distinction, Lohicca, that is a teacher not worthy of criticism in the world, and if anyone were to criticize this sort of teacher, the criticism would be false, unfactual, unrighteous, & blameworthy.

"Then, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna.... the third jhāna.... the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. Just as if a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; even so, the

monk sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness. When a disciple of a teacher attains this sort of grand distinction, Lohicca, that is a teacher not worthy of criticism in the world, and if anyone were to criticize this sort of teacher, the criticism would be false, unfactual, unrighteous, & blameworthy.

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, & bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge & vision... to creating a mind-made body... to the modes of supranormal powers... to the divine ear-property... to knowledge of the awareness of other beings... to knowledge of the recollection of past lives... to knowledge of the passing away & re-appearance of beings... to the knowledge of the ending of fermentations. He discerns, as it has come to be, that *'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress... These are fermentations... This is the origination of fermentations... This is the cessation of fermentations... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.'* His heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming, the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.... When a disciple of a teacher attains this sort of grand distinction, Lohicca, that is a teacher not worthy of criticism in the world, and if anyone were to criticize this sort of teacher, the criticism would be false, unfactual, unrighteous, & blameworthy." — *DN 12*

§ 69. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary.

Then Prince Abhaya went to [the Jain teacher] Niganṭha Nāṭaputta and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Niganṭha Nāṭaputta said to him, "Come, now, prince. Refute the words of Gotama the contemplative, and this admirable report about you will spread afar: 'The words of Gotama the contemplative—so mighty, so powerful—were refuted by Prince Abhaya!'"

"But how, venerable sir, will I refute the words of Gotama the contemplative—so mighty, so powerful?"

"Come now, prince. Go to Gotama the contemplative and on arrival say this: 'Venerable sir, would the Tathāgata say words that are unendearing & displeasing to others?' If Gotama the contemplative, thus asked, answers, 'The Tathāgata would say words that are unendearing & displeasing to others,' then you should say, 'Then how is there any difference between you, venerable sir, and run-of-the-mill people? For even run-of-the-mill people say words that are unendearing & displeasing to others.' But if Gotama the contemplative, thus asked, answers, 'The Tathāgata would not say words that are unendearing & displeasing to others,' then you should say, 'Then how, venerable sir, did you say of Devadatta that "Devadatta is headed for destitution, Devadatta is headed for hell, Devadatta will boil for an eon, Devadatta is incurable"? For Devadatta was upset & disgruntled at those words of yours.' When Gotama the contemplative is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won't be able to swallow it down or spit it up. Just as if a two-horned chestnut were stuck in a man's throat: he would not be able to swallow it down or spit it up. In the same way, when Gotama the contemplative is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won't be able to swallow it down or spit it up."

Responding, "As you say, venerable sir," Prince Abhaya got up from his seat, bowed down to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, circumambulated him, and then went to the Blessed One. On arrival, he bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he glanced up at the sun and thought, "Today is not the time to refute the Blessed One's words. Tomorrow in my own home I will overturn the Blessed One's words." So he said to the Blessed One, "May the Blessed One, together with three others, acquiesce to my offer of tomorrow's meal."

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Prince Abhaya, understanding the Blessed One's acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, and left.

Then, after the night had passed, the Blessed One early in the morning put on his robes and, carrying his bowl and outer robe, went to Prince Abhaya's home. On arrival, he sat down on a seat made ready. Prince

Abhaya, with his own hand, served & satisfied the Blessed One with fine staple & non-staple foods. Then, when the Blessed One had eaten and had removed his hand from his bowl, Prince Abhaya took a lower seat and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, would the Tathāgata say words that are unendearing & displeasing to others?"

"Prince, there is no categorical answer to that."

"Then right here, venerable sir, the Nigaṇṭhas are destroyed."

"But prince, why do you say, 'Then right here, venerable sir, the Nigaṇṭhas are destroyed'?"

"Just yesterday, venerable sir, I went to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and... he said to me... 'Come now, prince. Go to Gotama the contemplative and on arrival say this: "Venerable sir, would the Tathāgata say words that are unendearing & displeasing to others?" ... Just as if a two-horned chestnut were stuck in a man's throat: he would not be able to swallow it down or spit it up. In the same way, when Gotama the contemplative is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won't be able to swallow it down or spit it up.'"

Now at that time a baby boy was lying face-up on the prince's lap. So the Blessed One said to the prince, "What do you think, prince: If this young boy, through your own negligence or that of the nurse, were to take a stick or a piece of gravel into its mouth, what would you do?"

"I would take it out, venerable sir. If I couldn't get it out right away, then holding its head in my left hand and crooking a finger of my right, I would take it out, even if it meant drawing blood. Why is that? Because I have sympathy for the young boy."

"In the same way, prince:

[1] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial [or: not connected with the goal], unendearing & displeasing to others, he doesn't say them.

[2] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, unendearing & displeasing to others, he doesn't say them.

[3] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, but unendearing & displeasing to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them.

[4] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial, but endearing & pleasing to others, he doesn't say them.

[5] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, but endearing & pleasing to others, he doesn't say them.

[6] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, and endearing & pleasing to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them. Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has sympathy for living beings." — *MN 58* [*§79*]

§ 70. On one occasion the Blessed One, while wandering on tour among the Kosalans together with a large community of monks, arrived at Nālandā. There he stayed at Nālandā in Pāvarika's Mango Grove.

Now at that time Nālandā was in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, the crops white with blight and turned to straw. And at that time Niganṭha Nāṭaputta was staying in Nālandā together with a large following of Niganṭhas. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the Niganṭhas, went to Niganṭha Nāṭaputta and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Niganṭha Nāṭaputta said to him, "Come, now, headman. Refute the words of Gotama the contemplative, and this admirable report about you will spread afar: 'The words of Gotama the contemplative—so mighty, so powerful—were refuted by Asibandhakaputta the headman!'"

"But how, venerable sir, will I refute the words of Gotama the contemplative—so mighty, so powerful?"

"Come now, headman. Go to Gotama the contemplative and on arrival say this: 'Venerable sir, doesn't the Blessed One in many ways praise kindness, protection, & sympathy for families?' If Gotama the contemplative, thus asked, answers, 'Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praises kindness, protection, & sympathy for families,' then you should say, 'Then why, venerable sir, is the Blessed One, together with a large community of monks, wandering on tour around Nālandā in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, when the crops are white with blight and turned to straw? The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families.' When Gotama the

contemplative is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won't be able to swallow it down or spit it up."

Responding, "As you say, venerable sir," Asibandhakaputta the headman got up from his seat, bowed down to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, circumambulated him, and then went to the Blessed One. On arrival, he bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, doesn't the Blessed One in many ways praise kindness, protection, & sympathy for families?"

"Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praises kindness, protection, & sympathy for families."

"Then why, venerable sir, is the Blessed One, together with a large community of monks, wandering on tour around Nālandā in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, when the crops are white with blight and turned to straw? The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families."

"Headman, recollecting back over 91 eons, I do not know any family to have been brought to downfall through the giving of cooked alms. On the contrary: Whatever families are rich, with much wealth, with many possessions, with a great deal of money, a great many accoutrements of wealth, a great many commodities, all have become so from giving, from truth, from restraint.

"Headman, there are eight causes, eight reasons for the downfall of families. Families go to their downfall because of kings, or families go to their downfall because of thieves, or families go to their downfall because of fire, or families go to their downfall because of floods, or their stored-up treasure disappears, or their mismanaged undertakings go wrong, or in the family a wastrel is born who squanders, scatters, & shatters its wealth, and inconstancy itself is the eighth. These are the eight causes, the eight reasons for the downfall of families. Now, when these eight causes, these eight reasons are to be found, if anyone should say of me, 'The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families'—without abandoning that statement, without abandoning that intent, without relinquishing that view—then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell."

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.” — *SN 42:9*

Chapter Five

Cross-questioning: I

The Buddha cited cross-questioning *(paṭipucchā)* as a distinctive feature of his general teaching method [§73], noting that it's an effective means for clarifying obscure points and resolving doubts. In this way it helps realize one of the rewards of listening to the Dhamma [§8]: clarifying what is not yet clear. By observing the Buddha's use of this particular strategy in action, we can see why this is so.

To begin with, an interpersonal dynamic in which the teacher is open to cross-questioning from the student, and the student from the teacher, provides an atmosphere conducive for establishing that the topics under discussion are reasonable and responsive to the listeners' needs. Even though the Buddha, in opening himself to questions, was also opening himself to arguments and debates, he saw that if the student was intent on learning, even a contentious exchange could lead to a positive result. At times he would be willing to debate an insincere opponent if those listening to the debate were intent on learning the truth [§126], for he saw that the cross-questioning within the debate would clarify the truth in their minds.

In fact, it's possible to regard cross-questioning as the most inter-subjective mode of teaching. A teacher not open to cross-questioning is guilty of objectifying himself and his audience. On the one hand, the way he presents his teaching as a finished product stands on the foundation of objectification-classifications, "I am the thinker," unwilling to open his thought to the probing of others. On the other hand, he is treating his listeners as objects, for he shows no concern for whether they will understand or benefit from the beauty or logic of his thought. However, a teacher who welcomes cross-questioning is concerned less with his status as a teacher and more with communicating something clear and useful. In honoring his listeners' freedom to question, he opens the discussion to

their subjective experience of doubt and their desire for knowledge. Thus a sincere exchange of questions—particularly around the primary common-ground problem of subjective experience, how to gain release from suffering and stress—is the pedagogical equivalent of thought prior to objectification. The Buddha rejected objectification not only as a style of thinking but also as a style of teaching: another way in which his teaching style was an expression of his compassion.

Furthermore, as a compassionate and responsible teacher, the Buddha was not content simply to give the right answer to a question. He also wanted to ensure that his listeners understood the answer and had the right mental context for putting it to use. Thus his most distinctive form of cross-questioning was to cite activities familiar to them and—from his own experience—similar to the context in which the teaching was to be used. Then he would cross-question them about those activities to ensure that they too saw the parallel in a way that would help them understand and apply the teaching effectively.

At the same time, by showing his listeners how cross-questioning was done, he was giving them an example of how to pursue the process of clarification within their own minds. Having seen the value of self cross-examination—an internal form of cross-questioning—in his own search for awakening, he wanted to expose his listeners to the same process, showing them how it could be done skillfully, in hopes that they would subject themselves to the same process and receive similar results.

An important part of this lesson included knowing which types of cross-questioning to focus on, and which ones to put aside. Even though the Buddha was generally open to cross-questioning from his listeners, the fact that he was offering his teaching as a gift meant that he held the right to maintain firm control over what he would and wouldn't give. This meant exercising control over two things: the questions he would and wouldn't answer, and the questioners he would and wouldn't respond to. As we will see in Chapters Seven and Eight, he would put aside any questions whose answer would harm himself or others, or would distract attention from the issue at hand: how to understand and put an end to suffering and stress. As we will see later in this chapter, he refused to submit to cross-questioning from listeners whose motives in cross-questioning were less than sincere. Thus, even though the Buddha taught

by example that it was, in general, a good principle to be open to cross-questioning, he also taught by example that cross-questioning, in order to stay beneficial, had to stay focused within appropriate limits.

In Chapter One we noted the nine different situations to which the Canon applies the term "cross-questioning." Although only four of the situations involve cross-questioning as a response to a question, all nine are united by two common threads: A person should take responsibility for his or her actions or statements; and truth is to be found and clarified by a mutual willingness to cross-question and be cross-questioned. Thus, to understand what the Buddha intended when applying this strategy to questions addressed to him, it is useful to recapitulate all nine. They are:

1) A monk is accused of an offense that he denies committing. His fellow monks cross-question him to see if he can give a coherent and believable account of his behavior.
2) A monk, even after being reproved by his fellow monks, maintains a position in the Buddha's presence that is clearly pernicious. After the Buddha ascertains that the monk will not abandon the pernicious view, he rebukes the monk and then turns to the other monks to cross-question them as to the relevant right view. This is to ensure that none of them pick up the first monk's errant position.
3) The Buddha or one of his disciples makes a statement that a listener finds unclear. The listener asks him to explain what the statement means and how it fits in with his other statements.
4) A person asks a question unclear in its wording or underlying motive. The Buddha cross-questions him to clarify the original question.
5) A person asks for a definition of a term without realizing that he has enough knowledge to provide at least part of the definition himself. The Buddha responds by cross-questioning the person in such a way that the person ends up contributing to the answer of his own question.
6) A person asks a question in a way indicating that he may not understand the response the Buddha will give—either the content of the response or the strategy with which it is given. The Buddha then draws an example, usually an activity, familiar to the person

and questions him on it. From the person's replies, the Buddha shows how the proper response to the original question can be understood in the same frame as the person's understanding of the familiar activity.
7) A person presents an argument against the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha cites a hypothetical example that disproves the person's position and then questions him on it. From the person's answers, the Buddha shows how the person has contradicted himself and so disproven his own argument.
8) The Buddha encourages his listeners to cross-question themselves about their actions or traits present in their minds.
9) The Buddha cross-questions his listeners as to phenomena they are experiencing in the present moment.

The first of these situations is not, strictly speaking, a teaching situation, but the Buddha's method for handling it throws light on the responsibilities assumed in cross-questioning in all contexts. Thus we will examine below how accusations are handled in the monastic Saṅgha, to see what those responsibilities are. The remaining situations can be roughly divided into three categories: the student questions the teacher's statement (situation three); the teacher questions the student's statement or question (situations two, four, five, six, and seven); and the teacher encourages the student to question him/herself (situations eight and nine).

These last two situations are particularly effective in leading to awakening, and, as we will see, they act as the culmination of the process of cross-questioning applied in other situations. Thus, to focus special attention on them, we will devote a separate chapter to them, following this one. Although in this chapter we will have occasion to mention these two situations, our primary focus here is on how the Buddha employs cross-questioning in the first seven.

1) Accusations. When Monk A suspects Monk B of misbehavior and wants to bring up the issue with him, he first has to ask B's permission to discuss the issue. If B thinks that A is simply trying to create trouble with abusive or unprincipled cross-questioning, he is free to deny permission. However, he himself should be sure of his own motives in denying

permission, for if A feels that B is hiding something, he can gain support from his fellow monks to have the issue brought up in the midst of the Saṅgha. If they are convinced of A's sincerity, they will pressure B to give leave for A to make his accusation. Then they will cross-examine B—the word for cross-examination, *paṭipucchā,* is the same as for cross-questioning—until they can reach a unanimous decision as to whether B is guilty as charged.

The monk bringing the accusation is directed to establish five qualities in himself while he speaks: compassion, seeking the other's benefit, sympathy, removal of offenses, and esteem for the Vinaya (Cv.IX.5.5-6). The first four of these qualities mean that he is not to speak out of malice or the simple desire to shame the accused; the fourth and fifth mean that if he feels an offense has been committed, he is not to back off his accusation simply out of pity for the accused over the hardships the latter may have to undergo in the course of the cross-examination or the penalty for the offense. The fact that these two principles overlap at the fourth quality—seeking the removal of offenses—shows that compassion and strict adherence to rules are not incompatible principles. In fact, they are mutually reinforcing. If a monk is to succeed in his practice, he must be scrupulous in his behavior and take responsibility for his errors. Thus any skillful effort to get him to behave in a responsible manner is for his long-term benefit.

It's important to note that these procedures and standards for handling a cross-examination contain a strong ethical element in being fair to the accused. The fact that the latter may have acted unethically in committing an offense does not give his accusers the right to handle the cross-examination in an unfair or unethical way, for that would undercut their ability to arrive at the truth. The accused could later complain of their behavior, and that would call into question the truth of their verdict.

As for the accused monk, he is directed to establish two qualities in himself while being cross-examined: truth and unprovokability (Cv.IX.5.7). In other words, he is responsible for giving a true account of his actions and for not getting angered when asked probing questions or told that his word is in doubt. Although the monk making the accusation is advised to be compassionate, examples of cross-examination given in

the Vinaya (see, for example, Cv.IV.14.29) show that the accused is to be pressed and questioned quite aggressively until the Saṅgha is convinced of his guilt or innocence, so that if there is an offense, it can be removed and the standards of the Vinaya upheld. Thus the monk being cross-examined must remain patient and calm regardless of how his words are questioned.

These principles parallel those that can be observed in other forms of cross-questioning. Some of these parallels apply across the board, whereas others apply particularly in the context of an argument about the Dhamma. In all cases of cross-questioning, the person being questioned is not to take the questions as an insult, and so should remain unprovokable. He also has the responsibility of being truthful, even if the truthful answer undercuts his earlier position.

In the case of an argument about the Dhamma, the person to be questioned can opt out at the beginning of the argument if he feels that his opponent's motives are suspect. As we will see in the section on arguments, the Buddha had high standards for the type of person he was willing to argue with, and would often refuse to speak with those who did not meet his standards. Although some of these standards were intellectual, others were ethical, focused on the person's willingness to follow fair and truthful methods of argument. Like the process of cross-examining an accused monk, an argument could arrive convincingly at the truth only if both sides conducted it in a fair and ethical way. For this reason, the Buddha would argue with a person only if he trusted two qualities in that person: the desire for truth and the ability to adhere to truthful, ethical modes of discussion. Thus when he *did* engage a person in an argument, it was a sign of respect.

And of compassion: Just as kindness and strict adherence to the Vinaya were seen as necessary and mutually reinforcing motivations for cross-examining an accused monk, kindness and strict adherence to the truth were seen as necessary and mutually reinforcing motivations for engaging in an argument about the Dhamma. The Buddha did not argue simply to score points or to disgrace his opponent, and he discouraged his disciples from engaging in debates simply for the sake of coming out ahead. Instead, his purpose in arguing with his opponents was to establish them in right view so that they could embark on the path to the end of

suffering. If at times—as in cross-examinations—this required being aggressive in demolishing his opponents' arguments, that was a sign not of ill will but of the seriousness with which he regarded their error.

Thus the way the Buddha formulated the principles to be observed in a cross-examination following an accusation provides insight into the principles that underlie the practice of cross-questioning in general.

2) Establishing orthodoxy. MN 22 [§71] and MN 38 [§72] contain the two cases in the Canon where the Buddha felt the need to cross-question an assembly of monks about his teaching after they had heard an errant monk assert a pernicious form of wrong view in his presence. Here again, the Buddha's treatment of the errant monk might seem harsh, but he was acting out of compassion for the monks in the assembly, in case any of them might be swayed by the errant monk's position. In other words, the Buddha apparently saw the errant monk as a lost cause—for having behaved unethically in continuing to misrepresent the Buddha's teaching to the Buddha's face—but he didn't want this lost cause to cause further losses among the other monks. We have to remember that during the Buddha's lifetime there were no written accounts of his teachings; the monks and nuns all had to rely on their memory of what they had heard directly from him or through word-of-mouth from fellow members of the Saṅgha. Thus the Buddha saw the need to establish orthodoxy whenever a member of the Saṅgha was found espousing false interpretations of his teaching.

Here again, there is a parallel with the way the Buddha taught the monks to handle accusations. When a monk wants to bring up an accusation in a meeting of the Saṅgha, he is first to ask permission to question a knowledgeable monk in detail about the rules touching on the suspected offense. This questioning serves a dual purpose. It alerts all the monks present to reflect on their own behavior, to see if they have committed any offenses against the rules being explained; if the monk about to be accused is actually guilty of such an offense, he has the opportunity to confess it before the accusation is made, thus saving the Saṅgha from the burden of having to open an investigation. At the same time, the process of questioning the knowledgeable monk provides an opportunity for all the monks to refresh their knowledge of the rules in

question, so that if an investigation is opened they are all in a position to make an informed decision on the case.

In the same way, the Buddha's cross-questioning of the assembly of monks allows all the monks to refresh their knowledge of the point in question, and to examine their own views to see if they have misinterpreted what they have previously heard.

3) Questioning the speaker. Although the Buddha was a skilled rhetorician, he did not engage in rhetoric for rhetoric's sake. In teaching a path of practice, he meant for his words to be put into practice. And in most cases, this required that their meaning be clear, and their interrelationships precisely delineated. Although the Buddha occasionally spoke in cryptic terms [§47; §123; see also SN 1:1; SN 1:20], his purpose in these instances was frequently to subdue the pride of his listener. If the technique worked, the listener would be ready to listen carefully to his teachings; if not, teaching the person would have been a waste of time in any event. At other times, he might make a cryptic statement to the monks and then enter his dwelling without explaining his words. In cases of this sort, his intention was apparently to give one of his senior disciples the opportunity to show the monks how they should analyze statements of this sort for themselves [§ 50; see also MN 138].

In general, though, the Buddha took pains to explain his terms clearly and to teach in a step-by-step manner so that his listeners could follow what he was saying and see how one step in the practice built on the previous ones. To make doubly sure that his listeners understood, and to show them that he sincerely wanted them to understand, he would invite them to ask questions then and there about what they found unclear [§75]. AN 2:46 [§73] and AN 6:51 [§74] state that this was a general practice not only when the Buddha spoke, but also when the monks discussed the Dhamma among themselves. In MN 94 [§76] and MN 146 [§77], two monks who are giving talks explicitly invite their listeners to question them about anything they, the listeners, don't understand; in MN 94 the listener actually does ask a question. One of the most famous instances, however, in which a listener freely asks questions of a speaker is MN 84 [§100], when King Koravya asks Ven. Raṭṭhapāla about the meaning of the Dhamma summaries that Raṭṭhapāla had learned from the Buddha and that had inspired his ordination.

Although there were occasions—as in MN 140, Ud 1:10, and Ud 5:3—where the Buddha praised specific listeners for not "pestering" him with issues related to the Dhamma, these listeners were so wise that they had no need to ask questions and could attain noble attainments while listening to him speak. The fact that he later praised these listeners to the monks in these terms suggests that he may have wanted the monks to question him only about genuine problems. But—as we noted in the Introduction—the Buddha nevertheless took the principle of being open to cross-questioning so seriously that his next-to-last instruction to the monks before his passing away was to invite them to cross-question him about any doubts they might have about the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, the path, or the practice [§82]. To underline the sincerity of the invitation, he stated it three times, and then even gave the opportunity for any monks too shy to speak in front of the whole group to inform their friends of any questions they might have. In other words, even though he was on the verge of death, he did not consider the monks to be "pestering" him if their questions were based on serious doubts. Only after the monks remained silent did he address them with his final words.

In establishing the practice of being open to cross-questioning as a general principle, the Buddha was showing that people speaking the Dhamma should be held responsible for their words. They are not to engage irresponsibly in attractive but vague generalities—"the works of poets, artful in sound, artful in rhetoric, the work of outsiders" [§73]. For, after all, even if such words may be pleasing, they serve no truly compassionate intent. Thus people speaking the Dhamma should be able to explain the meaning of everything they say [§197].

In MN 58 [§93] the Buddha makes the point that he did not spend his time formulating answers for anticipated questions. He knew the Dhamma so well that when asked a question, he could come up with an answer on the spot. However, he also knew that his students might not have such familiarity with the Dhamma and yet might be asked difficult questions. So, as a way of preparing them for this eventuality, he—and Ven. Sāriputta—would warn his students of potential questions they might be asked and of the answers they should give.

The Canon cites two examples in which the Buddha does this, and in both he is preparing his students for faultfinders. In MN 59 [§78], he

prepares them for questioners who might spot what they think is an inconsistency in his teaching: How can he describe unbinding as pleasant or happy *(sukha)* when it is devoid of feeling? His answer is that the word *pleasure* is not limited to feelings. In DN 29 [§79] he prepares them for a question directed at one of his claimed skills that, in the eyes of some, might not measure up to the skills claimed by other contemporary teachers. Pūraṇa Kassapa and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, who taught two different forms of determinism, both claimed to have infinite knowledge of the cosmos, including knowledge of the past and future, which in their view was already predetermined [§156]. The Buddha, however, did not claim that the future was predetermined, and so his knowledge of the future was of a more specific sort. Followers of Pūraṇa Kassapa and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta might cast aspersions on what they could regard as the limited nature of this sort of knowledge, so here the Buddha clarifies what his knowledge of past and future actually are: His knowledge of the past is the ability to recollect any past event that he wants; his knowledge of the future is that this is his last birth; there is no further becoming. Regardless of how unlimited Pūraṇa Kassapa and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta might claim their knowledge of the future to be, they do not have this sort of knowledge of their own future at all.

In a similar passage, Ven. Sāriputta prepares a group of monks for questions they might face concerning the Buddha's teachings when they go to foreign lands [§80]. In this case, the questions he anticipates are not from faultfinders but from intelligent people with a sincere interest to know: "What does your teacher teach? Why does he teach that?" Ven. Sāriputta's answers to these questions are of special interest, for they demonstrate what he saw as the best way to frame an introduction to the Buddha's teachings. In keeping with the fact that the Buddha taught a path, Ven. Sāriputta begins his explanation not with a metaphysical proposition but with a recommended course of action: the subduing of passion and desire. After stating the benefits that come from this course of action, he then reverts to a more basic pragmatic principle about action as a whole: the desirability of abandoning unskillful qualities and developing skillful ones. The way Ven. Sāriputta handles this question not only prepares the monks for questions they might face, but also shows them the best way to present the Dhamma to intelligent newcomers.

In this way, the Buddha and Ven. Sāriputta prepare the monks for their responsibility of being open to questions as they spread the teaching.

However, it's important to note that in establishing his openness to be questioned, the Buddha is also alerting his listeners that he expects them to be open to questioning as well. This principle applies in two contexts. The first context is contained in the handful of passages where the Buddha approaches sectarians of other schools and questions them about their teachings [§83, §84], or when a follower of those sectarians approaches the Buddha, and the Buddha asks him about what his teachers teach [§85]. In each of these cases, the sectarians espouse doctrines denying the efficacy of action, among them determinism. In response, the Buddha points out that their doctrines, when followed to their logical conclusion, make the idea of a holy life, a path of practice for true happiness, totally meaningless. The follower is swayed by the Buddha's arguments, but there is no indication of whether the sectarians are.

Still, the passages in which the Buddha relates these encounters to his monk followers do serve other purposes. To begin with, the Buddha is showing the monks that they have the right to cross-question members of other sects quite aggressively. He also provides the monks with the tools needed specifically to refute any doctrine denying the efficacy of action. This underscores the importance of action as the focus of the Buddha's categorical teachings. And it's particularly important to note that these encounters establish the point that he did not teach a deterministic view of the workings of kamma, and that his teachings should not be confused with the various forms of determinism current in his day. The effort with which the Buddha emphasized this point—even to the extent of seeking out the determinists to dispute their teachings—calls attention to a fact that has long been misunderstood within the Buddhist tradition over the centuries and is still widely misunderstood to this day: The Buddha was not a determinist, and his teachings on kamma and causality—to be correctly understood—have to be interpreted in a non-deterministic way.

The other context in which the Buddha alerts his listeners that they have to be open to questioning is when they are asking him questions and he announces that he will cross-question them in turn. If they want answers from him, they first have to be willing to give him the answers he

wants from them. This establishes the principle that the teaching and the learning of the Dhamma are a cooperative process. The more both sides are open to questioning, the more easily the Dhamma can be learned in a way that is conducive to practice.

With these observations in mind, we can now look at the four situations in which the Buddha cross-questions his questioners.

4) Clarifying the question. In cases where a question or the motivation behind it is unclear, the Buddha would cross-question the person asking the question about the meaning of its terms or about his/her motivation for asking it. There are a number of ironies surrounding this type of cross-questioning. To begin with, the Commentary identifies it as the primary use of cross-questioning, whereas in the Canon it's one of the rarest. Among the few examples of this type, two—in DN 9 [§88] and MN 90 [§86]—contain their own ironies.

In DN 9, Poṭṭhapāda the wanderer asks if self is the same as perception, and the Buddha responds first by asking Poṭṭhapāda to define what sort of self he is referring to. Poṭṭhapāda ends up offering three definitions, and in each case the Buddha shows that self is one thing and perception another. In other words, regardless of how the terms are defined, the answer is the same. Perhaps the Buddha wanted to emphasize this point by offering Poṭṭhapāda the chance to come up with as many different definitions as possible, only to see them all treated in the same way.

In MN 90, King Pasenadi asks the Buddha if there are devas. MN 100 [§87] suggests that this was a trick question in the Buddha's time: If the person answering said Yes, he would be asked to prove his answer and yet be unable to do so. If he said No, he would be denying the contemporary convention whereby kings were called devas, and thus could be accused of showing disrespect for kings. In MN 100, the Buddha gives something of a trick answer to the trick question—recognizing the existence of the convention on the human plane, but not getting into the issue of whether there is a separate plane of earthly or heavenly devas—and the person asking the question is so impressed that he goes for refuge.

Given this background, it's only natural that in MN 90, when King Pasenadi asks if there are devas, the Buddha first questions his motives for doing so. It turns out, however, that Pasenadi—whom the Canon

frequently depicts as somewhat scatterbrained—has a totally different question in mind and has simply been sloppy about putting it into words.

Even from just these two examples, though, it's possible to draw four lessons for when this sort of cross-questioning is useful: a) when forcing the questioner to be more precise in defining his terms allows for a more precise answer to the question; b) when it allows for the rhetorical point of showing that, however a particular term is defined, the answer will be the same; c) when one senses a trick question and wants to avoid falling into a trap; and d) when one is dealing with questioners who have trouble articulating their thoughts.

5) Extracting definitions. There are three cases where the Buddha, when asked the definition of a term, responds by cross-questioning the questioner in a way that allows the questioner to arrive at the definition based on knowledge he has already acquired: either through personal experience or from having heard the Buddha's teachings [§89, §90]. This, however, is not the Buddha's preferred strategy when asked for definitions —in the vast majority of cases he simply gives the definition as requested —and even in cases where he does use it, the process of cross-questioning yields only part of the definition requested. But it's easy to see how this strategy can be effective when the questioner has enough background, for it not only yields the meaning of the term but also shows how the term relates to what the questioner already knows. This strategy is especially effective in §89, for the question relates to how the Dhamma is visible here & now, and so the Buddha's way of responding drives home the point that the questioner has already seen an aspect of the Dhamma here & now.

However, the most interesting variation on this strategy is in AN 3:73 [§91], where Ven. Ānanda is asked a series of questions that are not requests for definitions, and yet his strategy of cross-questioning turns them into a search for definitions that the questioner ends up providing himself.

To understand why Ven. Ānanda does this, we first have to recall one of the essential features of the etiquette of a Dhamma teacher: the Buddha's insistence that Dhamma speakers not harm themselves or others by their speech [§8], which means that they not exalt themselves or disparage others by name. There are examples in the Canon where the Buddha is

quite critical of teachers of other schools of thought, but he mentions these teachers by name only when speaking to the monks (AN 3:138, Chapter Seven). When asked point-blank by lay people or wanderers of other sects whether teachers or members of other sects are awakened, he usually puts the question aside and simply teaches the Dhamma. In one famous instance, however—the discourse to the Kālāmas [§149]—he puts the question aside and then follows it with a series of cross-questions, extracting responses from his listeners based on their experience of what is skillful and not, establishing the principle that teachers are to be evaluated by testing their teachings. We will examine this example again in Chapter Seven.

Here in AN 3:73, however, Ven. Ānanda establishes a similar principle without putting the question aside, but simply by cross-questioning his listener, a student of the fatalist school who was apparently testing Ven. Ānanda's manners. When asked who is teaching rightly, who is practicing rightly, and who is well-gone, Ven. Ānanda avoids the trap of naming names and instead asks the questioner about what, in general terms, right teaching, right practice, and right attainment would be. He gets the questioner to state that those who teach the abandoning of passion, aversion, and delusion teach rightly; those who practice for the abandoning of passion, aversion, and delusion are practicing rightly; and those who have abandoned passion, aversion, and delusion are well-gone. In this way, Ven. Ānanda then notes, the questioner has answered his own question. The result is that the questioner, impressed with Ven. Ānanda's tact, goes for refuge in the Triple Gem.

One of the noteworthy features of this passage is that Ven. Ānanda adopts a strategy used by the Buddha and takes it further than any extant examples we have of the Buddha's own use of it: both in the way in which the cross-questioning yields complete definitions, and in the deft way it avoids a potential trap. We cannot know if the Buddha ever used this strategy with quite this finesse, but the record as we have it in the Canon suggests that this is one instance in which a disciple of the Buddha developed one of the Buddha's response-strategies further than the Teacher did himself.

6) Exploring hypotheticals. This is one of the two most frequent ways in which the Buddha cross-questions his questioners. In situations where he

senses that they might not understand his answer to their questions, or they have shown confusion about statements he has already made, he prefaces or follows his answers by citing hypothetical cases: either examples of the point he is trying to make or analogies that illuminate it. He then questions his questioners about the details of the hypothetical cases, after which he shows how their knowledge of those cases applies to the points they have trouble understanding. In this way, the questioners become participants in explaining the points in question and resolving their own confusion. At the same time, the Buddha is demonstrating an important pedagogical point: that a convenient way to clarify an issue in the minds of one's listeners is to remind them of a relevant pattern they have already learned and mastered in the past. In the terms of the Buddha's own vocabulary, this is an exercise in strengthening mindfulness—the ability to keep something in mind—combining it with discernment to treat the question at hand.

A short example of this strategy is this:

> [Prince Abhaya:] "Venerable sir, when wise nobles or brahmans, householders or contemplatives, having formulated questions, come to the Tathāgata and ask him, does this line of reasoning appear to his awareness beforehand—'If those who approach me ask this, I—thus asked—will answer in this way'—or does the Tathāgata come up with the answer on the spot?"
> [The Buddha:] "Very well then, prince, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Are you skilled in the parts of a chariot?"
> "Yes, venerable sir. I am skilled in the parts of a chariot."
> "And what do you think? When people come & ask you, 'What is the name of this part of the chariot?' does this line of reasoning appear to your awareness beforehand—'If those who approach me ask this, I—thus asked—will answer in this way'—or do you come up with the answer on the spot?"
> "Venerable sir, I am renowned for being skilled in the parts of a chariot. All the parts of a chariot are well known to me. I come up with the answer on the spot."
> "In the same way, prince, when wise nobles or brahmans, householders or contemplatives, having formulated questions,

> come to the Tathāgata and ask him, he comes up with the answer on the spot. Why is that? Because the property of the Dhamma is thoroughly penetrated by the Tathāgata. From his thorough penetration of the property of the Dhamma, he comes up with the answer on the spot." — *MN 58*

AN 4:111 [§98] contains a variation on the strategy of cross-questioning hypotheticals, in which the Buddha doesn't wait to be asked a question. He quizzes a horse-trainer about the latter's approach to training horses, and then—when the trainer in turn asks him how he trains his monks—draws on the analogy provided by the trainer's answers to his original questions.

It's easy to see that this strategy would have a doubly positive effect on the questioners. First, they see that they already have a fund of knowledge they can apply to understanding the Dhamma; this gives them confidence that they can learn even more abstruse points. Second, they sense that the Buddha respects their knowledge; this makes them more inclined to view him and his teachings with respect as well. In establishing an atmosphere of mutual respect, the Buddha makes it easier for his listeners to learn with an open, trusting, and receptive state of mind.

MN 97 [§111] constitutes a special case in the use of this particular strategy. In this discourse Ven. Sāriputta is addressing a layperson he has taught in the past. The layperson—Dhanañjāni—having come under the influence of a wife with no faith in the Buddha's teachings, has been gaining his livelihood in a dishonest manner. Ven. Sāriputta asks him about his behavior and then cross-questions him on a series of hypothetical situations as to what will happen at death to people who try to excuse their dishonest behavior, as Dhanañjāni has done, by citing the need to help their family and relatives. Dhanañjāni ends up admitting that his excuses are worthless. What's special about this case is that the hypotheticals draw, not on Dhanañjāni's personal experience, but on the implications of the doctrine of kamma, which Ven. Sāriputta has apparently taught Dhanañjāni in the past. In this case, instead of clarifying new points of the Dhamma, the cross-questioning simply serves to remind Dhanañjāni of points he already knows. Still, this case has two important points in common with other uses of this strategy. The first is

that it clarifies an issue by reminding the listener of something the listener already knows. This shows the central role that of the act of reminding plays in the process of clarification. The second point is that the discussion is conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect, and compassion. This is what inclines Dhanañjāni to accept the fairly harsh points that Ven. Sāriputta wants to convey.

In addition to explaining categorical answers, the Buddha also uses the strategy of exploring hypotheticals to explain why he is using a particular strategy in responding to a question. We have already seen three instances in which he uses this form of cross-questioning to show why he is giving an analytical answer to a question [§68, §69, §103]. The most famous instance in which he uses this strategy to explain why he is putting a question aside is MN 72 [§190], a passage we will discuss in Chapter Eight.

Two points in particular stand out in the Buddha's strategy of exploring hypotheticals through cross-questioning. One is that the analogies he draws deal primarily with skills and activities that the listeners have mastered. This point resonates with the fact that his own teaching deals primarily with the mastery of skills, and adds clarity and nuance to his primary categorical teaching, the distinction between what is skillful and not. Because skills require strategies—sometimes paradoxical, and always sensitive to context—the Buddha's frequent reference to skills in this context emphasizes the need to think strategically, alert to paradox and context, when trying to comprehend and follow the path.

The second point is that the Buddha often uses this strategy with people of rank: kings, princes, generals, brahmans, and village headmen. Sensitive to their position in society, they would be pleased that a person of the Buddha's stature would recognize their knowledge and skills, and would trust them—with a little encouragement—to answer their own questions and resolve their own confusion.

The fact that the Buddha would sometimes use this strategy specifically to appeal to the vanity of a high-ranking visitor is shown by comparing §104 with §105. In both cases, the same person, General Sīha—is asking the same question, concerning the rewards of generosity in the present life. In the first case, the Buddha simply gives a categorical answer to the

question; in the second, he cross-questions Sīha about Sīha's personal experience with the issue, giving Sīha the opportunity to describe the rewards he has seen from his own generosity. The fact that the Buddha in the first instance doesn't resort to cross-questioning shows that the question doesn't inherently demand a cross-questioning response. The fact that Sīha in the second instance explicitly takes the opportunity to declare that he is a person of generosity shows that he is not averse to self-flattery—a fact that the Buddha probably sensed when choosing to respond to the question in the way he did.

The Buddha's ability to appeal to his listeners' vanity in this way is a mark of his rhetorical skill. He himself is not reduced to being a sycophant; the sincerity of the implied compliment is much more believable than direct flattery, for it demonstrates trust and respect in action; and—by illustrating his point with analogies—he is giving a valuable lesson in how to draw on one's previous knowledge of skills in comprehending the skills needed for the path. In this way he shows his proud listeners that their knowledge and skills are a more appropriate reason for pride than is their rank.

7) Engaging in debate. This, the other of the two most frequent ways in which the Buddha cross-questions his questioners, is virtually identical with the preceding strategy. The primary difference is that the questioners are not expressing confusion; instead, they are arguing with a statement the Buddha has made. As we will see, though, the Buddha treats those who argue with him primarily as if they are simply confused. In this case, as in the preceding one, the Buddha responds by citing hypothetical cases: examples that refute the point the questioners are trying to make, or analogies indicating why it is wrong. Then he questions them about the details of the hypothetical cases, after which he shows how their answers to his questions refute their position. In some cases—as in the following example—he doesn't even have to make the connection explicit. The questioner realizes that the cross-question has already defeated him.

> [Saccaka Aggivessana:] "Yes, Master Gotama, I'm saying that 'Form is my self, feeling is my self, perception is my self, fabrications are my self, consciousness is my self.'"

> "Very well then, Aggivessana, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Would a consecrated, noble-warrior king—such as King Pasenadi of Kosala or King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha—wield the power in his own domain to execute those who deserve execution, to fine those who deserve to be fined, and to banish those who deserve to be banished?"
> "Yes, Master Gotama, he would... Even these oligarchic groups, such as the Vajjians & Mallans, wield the power in their own domains to execute those who deserve execution, to fine those who deserve to be fined, and to banish those who deserve to be banished, to say nothing of a consecrated, noble-warrior king such as King Pasenadi of Kosala, or King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha. He would wield it, and he would deserve to wield it."
> "What do you think, Aggivessana? When you say, 'Form is my self,' do you wield power over that form: 'May my form be thus, may my form not be thus'?"
> When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son was silent. — *MN 35*

There are two further differences between the Buddha's use of this strategy and of the preceding one. The first is that, whereas in the preceding strategy he uses analogies proportionately more than examples, here the proportions are reversed (the above passage being one of his rare uses of analogy in this context). The reason is not hard to see: A person set on debate might easily deny an analogy's relevance to the point in question, whereas it's harder to deny that an example doesn't fall under the general point being made. Thus the Buddha, when engaged in an argument, would use analogies only when they were obviously relevant, and examples to make the majority of his points.

The second difference is the obvious one that, whereas the preceding strategy can feed the pride of the questioner, this strategy can severely wound it, for in responding to the Buddha's cross-questioning the questioner has become a party to the refutation of his own argument. And he has done a thorough job of refutation. Having given, in response to the Buddha's cross-questioning, answers that support the Buddha's position, he cannot turn around and deny what he has just said. In effect, he has done the Buddha's work so thoroughly that there is little left for the

Buddha to say. Many are the cases where, on being defeated by the Buddha's cross-questioning in front of an audience, the questioner is left "silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words."

This raises two points. The first is that, for this strategy to work, the questioner must be truthful in his responses to the Buddha's cross-questioning. This means that the Buddha would have to be selective in choosing whom to debate. The second is that, given the Buddha's avowed principles in teaching—that he would speak only what is true, beneficial, and timely—he must have seen some benefit in refuting his opponents so thoroughly. And with these two points we come to the heart of the Buddha's approach to debate in general. For him it was a mark of his respect that he would be willing to debate a listener; and he saw the defeat of his opponent's wrong views as an act of compassion.

Given the way debates are usually conducted, especially in modern society, it seems hard to reconcile these two principles. We see debaters showing extreme disrespect for their opponents, and so it seems inevitable that debate must involve disdain. To avoid the obvious dangers of this lack of civility, we see other groups maintaining that the compassionate way to live together is to leave each person to his or her own opinions, or to celebrate the fact that our views are diverse.

The Buddha's approach, however, was very different. On the one hand, he was selective in taking on an opponent in debate. He would not engage in debates designed simply for the sport of trying to defeat an opponent. Sn 4:8 [§120] and MN 18 [§123] are examples in which he declines to get involved in debates of this sort. In the first case he states his reasons for not participating; in the second, he stymies a would-be debater with a statement that leaves no room for argument. For him, a debate was worthwhile only if aimed at establishing the truth.

To further this end, the Buddha would sometimes explicitly set the conditions for a debate when faced with argumentative followers of other beliefs:

> "If, householder, you will confer taking a stand on the truth, we might have some discussion here." — *MN 56*

> "Vappa, if you will allow of me what should be allowed, protest what should be protested, and further cross-question me directly then & there on the meaning of any statement of mine that you don't understand—'How is this, lord? What is the meaning of this?'—then we could have a discussion here." — *AN 4:195*

In other words, debates should be conducted in a way that stands by the truth and recognizes established standards for what is and is not a valid argument. At the same time, the participants—rather than attacking or ridiculing any statement they don't understand—should make every effort to get at the meaning of what their opponents are saying.

One of the implications of "standing by the truth" is that arguments be internally consistent—a point reflected in the admonition the Buddha gives to any debater whose statements contradict one another:

> "Householder, householder, pay attention, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn't consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after. And yet you made this statement: 'Lord, I will confer taking a stand on the truth; let us have some discussion here.'" — *MN 56*

Because internal consistency is also an established standard for a valid argument, the Buddha apparently saw legitimate forms of debate not as mere conventions but as implicit expressions of the nature of the truth.

In addition to being selective in the format of the debate, the Buddha was also selective in the type of person he was willing to talk to. MN 80 [§117] states the basic qualities he was looking for in a student—being truthful and observant—and AN 3:68 [§118] fleshes out these qualities by describing in more detail the sort of person fit to talk to or not.

The first two sets of qualities pertains to the person's intellectual capabilities:

> "If a person, when asked a question, doesn't give a categorical answer to a question deserving a categorical answer, doesn't give an analytical answer to a question deserving an analytical answer, doesn't cross-question a question deserving cross-questioning, doesn't put aside a question deserving to be put aside, then—that

being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, gives a categorical answer to a question deserving a categorical answer, gives an analytical answer to a question deserving an analytical answer, cross-questions a question deserving cross-questioning, and puts aside a question deserving to be put aside, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with....

"If a person, when asked a question, doesn't stand by what is possible and impossible, doesn't stand by agreed-upon assumptions, doesn't stand by teachings known to be true, doesn't stand by standard procedure, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, stands by what is possible and impossible, stands by agreed-upon assumptions, stands by teachings known to be true, stands by standard procedure, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with....

The next two sets of qualities, however, deal with the extent to which the person conducts an argument in an ethical manner:

"If a person, when asked a question, wanders from one thing to another, pulls the discussion off the topic, shows anger & aversion and sulks, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, doesn't wander from one thing to another, doesn't pull the discussion off the topic, doesn't show anger or aversion or sulk, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with....

"If a person, when asked a question, puts down [the questioner], crushes him, ridicules him, grasps at his little mistakes, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, doesn't put down [the questioner], doesn't crush him, doesn't ridicule him, doesn't grasp at his little mistakes, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with."

— *AN 3:68*

In short, the Buddha would engage a person in conversation and debate only if he felt that the person was competent and truthful, and would behave in a fair and civil manner: the sort of person who would engage in debate not simply to win a point, but to find the truth. In this

way, the type of person the Buddha would debate with was intimately connected to the form of debate in which he was willing to engage. On one level, this point is obvious enough—anyone would prefer to debate with a person whose way of debating is congenial—but the Buddha is not dealing simply with preferences here. He is dealing with principles. The ability to follow the proper form of the debate as he defines it is not simply a matter of the intellect. It reflects the character of the debater as well: his fairness, his honesty, his ethical standards. This means that the pursuit of truth requires not only a sharp intellect but also personal integrity. This may be one of the reasons why, as we noted above, the Buddha saw that standard procedure in the conduct of a debate is intimately related to the nature of truth: Because truth is both a matter of factual accuracy and moral rectitude, only a person who is true in his or her way of seeking the truth will be able to find it.

From these considerations we can conclude that when the Buddha engages a person in a debate, it's a sign that he respects that person's motives and morals. Even in the case of Saccaka [§126], who tries to snare the Buddha with a variety of cheap debater's tricks—such as appealing to the prejudices of the audience he has brought along—we find that by the end of their encounters, recorded in MN 35, Saccaka displays enough truthfulness to show that he has benefited from their debates.

And that is the Buddha's intention in every debate: to benefit his opponent. For him, it is not an act of compassion simply to leave a person to his or her views, for those views can easily be wrong, leading that person to act in ways that produce many lifetimes of suffering. On the surface, the Buddha's sharp insistence on right and wrong view here might seem surprising. After all, view-clinging is one of the forms of clinging he abandoned at awakening. However, this does not mean that he lost his sense of right and wrong. As he points out in Sn 4:9 [§47], the awakened state is not defined in terms of view, but it cannot be attained without right view. The Buddha may no longer need right view for his own sake, but he sees that other people need to develop it if they are to reach full awakening. Having been to the top of the mountain, he is in a position to see that only one path leads there.

This is why the factors of the noble eightfold path are all termed *right,* and anything deviating from them *wrong.* As he states in Sn 4:12 [§48],

"the truth is one; there is no second." Even a stream-winner—who has had only a first glimpse of the deathless—is in a position to see that no path aside from the noble eightfold path leads to the deathless [§144]. Any view that deviates from right view is a wrong view that strays from the path. As §67 shows, acting on wrong view is like trying to get milk from a cow by twisting her horn: In addition to not getting any milk, you wear yourself out and torment the cow.

Thus the Buddha, when necessary, sees it as an act of respect and compassion to argue aggressively with anyone who is desirous of the truth but holds to wrong view. The fact that he uses cross-questioning—a means of clarification—as his primary mode of debate shows that he regards debate as a means of instruction: Once he can get the opponent to see the facts clearly in the right perspective, he has accomplished his immediate aim. And in keeping with the fact that instruction is a collaborative effort, involving the kamma of both sides, the collaboration of cross-questioning is an ideal strategy to drive his points home.

Given this understanding, it is easy to see that even when the Buddha is aggressive in his cross-questioning—and he can at times be extremely aggressive, even to the point of going *ad hominem* [§125; see also MN 14] —it is a sign, not of ill will, but of the sincerity of his concern for the other person's well-being.

Here again we can see the parallels between the way the Buddha handles arguments and the way he instructs his monks to handle the cross-examination of a monk accused of having committed an offense. In both cases, the process must be conducted with mutual respect, compassion, and a clear sense of right and wrong. Just as the accused has the right not to give leave to accusers whose motives he suspects, the Buddha holds the right not to engage in an argument with a person who is not aiming at the truth and who will not conduct the argument in a fair way. Just as the accusers must keep the well-being of the accused foremost in mind so as to release him from his offense, the Buddha cross-questions his opponents for the compassionate purpose of clearing up their misunderstanding and establishing them in right view. And just as the accusers, motivated by their esteem for the Vinaya, can cross-question the accused in an aggressive manner, the Buddha can be aggressive in rooting out wrong view because, knowing the true value of the Dhamma (SN 5:2),

he knows that any truthful questioner would benefit from developing the same appreciation.

These, then, are the first seven situations in which the Buddha would apply the approach of cross-questioning. As we will see in the next chapter, these seven types of cross-questioning reach their culmination in the remaining two, but before we explore how that happens, it would be useful to stop and take stock of the situations we have already covered. One way to do this is to compare the Buddha's use of cross-questioning in these situations with the way Socrates is portrayed as using cross-questioning in Plato's dialogues. It has often been said that the Buddha makes frequent use of the Socratic method, so it's instructive to see exactly how far this is true.

The parallels between the two teachers are obvious. Comparing the Buddha's teachings with what we find, for example, in the *Protagoras,* we can see that both teachers express a dislike of empty bombast [§73], and both feel that learning is best fostered in an atmosphere where people are free to question one another. Both state that the back-and-forth of a dialogue is most effective when conducted in an atmosphere of mutual good will. Just as the Buddha would regard cross-questioning as a compassionate activity, leading to the true happiness of the questioner, Socrates in the *Symposium* states that philosophical dialectic—the process of talking things through together—is an expression of the highest form of love in that it leads eventually to the vision of absolute truths.

However, the two teachers have very different ideas of how cross-questioning works. In the *Theaetetus,* Socrates compares himself to a midwife, helping his interlocutors give birth to definitions that he then tests to see how viable they are. But in line with his belief in the transmigration of souls, he holds that the birth of a true idea is actually its rebirth. In the *Meno,* he asks a slave a series of leading questions about how to find a square with double the area of a given square. After a number of false starts, the slave—who has no background whatsoever in geometry—arrives at the correct answer. Socrates then argues that this knowledge must have come from his knowledge of true principles gained before birth.

The Buddha, however, even though he teaches rebirth, does not see the process of cross-questioning as operating in this way at all. He questions his listeners as to knowledge they have gained from practical experience in this life. Even when extracting definitions from his listeners, he draws solely on information or experiences in the immediate present.

A second major difference between the two teachers is in how they characterize the good will that provides the ideal atmosphere for discovering the truth. In Socrates' eyes, this good will starts with carnal love and attraction, whereas for the Buddha good will starts with the realization that all beings desire happiness and freedom from suffering, and he allows no role for carnal love in the mutual pursuit of truth at all.

These differences in how the process of cross-questioning is understood to work are reflected in how the two teachers actually use the strategy. Throughout the Platonic dialogues, Socrates makes most frequent use of the strategy of extracting definitions from his listeners, whereas the Buddha in the Pali Canon rarely employs that strategy, and—even when he does employ it—doesn't make it carry the full burden of extracting extended definitions from his listeners in the way that Socrates does. Instead, the Buddha makes frequent use of the strategy of exploring hypotheticals—analogies and examples, usually based on actions and skills—to aid in understanding his points. This difference reflects the deeper difference we noted between these two in Chapter Three: that Socrates sees dialectic as a way of constructing, through clear definitions connected through reason, an intellectual grasp of reality as a whole; whereas the Buddha sees the strategy of cross-questioning hypotheticals as a way of clarifying the path of skills needed to achieve the goal of unbinding.

A second difference in practice is that, at crucial junctures in dialogues such as the *Symposium* and the *Republic,* Socrates abandons the dialectical strategy of cross-questioning to make assertions concerning issues that the Buddha would have classified under the categories of objectification, such as the existence or non-existence of the soul and whether it can be identified with the body. In these passages, Socrates bases his remarks on myth and visionary experiences, a mode of presentation that precludes cross-questioning. As we noted above, this sort of presentation is the pedagogical equivalent of objectification. In contrast, the Buddha almost

always avoids the categories of objectification; even when he does use them he remains open to cross-questioning, keeping the discussion in the pedagogical mode appropriate to pre-objectified thought.

A third difference in practice is that Socrates' strategy of cross-questioning often ends up with an inconclusive result: Many ideas are tested and found wanting—to use the midwife analogy, the children produced are not viable and so are allowed to die—and yet they are not replaced with any useful conclusions. The *Meno,* for instance, starts with Meno asking Socrates if goodness can be taught. Socrates then gets Meno to provide a definition of goodness, only to reject every definition he can induce Meno to supply. The dialogue ends somewhat uselessly, with their agreeing that goodness, whatever it might be, is a gift of the gods.

Thus the process of the Socratic dialogue is often less about reaching a goal than about the process itself, the happiness to be found in clarifying one's ideas and approaching—if never quite reaching in this lifetime—an intellectual grasp of pure abstractions. In the Buddha's hands, however, the process of cross-questioning has a clear goal—awakening—attainable in this life, and the discourses show that in many cases the arguments and analogies explored through cross-questioning either lead the listeners there immediately, inspire them to practice with ardency and resolution until they soon achieve awakening, or encourage them to take refuge as a first step in that direction.

The Buddha's pragmatic emphasis is further illustrated by the cluster of topics he treats through cross-questioning: how to understand the workings of kamma, how to understand pleasure and pain, how important caste is in comparison to action, whether the life gone forth can benefit as many people as the practice of sacrifice, what his qualifications for teaching are, and why he teaches the way he does. And actually, all six of these topics are permutations of one: kamma. Pleasure and pain are best understood in terms of the actions that lead to them; people are to be judged by their actions rather than their caste; the life gone forth enables one to find and teach to numerous beings the path of action leading to the end of suffering, something no sacrifice can do; the Buddha is qualified to teach because of the skillful way he has mastered the principles of cause and effect in training his mind; and the way he

teaches—and in particular, his use of cross-questioning itself—is a primary example of how the kamma of collaborative effort works.

In this way we can see again that *how* the Buddha teaches is intimately connected to *what* he teaches. Sensitive to the role that kamma plays on the path to awakening, he uses the kamma of cross-questioning in a way that sensitizes his listeners to that role as well. Rather than aiming his students at abstractions—as Socrates does—he aims them in the other direction, at the particulars of their actions and their results. That's where they will find release.

This point will become even clearer in the next chapter, where we see how the Buddha cross-questions his students—and encourages them to cross-question themselves—on their present actions and the results of those actions. There we will see that cross-questioning oneself on one's actions from the grossest levels to the subtlest is one of the most effective ways to achieve awakening.

READINGS

ESTABLISHING ORTHODOXY

§ 71. Then the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it true, Ariṭṭha, that this pernicious viewpoint has arisen in you—'As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in, are not genuine obstructions'?"[1]

"Exactly so, lord. As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in, are not genuine obstructions."

"Worthless man, from whom have you understood that Dhamma taught by me in such a way? Worthless man, haven't I in many ways described obstructive acts? And when indulged in, they are genuine obstructions. I have said that sensual pleasures are of little satisfaction, much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. I have compared sensual

pleasures to a chain of bones: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. I have compared sensual pleasures to a lump of flesh... a grass torch... a pit of glowing embers... a dream... borrowed goods... the fruits of a tree... a butcher's ax and chopping block... swords and spears... a snake's head: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. But you, worthless man, through your own poor grasp [of the Dhamma], not only misrepresent us but also dig yourself up [by the root] and produce much demerit for yourself. That will lead to your long-term harm & suffering."

Then the Blessed One said to the monks, "What do you think, monks? Is this monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers even warm in this Dhamma & Vinaya?"

"How could he be, lord? No, lord."

When this was said, the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers sat silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Then the Blessed One, seeing that the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers was sitting silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words, said to him, "Worthless man, you will be recognized for your own pernicious viewpoint. I will cross-question the monks on this matter."

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Monks, do you too understand the Dhamma as taught by me in the same way that the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers does when, through his own poor grasp, he not only misrepresents us but also digs himself up [by the root] and produces much demerit for himself?"

"No, lord, for in many ways the Blessed One has described obstructive acts to us, and when indulged in they are genuine obstructions. The Blessed One has said that sensual pleasures are of little satisfaction, much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. The Blessed One has compared sensual pleasures to a chain of bones: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. The Blessed One has compared sensual pleasures to a lump of flesh... a grass torch... a pit of glowing embers... a dream... borrowed goods... the fruits of a tree... a butcher's ax and chopping block... swords and spears... a snake's head: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks."

"It's good, monks, that you understand the Dhamma taught by me in this way, for in many ways I have described obstructive acts to you, and when indulged in they are genuine obstructions. I have said that sensual pleasures are of little satisfaction, much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. I have compared sensual pleasures to a chain of bones: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. I have compared sensual pleasures to a lump of flesh... a grass torch... a pit of glowing embers... a dream... borrowed goods... the fruits of a tree... a butcher's ax and chopping block... swords and spears... a snake's head: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. But this monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers, through his own poor grasp [of the Dhamma], has both misrepresented us as well as injuring himself and accumulating much demerit for himself, and that will lead to this worthless man's long-term harm & suffering. For a person to indulge in sensual pleasures without sensual passion, without sensual perception, without sensual thinking: That isn't possible." — *MN 22*

NOTE: 1. The Commentary notes that Ariṭṭha here is referring to sexual intercourse and other related acts.

§ 72. Then the monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it true, Sāti, that this pernicious view has arisen in you—'As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is just this consciousness that runs and wanders on [from birth to birth], not another'?"

"Exactly so, lord. As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is just this consciousness that runs and wanders on, not another."

"Which consciousness, Sāti, is that?"[1]

"This speaker, this knower, lord, that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & evil actions."

"And to whom, worthless man, do you understand me to have taught the Dhamma like that? Haven't I, in many ways, said of dependently co-arisen consciousness, 'Apart from a requisite condition, there is no coming-into-play of consciousness'?[2] But you, through your own poor grasp, not only misrepresent us but also dig yourself up [by the root] and

produce much demerit for yourself. That will lead to your long-term harm & suffering."

Then the Blessed One said to the monks, "What do you think, monks? Is this monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, even warm in this Dhamma & Vinaya?"

"How could he be, lord? No, lord."

When this was said, the monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, sat silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Then the Blessed One, seeing that the monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, was sitting silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words, said to him, "Worthless man, you will be recognized for your own pernicious viewpoint. I will cross-question the monks on this matter."

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Monks, do you too understand the Dhamma as taught by me in the same way that the monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, does when, through his own poor grasp [of the Dhamma], he not only misrepresents us but also digs himself up [by the root] and produces much demerit for himself?"

"No, lord, for in many ways the Blessed One has said of dependently co-arisen consciousness, 'Apart from a requisite condition, there is no coming-into-play of consciousness.'"

"It's good, monks, that you understand the Dhamma taught by me in this way, for in many ways I have said of dependently co-arisen consciousness, 'Apart from a requisite condition, there is no coming-into-play of consciousness.' But this monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, through his own poor grasp [of the Dhamma], has not only misrepresented us but has also dug himself up [by the root], producing much demerit for himself. That will lead to this worthless man's long-term harm & suffering." — *MN 38*

NOTES

1. The Buddha, knowing that there are two types of consciousness—the consciousness aggregate *(viññāṇakkhandha)* and consciousness without surface *(viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ*—see §205, note 4)—is here giving Sāti the chance to identify which of the two types he has interpreted as running and wandering

on. Sāti's answer shows that he is talking about the first type. It would have been interesting to see how the Buddha would have attacked Sāti's misunderstanding if Sāti had identified the second.

2. The Pali here is, *Nanu mayā moghapurisa anekapariyāyena paṭiccasamuppannaṁ viññāṇaṁ vuttaṁ, 'Aññatra paccayā n'atthi viññāṇassa sambhavoti?'* Literally: "Worthless man, hasn't dependently-coarisen consciousness been described by me in many ways that, 'Apart from a requisite condition, there is no coming-into-play of consciousness'?"

Some translators, thinking that all consciousness must be dependently co-arisen, have translated this sentence as, "Misguided man, have I not stated in many ways consciousness to be dependently arisen since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness?" They then use this translation to assert that the two passages in the Canon referring to consciousness without surface [§161, §205] are not in keeping with the principle, expressed here, that all consciousness is dependently co-arisen. Thus, they say, those two passages cannot be accepted as coming genuinely from the Buddha, whereas this passage in MN 38 definitely can. Their translation, however, is grammatically incorrect, as it inserts a "since" where there is none in the Pali, and ignores the quotation marks *(ti)* around the sentence in which dependently co-arisen consciousness is described. Thus it is a case of an interpretation forced on a passage that is then supposed to act as evidence confirming the interpretation—a form of circular reasoning.

When this passage is correctly translated, however, there is no conflict between this passage and those. The Buddha here is discussing dependently-coarisen consciousness in a way that does not conflict with the possibility that there is also a consciousness without surface that lies beyond the six sense-spheres and is not dependently-coarisen. In fact, because he modifies the consciousness discussed here with the adjective "dependently-co-arisen," that suggests that he is keeping in mind the fact that there is another type of consciousness to which that modification does not apply.

CROSS-QUESTIONING IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING

§ 73. "Monks, there are these two assemblies. Which two? The assembly trained in bombast and not in cross-questioning, and the assembly trained in cross-questioning and not in bombast.

"And which is the assembly trained in bombast and not in cross-questioning?

There is the case where in any assembly when the discourses of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—are recited, the monks don't listen, don't lend ear, don't set their hearts on knowing them; don't regard them as worth grasping or mastering. But when discourses that are literary works—the works of poets, artful in sound, artful in expression, the work of outsiders, words of disciples—are recited, they listen, they lend ear, they set their hearts on knowing them; they regard them as worth grasping & mastering. Yet when they have mastered that Dhamma, they don't cross-question one another about it, don't dissect: 'How is this? What is the meaning of this?' They don't make open what isn't open, don't make plain what isn't plain, don't dispel doubt on its various doubtful points. This is called an assembly trained in bombast, not in cross-questioning.

"And which is the assembly trained in cross-questioning and not in bombast?

There is the case where in any assembly when discourses that are literary works—the works of poets, artful in sound, artful in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of disciples—are recited, the monks don't listen, don't lend ear, don't set their hearts on knowing them; don't regard them as worth grasping or mastering. But when the discourses of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—are recited, they listen, they lend ear, they set their hearts on knowing them; they regard them as worth grasping & mastering. And when they have mastered that Dhamma, they cross-question one another about it and dissect it: 'How is this? What is the meaning of this?' They make open what isn't open, make plain what isn't plain, dispel doubt on its various doubtful points. This is called an assembly trained in cross-questioning and not in bombast." — *AN 2:46*

§ 74. Ven. Ānanda said, "There is the case, friend Sāriputta, where a monk masters the Dhamma: dialogues, narratives of mixed prose & verse, explanations, verses, spontaneous exclamations, quotations, birth stories, amazing events, question & answer sessions. He teaches the Dhamma in detail—as he has heard it, as he has remembered it—to others. He gets others to recite the Dhamma in detail—as they have heard it, as they have

remembered it. He holds a group chanting of the Dhamma in detail—as he has heard it, as he has remembered it. He thinks about & evaluates the Dhamma as he has heard it, as he has remembered it; he contemplates it with his intellect. He enters the Rains in monasteries in which there are senior monks who are learned, who know the tradition, who are holders of the Dhamma, the Vinaya, & the Mātika [the lists of topics that later formed the basis for the Abhidhamma]. Having approached them periodically, he questions them & quizzes them: 'How it this, venerable sirs? What is the meaning of this?' They make open for him what wasn't open, make plain what wasn't plain, dispel doubt on various doubtful points.

"It's to this extent, friend Sāriputta, that a monk hears Dhamma he has not heard, that the Dhammas he has heard do not get confused, that the Dhammas he has touched with his awareness stay current, and that he understands what (previously) was not understood." — *AN 6:51*

Invitations to cross-questioning:

§ 75. "Therefore, monks, when you understand the meaning of any statement of mine, that is how you should remember it. But when you don't understand the meaning of any statement of mine, then right then & there you should cross-question me or the experienced monks." — *MN 22*

§ 76. Then Ghoṭamukha the brahman, taking a low seat, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Udena, "My good contemplative, there is no righteous wanderer's life: That is [the opinion] that occurs to me here, but that may be from not seeing either someone like your venerable self or the Dhamma here."

"Brahman, if you will allow of me what should be allowed, protest what should be protested, and further cross-question me right then & there on the meaning of any statement of mine that you don't understand—'How is this, Master Udena? What is the meaning of this?'—then we could have a discussion here." — *MN 94 [See also §109]*

§ 77. As the nuns were sitting there, Ven. Nandaka said to them, "This will be a cross-questioning talk, sisters. Where you understand, you should say, 'We understand.' Where you don't, you should say, 'We don't understand.' Where you feel doubt or indecision, you should cross-question me right then & there: 'How is this, venerable sir? What is the meaning of this?'"

"Venerable sir, we are gratified & delighted that you invite us [in this way]."

"So then, sisters, what do you think? Is the eye constant or inconstant?" "Inconstant, venerable sir." "And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?" "Stressful, venerable sir." "And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, venerable sir."

"... Is the ear constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."...

"... Is the nose constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."...

"... Is the tongue constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."...

"... Is the body constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."...

"What do you think, sisters? Is the intellect constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, venerable sir."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because we have already seen it well as it has come to be, with right discernment, that these six internal media are inconstant."

"Good, good, sisters. That's how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

“Now, what do you think, sisters? Are forms constant or inconstant?” “Inconstant, venerable sir.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, venerable sir.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, venerable sir.”

“… Are sounds constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, venerable sir.”…

“… Are aromas constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, venerable sir.”…

“… Are flavors constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, venerable sir.”…

“… Are tactile sensations constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, venerable sir.”…

“What do you think, sisters? Are ideas constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, venerable sir.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, venerable sir.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because we have already seen it well as it has come to be, with right discernment, that these six external media too are inconstant.”

“Good, good, sisters. That’s how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

“Now, what do you think, sisters? Is eye-consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, venerable sir.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, venerable sir.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, venerable sir.”

"... Is ear-consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."...

"... Is nose-consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."...

"... Is tongue-consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."...

"... Is body-consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."...

"What do you think, sisters? Is intellect-consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, venerable sir."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because we have already seen it well as it has come to be, with right discernment, that these six consciousness-groups too are inconstant."

"Good, good, sisters. That's how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

"Just as when the oil in a burning oil lamp is inconstant & subject to change, its wick is inconstant & subject to change, its flame is inconstant & subject to change, its light is inconstant & subject to change. If someone were to say, 'The oil in that burning oil lamp is inconstant & subject to change, its wick is inconstant & subject to change, its flame is inconstant & subject to change, but as for its light, that is constant, everlasting, eternal, & not subject to change,' would he be speaking rightly?"

"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because the oil in that burning oil lamp is inconstant & subject to change, its wick is inconstant & subject to change, its flame is inconstant & subject to change, so how much more should its light be inconstant & subject to change."

"In the same way, sisters, if someone were to say, 'My six internal media are inconstant, but what I experience based on the six internal

media—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that is constant, everlasting, eternal, & not subject to change,' would he be speaking rightly?"

"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because each feeling arises dependent on its corresponding condition. With the cessation of its corresponding condition, it ceases."

"Good, good, sisters. That's how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

"Just as when the root of a great, standing tree—possessed of heartwood—is inconstant & subject to change, its trunk is inconstant & subject to change, its branches & foliage are inconstant & subject to change, its shadow is inconstant & subject to change. If someone were to say, 'The root of that great, standing tree—possessed of heartwood—is inconstant & subject to change, its trunk is inconstant & subject to change, its branches & foliage are inconstant & subject to change, but as for its shadow, that is constant, everlasting, eternal, & not subject to change,' would he be speaking rightly?"

"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because the root of that great, standing tree—possessed of heartwood—is inconstant & subject to change, its trunk is inconstant & subject to change, its branches & foliage are inconstant & subject to change, so how much more should its shadow be inconstant & subject to change."

"In the same way, sisters, if someone were to say, 'My six external media are inconstant, but what I experience based on the six internal media—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that is constant, everlasting, eternal, & not subject to change,' would he be speaking rightly?"

"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because each feeling arises dependent on its corresponding condition. With the cessation of its corresponding condition, it ceases."

"Good, good, sisters. That's how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

"Just as if a skilled butcher or butcher's apprentice, having killed a cow, were to carve it up with a sharp carving knife so that—without damaging the substance of the inner flesh, without damaging the substance of the

outer hide—he would cut, sever, & detach only the skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between. Having cut, severed, & detached the outer skin, and then covering the cow again with that very skin, if he were to say that the cow was joined to the skin just as it had been, would he be speaking rightly?"[1]

"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because if the skilled butcher or butcher's apprentice, having killed a cow, were to... cut, sever, & detach only the skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between; and... having covered the cow again with that very skin, then no matter how much he might say that the cow was joined to the skin just as it had been, the cow would still be disjoined from the skin."

"This simile, sisters, I have given to convey a message. The message is this: The substance of the inner flesh stands for the six internal media; the substance of the outer hide, for the six external media. The skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between stand for passion & delight. And the sharp knife stands for noble discernment—the noble discernment that cuts, severs, & detaches the defilements, fetters, & bonds in between.

"Sisters, there are these seven factors for awakening through whose development & pursuit a monk enters & remains in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now. Which seven? There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening... *persistence* as a factor for awakening... *rapture* as a factor for awakening... *serenity* as a factor for awakening... *concentration* as a factor for awakening... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. These are the seven factors for awakening through whose development & pursuit a monk enters & remains in the fermentation-free release of awareness & release of discernment, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now."

Then, having exhorted the nuns with this exhortation, Ven. Nandaka dismissed them, saying, "Go, sisters. The time has come." The nuns, delighting in and approving of Ven. Nandaka's exhortation, got up from

their seats, bowed down to him, circumambulated him—keeping him to the right—and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, they stood to one side. As they were standing there, the Blessed One said to them, "Go, nuns. The time has come." So the nuns, having bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him—keeping him to the right—and departed.

Then, not long after the nuns' departure, the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Monks, just as on the uposatha day of the fifteenth, people at large feel no doubt or indecision as to whether the moon is lacking or full, for it is clearly full; in the same way, the nuns are gratified with Nandaka's Dhamma-teaching, and their resolves have been fulfilled. Of these 500 nuns, the most backward is a stream-winner, not destined for the planes of deprivation, headed to self-awakening for sure." — *MN 146*

NOTE: 1. The act of covering the cow with skin refers to the arahant's return to the world of the six senses after emerging from the experience of awakening.

The Buddha anticipates cross-questioning of his teaching by faultfinders:

§ 78. "Now it's possible, Ānanda, that some wanderers of other sects might say, 'Gotama the contemplative speaks of the cessation of perception & feeling, and yet describes it as pleasure. What is this? How is this?' When they say that, they are to be told, 'It's not the case, friends, that the Blessed One describes only pleasant feeling as included under pleasure. Wherever pleasure is found, in whatever terms,[1] the Blessed One describes it as pleasure.'" — *MN 59 [See also §116]*

NOTE: 1. This passage indicates that the aggregates do not cover all possible experience. See also §205, note 4.

§ 79. "Now it's possible, Cunda, that some wanderers of other sects might say, 'Gotama the contemplative describes unlimited knowledge & vision with regard to the past, but doesn't describe unlimited knowledge & vision with regard to the future. What is this? How is this?' Those wanderers of other sects construe the sort of knowing that is not knowledge & vision to be the sort of knowing that is knowledge & vision, just like those who are foolish & inexperienced. The Tathāgata's memory-

&-recollection knowledge with regard to the past is such that he recollects whatever he wants. The Tathāgata's knowledge with regard to the future arises born from his awakening: 'This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.'

"With regard to what is past: If it is unfactual, untrue, & unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, but unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, & beneficial, the Tathāgata has a sense of the proper time for giving the answer to that question.

"With regard to what is future...

"With regard to what is present: If it is unfactual, untrue, & unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, but unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, & beneficial, the Tathāgata has a sense of the proper time for giving the answer to that question." — *DN 29 [§69, §156]*

Ven. Sāriputta anticipates cross-questioning of the teaching by sincere, intelligent people:

§ 80. Ven. Sāriputta said, "Friends, in foreign lands there are wise nobles & brahmans, householders & contemplatives—for the people there are wise & discriminating—who will question a monk: 'What is your teacher's doctrine? What does he teach?'

"Thus asked, you should answer, 'Our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire.'

"Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmans, householders & contemplatives... who will question you further, 'And your teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for what?'

"Thus asked, you should answer, 'Our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications. Our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness.' [§38]

"Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmans, householders & contemplatives... who will question you further, 'And seeing what danger does your teacher teach the subduing of passion &

desire for form… for feeling… for perception… for fabrications? Seeing what danger does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness?'

"Thus asked, you should answer, 'When one is not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for form, then from any change & alteration in that form, there arises sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair. When one is not free from passion… for feeling… for perception… for fabrications… When one is not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for consciousness, then from any change & alteration in that consciousness, there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair. Seeing this danger, our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for form… for feeling… for perception… for fabrications. Seeing this danger our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness.'

"Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmans, householders & contemplatives… who will question you further, 'And seeing what benefit does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for form… for feeling… for perception… for fabrications? Seeing what benefit does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness?'

"Thus asked, you should answer, 'When one is free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for form, then with any change & alteration in that form, there does not arise any sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, or despair. When one is free from passion… for feeling… for perception… for fabrications… When one is free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for consciousness, then with any change & alteration in that consciousness, there does not arise any sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, or despair. Seeing this benefit, our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for form… for feeling… for perception… for fabrications. Seeing this benefit our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness.'

"Friends, if one who entered & remained in unskillful qualities were to have a pleasant abiding in the here & now—unthreatened, undespairing, unfeverish—and on the breakup of the body, after death, could expect a good destination, then the Blessed One would not advocate the abandoning of unskillful qualities. But because one who enters & remains

in unskillful qualities has a stressful abiding in the here & now—threatened, despairing, & feverish—and on the breakup of the body, after death, can expect a bad destination, that is why the Blessed One advocates the abandoning of unskillful qualities.

"If one who entered & remained in skillful qualities were to have a stressful abiding in the here & now—threatened, despairing, & feverish—and on the breakup of the body, after death, could expect a bad destination, then the Blessed One would not advocate entering into skillful qualities. But because one who enters & remains in skillful qualities has a pleasant abiding in the here & now—unthreatened, undespairing, unfeverish—and on the breakup of the body, after death, can expect a good destination, that is why the Blessed One advocates entering into skillful qualities." — *SN 22:2 [See also §20; §26]*

Awakening through cross-questioning the speaker:

§ 81. On one occasion many elder monks were staying at Kosambī in Ghosita's park. And at that time Ven. Khemaka was staying at the Jujube Tree park, diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then in the late afternoon the elder monks left their seclusion and addressed Ven. Dāsaka, (saying,) "Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "We hope you are getting better, friend. We hope you are comfortable. We hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. We hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing."'"

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'We hope you are getting better, friend. We hope you are comfortable. We hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. We hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.'"

"I am not getting better, my friend. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening."

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and, on arrival, said to them, "The monk Khemaka has said to me, 'I am not getting better, my friend. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening.'"

"Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: Do you assume anything with regard to these five clinging-aggregates to be self or belonging to self?"'"

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: Do you assume anything with regard to these five clinging-aggregates to be self or belonging to self?'"

"Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self."

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and on arrival said to them, "The monk Khemaka has said to me, 'Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self.'"

"Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: If, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, Ven.

Khemaka assumes nothing to be self or belonging to self, then Ven. Khemaka is an arahant, devoid of fermentations.'"'"

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: If, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, Ven. Khemaka assumes nothing to be self or belonging to self, then Ven. Khemaka is an arahant, devoid of fermentations.'"

"Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self, and yet I am not an arahant. With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, 'I am' has not been overcome, although I don't assume that 'I am this.'"

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and on arrival said to them, "The monk Khemaka has said to me, 'Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self, and yet I am not an arahant. With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, "I am" has not been overcome, although I don't assume that "I am this."'"

"Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "Friend Khemaka, this 'I am' of which you speak: What do you say 'I am'? Do you say, 'I am form,' or do you say, 'I am something other than form'? Do you say, 'I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,' or do you say, 'I am something other than consciousness'? This 'I am' of which you speak: What do you say 'I am'?"'"

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'Friend Khemaka, this "I am" of which you speak: What do you say "I am"? Do you say, "I am form," or do you say, "I am something other

than form"? Do you say, "I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness," or do you say, "I am something other than consciousness"? This "I am" of which you speak: What do you say "I am"?'"

"Enough, friend Dāsaka. What is accomplished by this running back & forth? Fetch me my staff. I will go to the elder monks myself."

Then Ven. Khemaka, leaning on his staff, went to the elder monks and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with them. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the elder monks said to him, "Friend Khemaka, this 'I am' of which you speak: What do you say 'I am'? Do you say, 'I am form,' or do you say, 'I am something other than form'? Do you say, 'I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,' or do you say, 'I am something other than consciousness'? This 'I am' of which you speak: What do you say 'I am'?"

"Friends, it's not that I say 'I am form,' nor do I say 'I am something other than form.' It's not that I say, 'I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,' nor do I say, 'I am something other than consciousness.' With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, 'I am' has not been overcome, although I don't assume that 'I am this.'

"It's just like the scent of a blue, red, or white lotus: If someone were to call it the scent of a petal or the scent of the color or the scent of a filament, would he be speaking correctly?"

"No, friend."

"Then how would he describe it if he were describing it correctly?"

"As the scent of the flower: That's how he would describe it if he were describing it correctly."

"In the same way, friends, it's not that I say 'I am form,' nor do I say 'I am other than form.' It's not that I say, 'I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,' nor do I say, 'I am something other than consciousness.' With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, 'I am' has not been overcome, although I don't assume that 'I am this.'

"Friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, he still has with regard to the five clinging-aggregates a lingering residual 'I am' conceit, an 'I am' desire, an 'I am' obsession. But at a later

time he keeps focusing on the phenomena of arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' As he keeps focusing on the arising & passing away of these five clinging-aggregates, the lingering residual 'I am' conceit, 'I am' desire, 'I am' obsession is fully obliterated.

"Just like a cloth, dirty & stained: Its owners give it over to a washerman, who scrubs it with salt earth or lye or cow-dung and then rinses it in clear water. Now even though the cloth is clean & spotless, it still has a lingering residual scent of salt earth or lye or cow-dung. The washerman gives it to the owners, the owners put it away in a scent-infused wicker hamper, and its lingering residual scent of salt earth, lye, or cow-dung is fully obliterated.

"In the same way, friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, he still has with regard to the five clinging-aggregates a lingering residual 'I am' conceit, an 'I am' desire, an 'I am' obsession. But at a later time he keeps focusing on the phenomena of arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' As he keeps focusing on the arising & passing away of these five clinging-aggregates, the lingering residual 'I am' conceit, 'I am' desire, 'I am' obsession is fully obliterated."

When this was said, the elder monks said to Ven. Khemaka, "We didn't cross-examine Ven. Khemaka with the purpose of troubling him, just that [we thought] Ven. Khemaka is capable of declaring the Blessed One's message, teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain—just as he has in fact declared it, taught it, described it, set it forth, revealed it, explained it, made it plain."

That is what Ven. Khemaka said. Gratified, the elder monks delighted in his words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of sixty-some monks, through no clinging, were released from fermentations—as was Ven. Khemaka's. — *SN 22:89*

The Buddha's final invitation to cross-question him:

§ 82. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "If even a single monk has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don't later regret that 'The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn't bring ourselves to cross-question him in his presence.'"

When this was said, the monks were silent.

A second time, the Blessed One said, "If even a single monk has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don't later regret that 'The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn't bring ourselves to cross-question him in his presence.'"

A second time, the monks were silent.

A third time, the Blessed One said, "If even a single monk has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don't later regret that 'The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn't bring ourselves to cross-question him in his presence.'"

A third time, the monks were silent.

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Now, if it's out of respect for the Teacher that you don't ask, let a friend inform a friend."

When this was said, the monks were silent.

Then Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding. I'm confident that in this community of monks there isn't even a single monk who has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice."

"You, Ānanda, speak out of confidence, while there is knowledge in the Tathāgata that in this community of monks there isn't even a single monk who has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice. Of these 500 monks, the most backward is a stream-winner, not destined for the planes of deprivation, headed to self-awakening for sure."

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Now then, monks, I exhort you: All fabrications are subject to decay. Bring about completion

by being heedful."

Those were the Tathāgata's last words. — *DN 16*

THE BUDDHA QUESTIONS OTHER SECTARIANS

§ 83. "Monks, there are these three sectarian guilds that—when interrogated, pressed, & rebuked by wise people—even though they may explain otherwise, remain stuck in [a doctrine of] inaction. Which three?

"There are contemplatives & brahmans who hold this teaching, hold this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful—is all caused by what was done in the past.' There are contemplatives & brahmans who hold this teaching, hold this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful—is all caused by a supreme being's act of creation.' There are contemplatives & brahmans who hold this teaching, hold this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful—is all without cause & without condition.'

"Having approached the contemplatives & brahmans who hold that... 'Whatever a person experiences... is all caused by what was done in the past,' I said to them: 'Is it true that you hold that... whatever a person experiences... is all caused by what was done in the past?' Thus asked by me, they admitted, 'Yes.' Then I said to them, 'Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings because of what was done in the past. A person is a thief... unchaste... a liar... a divisive speaker... a coarse speaker... an idle chatterer... covetous... one bearing thoughts of ill will... a holder of wrong views because of what was done in the past.' When one falls back on what was done in the past as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort [at the thought], 'This should be done. This shouldn't be done.' When one can't pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn't be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative. This was my first righteous refutation of those contemplatives & brahmans who hold to such teachings, such views.

"Having approached the contemplatives & brahmans who hold that... 'Whatever a person experiences... is all caused by a supreme being's act of creation,' I said to them: 'Is it true that you hold that... whatever a person experiences... is all caused by a supreme being's act of creation?' Thus

asked by me, they admitted, 'Yes.' Then I said to them, 'Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings because of a supreme being's act of creation. A person is a thief... unchaste... a liar... a divisive speaker... a coarse speaker... an idle chatterer... covetous... one bearing thoughts of ill will... a holder of wrong views because of a supreme being's act of creation.' When one falls back on a supreme being's act of creation as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort [at the thought], 'This should be done. This shouldn't be done.' When one can't pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn't be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative. This was my second righteous refutation of those contemplatives & brahmans who hold to such teachings, such views.

"Having approached the contemplatives & brahmans who hold that... 'Whatever a person experiences... is all without cause, without condition,' I said to them: 'Is it true that you hold that... whatever a person experiences... is all without cause, without condition?' Thus asked by me, they admitted, 'Yes.' Then I said to them, 'Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings without cause, without condition. A person is a thief... unchaste... a liar... a divisive speaker... a coarse speaker... an idle chatterer... covetous... one bearing thoughts of ill will... a holder of wrong views without cause, without condition.' When one falls back on lack of cause and lack of condition as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort [at the thought], 'This should be done. This shouldn't be done.' When one can't pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn't be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative. This was my third righteous refutation of those contemplatives & brahmans who hold to such teachings, such views.

"These are the three sectarian guilds that—when interrogated, pressed, & rebuked by wise people—even though they may explain otherwise, remain stuck in inaction." — *AN 3:62*

§ 84. The Blessed One said, "Monks, there are some contemplatives & brahmans who teach in this way, who have this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be

no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted.' Such is the teaching of the Niganṭhas.

"Going to Niganṭhas who teach in this way, I have asked them, 'Is it true, friend Niganṭhas, that you teach in this way, that you have this view: "Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted"?'

"Having been asked this by me, the Niganṭhas admitted it, 'Yes.'

"So I said to them, 'But, friends, do you know that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist?'

"'No, friend.'

"'And do you know that you did evil actions in the past, and that you did not not do them?'

"'No, friend.'

"'And do you know that you did such-and-such evil actions in the past?'

"'No, friend.'

"'And do you know that so-and-so much stress has been exhausted, or that so-and-so much stress remains to be exhausted, or that with the exhaustion of so-and-so much stress all stress will be exhausted?'

"'No, friend.'

"'But do you know what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now?'

"'No, friend.'

"'So, friends, it seems that you don't know that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist... you don't know what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now. That being the case, it is not proper for you to assert that,

“Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted.”

“‘If, however, you knew that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist; if you knew that you did evil actions in the past, and that you did not not do them; if you knew that you did such-and-such evil actions in the past; you don’t know that so-and-so much stress has been exhausted, or that so-and-so much stress remains to be exhausted, or that with the exhaustion of so-and-so much stress all stress will be exhausted; if you knew what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now, then—that being the case—it would be proper for you to assert that, “Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted.”

“‘Friend Niganṭhas, it’s as if a man were shot with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. As a result of being shot with the arrow, he would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. His friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives would provide him with a surgeon. The surgeon would cut around the opening of the wound with a knife. As a result of the surgeon’s cutting around the opening of the wound with a knife, the man would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. The surgeon would probe for the arrow with a probe. As a result of the surgeon’s probing for the arrow with a probe, the man would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. The surgeon would then pull out the arrow. As a result of the surgeon’s pulling out the arrow, the man would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. The surgeon would then apply a burning medicine to the mouth of the wound. As a result of the surgeon’s applying a burning medicine to the mouth of the wound, the

man would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. But then at a later time, when the wound had healed and was covered with skin, he would be well & happy, free, master of himself, able to go wherever he liked. The thought would occur to him, "Before, I was shot with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. As a result of being shot with the arrow, I felt fierce, sharp, racking pains. My friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives provided me with a surgeon.... The surgeon cut around the opening of the wound with a knife... probed for the arrow with a probe... pulled out the arrow... applied a burning medicine to the mouth of the wound. As a result of his applying a burning medicine to the mouth of the wound, I felt fierce, sharp, racking pains. But now that the wound is healed and covered with skin, I am well & happy, free, master of myself, able to go wherever I like."

"'In the same way, friend Nigaṇṭhas, if you knew that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist... if you knew what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now, then—that being the case—it would be proper for you to assert that, "Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted." But because you do not know that you existed in the past... you do not know what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now, then—that being the case—it is not proper for you to assert that, "Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted."

"When this was said, the Nigaṇṭhas said to me, 'Friend, the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta [the leader of the Nigaṇṭhas] is all-knowing, all-seeing, and

claims total knowledge & vision thus: "Whether I am walking or standing, sleeping or awake, knowledge & vision are continuously & continually established in me." He has told us, "Nigaṇṭhas, there are evil actions that you have done in the past. Exhaust them with these painful austerities. When in the present you are restrained in body, restrained in speech, and restrained in mind, that is the non-doing of evil action for the future. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted." We approve of that [teaching], prefer it, and are gratified by it.'

"When this was said, I said to the Nigaṇṭhas, 'Friend Nigaṇṭhas, there are five things that can turn out in two ways in the here-&-now. Which five? Conviction, liking, unbroken tradition, reasoning by analogy, & an agreement through pondering views. These are the five things that can turn out in two ways in the here-&-now. That being the case, what kind of conviction do you have for your teacher with regard to the past? What kind of liking? What kind of unbroken tradition? What kind of reasoning by analogy? What kind of agreement through pondering views?' But when I said this, I did not see that the Nigaṇṭhas had any legitimate defense of their teaching.

"So I asked them further, 'Friend Nigaṇṭhas, what do you think? When there is fierce striving, fierce exertion, do you feel fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment? And when there is no fierce striving, no fierce exertion, do you feel no fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment?'

"'Yes, friend....'

"'... Then it's not proper for you to assert that, "Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the

ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted."

"'If it were the case that when there was fierce striving, fierce exertion, you felt fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment; and when there was no fierce striving, no fierce exertion, you still felt fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment, then—that being the case—it would be proper for you to assert that, "Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted." But because when there is fierce striving, fierce exertion, you feel fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment; and when there was no fierce striving, no fierce exertion, you feel no fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment, then—that being the case—it is not proper for you to assert that, "Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted."' But when I said this, I did not see that the Niganṭhas had any legitimate defense of their teaching.

"So I asked them further, 'Friend Niganṭhas, what do you think? Can an action to be experienced in the here-&-now be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced in the future life?'

"'No, friend.'

"'Can an action to be experienced in the future life be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced in the here-&-now?'

"'No, friend.'

"What do you think? Can an action to be experienced as pleasure be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced as pain?'

"'No, friend.'

"'Can an action to be experienced as pain be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced as pleasure?'

"'No, friend.'

"What do you think? Can an action ripe to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action not ripe to be experienced?'

"'No, friend.'

"'Can an action not ripe to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action ripe to be experienced?'

"'No, friend.'

"What do you think? Can an action greatly to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action barely to be experienced?'

"'No, friend.'

"'Can an action barely to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action greatly to be experienced?'

"'No, friend.'

"What do you think? Can an action to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action not to be experienced?'

"'No, friend.'

"'Can an action not to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced?'

"'No, friend.'

"'So, friends, it seems that an action to be experienced in the here-&-now cannot be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced in the future life. An action to be experienced in the future life cannot be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced in the here-&-now.... An action to be experienced cannot be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action not to be experienced. An action not to be experienced cannot be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced. That being the case, the striving of the Nigaṇṭhas is fruitless, their exertion is fruitless.'

"Such is the teaching of the Nigaṇṭhas. And, such being the teaching of the Nigaṇṭhas, ten legitimate deductions can be drawn that give

grounds for censuring them.

"[1] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on what was done in the past, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have done bad things in the past, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

"[2] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on the creative act of a supreme god, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have been created by an evil supreme god, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

"[3] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on sheer luck, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have evil luck, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

"[4] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on birth, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have had an evil birth, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

"[5] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on efforts in the here-&-now, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have evil efforts in the here-&-now, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

"[6] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on what was done in the past, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

"[7] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on the creative act of a supreme god, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

"[8] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on sheer luck, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

"[9] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on birth, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

"[10] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on efforts in the here-&-now, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

"Such is the teaching of the Nigaṇṭhas, monks. And, such being the teaching of the Nigaṇṭhas, these ten legitimate deductions can be drawn that give grounds for censuring them." — *MN 101*

§ 85. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the Niganṭhas, went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Headman, how does Niganṭha Nāṭaputta teach the Dhamma to his disciples?"

"Niganṭha Nāṭaputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way, lord: 'All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal.... All those who indulge in sexual misconduct.... All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell. Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth].' That's how Niganṭha Nāṭaputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples."

"If it's true that 'Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],' then no one is destined for a state of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Niganṭha Nāṭaputta's words. What do you think, headman? If a man is one who takes life, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, which time is more: the time he spends taking life or the time he spends not taking life?"

"If a man is one who takes life, lord, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, the time he spends taking life is less, and the time he spends not taking life is certainly more. If it's true that 'Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],' then no one is destined for a state of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Niganṭha Nāṭaputta's words."

"What do you think, headman? If a man is one who steals... engages in sexual misconduct... tells lies, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, which time is more: the time he spends telling lies or the time he spends not telling lies?"

"If a man is one who tells lies, lord, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, the time he spends telling lies is less, and the time he spends not telling lies is certainly more. If it's true that 'Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],' then no one is destined for a state of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Niganṭha Nāṭaputta's words."

"There's the case, headman, where a certain teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: 'All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal.... All those who engage in sexual misconduct.... All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell.' A disciple has faith in that teacher, and the thought occurs to him, 'Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: "All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell." There are living beings that I have killed. I too am destined for a state of deprivation, am destined for hell.' He fastens onto that view. If he doesn't abandon that doctrine, doesn't abandon that state of mind, doesn't relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

"[The thought occurs to him,] 'Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: 'All those who steal.... All those who engage in sexual misconduct.... All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell.' There are lies that I have told. I too am destined for a state of deprivation, am destined for hell.' He fastens onto that view. If he doesn't abandon that doctrine, doesn't abandon that state of mind, doesn't relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

"There is the case, headman, where a Tathāgata appears in the world, worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear knowing & conduct, well-gone, a knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those to be tamed, teacher of human & divine beings, awakened, blessed. He, in various ways, criticizes & censures the taking of life, and says, 'Abstain from taking life.' He criticizes & censures stealing, and says, 'Abstain from stealing.' He criticizes & censures engaging in sexual misconduct, and says, 'Abstain from engaging in sexual misconduct.' He criticizes & censures the telling of lies, and says, 'Abstain from the telling of lies.'

"A disciple has faith in that teacher and reflects: 'The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes & censures the taking of life, and says, "Abstain from taking life." There are living beings that I have killed, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.' So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the taking of life, and in the future refrains from taking life. This is how there comes to be the

abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

"[He reflects:] 'The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes & censures stealing... engaging in sexual misconduct... the telling of lies, and says, "Abstain from the telling of lies." There are lies that I have told, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.' So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the telling of lies, and in the future refrains from telling lies. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

"Having abandoned the taking of life, he refrains from taking life. Having abandoned stealing, he refrains from stealing. Having abandoned sexual misconduct, he refrains from sexual misconduct. Having abandoned lies, he refrains from lies. Having abandoned divisive speech, he refrains from divisive speech. Having abandoned coarse speech, he refrains from coarse speech. Having abandoned idle chatter, he refrains from idle chatter. Having abandoned covetousness, he becomes uncovetous. Having abandoned ill will & anger, he becomes one with a mind of no ill will. Having abandoned wrong views, he becomes one who has right views.

"That disciple of the noble ones, headman—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with good will, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through good will is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.

"That disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion... empathetic joy... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth.

Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through equanimity is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there." — *SN 42:8*

CLARIFYING THE QUESTION

§ 86. [King Pasenadi:] "But, lord, are there devas?"

[The Buddha:] "But why do you ask, great king, 'But, lord, are there devas'?"

"Whether the devas come back to this life, lord, or whether they don't."

"Those devas who are afflicted come back to this life, whereas those devas who are unafflicted don't come back to this life." — *MN 90*

§ 87. [Saṅgārava Bhāradvāja:] "Well, Master Gotama, are there devas?"

"It's immediately known to me, Bhāradvāja, that there are devas."

"Why, when asked if there are devas, did Master Gotama say, 'It's immediately known to me, Bhāradvāja, that there are devas.' When that's the case, isn't that empty and false?"

"When, on being asked if there are devas, one would say, 'There are devas' or one would say, 'They are immediately known, they are known to me,' then a knowledgeable person would come to the categorical conclusion that there are devas."

"But why didn't Master Gotama answer me the first way?"

"It's assumed as something high in the world that there are devas." — *MN 100*

§ 88. "Now, lord, is perception a person's self, or is perception one thing and self another?"

"What self do you posit, Poṭṭhapāda?"

“I posit a gross self, possessed of form, made up of the four great existents [earth, water, fire, and wind], feeding on physical food.”

“Then, Poṭṭhapāda, your self would be gross, possessed of form, made up of the four great existents, feeding on physical food. That being the case, then for you perception would be one thing and self another. And it’s through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another: even as there remains this gross self—possessed of form, made up of the four great existents, and feeding on food—one perception arises for that person as another perception passes away. It’s through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another.”

“Then, lord, I posit a mind-made self complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties.”

“Then, Poṭṭhapāda, your self would be mind-made, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties. That being the case, then for you perception would be one thing and self another. And it’s through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another: even as there remains this mind-made self—complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties—one perception arises for that person as another perception passes away. It’s through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another.”

“Then, lord, I posit a formless self made of perception.”

“Then, Poṭṭhapāda, your self would be formless and made of perception. That being the case, then for you perception would be one thing and self another. And it’s through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another: even as there remains this formless self made of perception, one perception arises for that person as another perception passes away. It’s through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another.”

“Is it possible for me to know, lord, whether perception is a person’s self or if perception is one thing and self another?”

“Poṭṭhapāda—having other views, other practices, other satisfactions, other aims, other teachers—it’s hard for you to know whether perception is a person’s self or if perception is one thing and self another.” — *DN 9*

EXTRACTING DEFINITIONS

§ 89. Then Moḷiya Sīvaka the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "'The Dhamma is visible here-&-now. The Dhamma is visible here-&-now.' Thus it is said. To what extent, lord, is the Dhamma visible here-&-now, timeless, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves?"

"Very well then, Sīvaka, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There being greed present within you, do you discern, 'There is greed present within me'? And there being no greed present within you, do you discern, 'There is no greed present within me'?"

"Yes, lord."

"Sīvaka, the fact that, there being greed present within you, you discern, 'There is greed present within me'; and, there being no greed present within you, you discern, 'There is no greed present within me': It is in this way that the Dhamma is visible here-&-now, timeless, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves.

"What do you think? There being aversion present within you, do you discern, 'There is aversion present within me'? And there being no aversion present within you, do you discern, 'There is no aversion present within me'?"

"Yes, lord."

"Sīvaka, the fact that, there being aversion present within you, you discern, 'There is aversion present within me'; and, there being no aversion present within you, you discern, 'There is no aversion present within me': It is in this way that the Dhamma is visible here-&-now, timeless, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves.

"What do you think? There being delusion present within you, do you discern, 'There is delusion present within me'? And there being no delusion present within you, do you discern, 'There is no delusion present within me'?"

"Yes, lord."

"Sīvaka, the fact that, there being delusion present within you, you discern, 'There is delusion present within me'; and, there being no delusion present within you, you discern, 'There is no delusion present within me': It is in this way that the Dhamma is visible here-&-now, timeless, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves." — *AN 6:47*

[In AN 6:48, a certain brahman asks the Buddha the same question, and he responds in a similar manner, although instead of using the examples of greed, aversion, and delusion, he uses the examples of passion, aversion, delusion, bodily corrupt behavior, verbal corrupt behavior, and mental corrupt behavior.]

§ 90. [Ven. Ānanda:] "This word, 'becoming, becoming'—to what extent is there becoming?"

[The Buddha:] "If there were no kamma ripening in the sensuality-property, would sensuality-becoming be discerned?"

[Ven. Ānanda:] "No, lord."

The Buddha: "Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a lower property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future.

"If there were no kamma ripening in the form-property, would form-becoming be discerned?"

[Ven. Ānanda:] "No, lord."

[The Buddha:] "Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a middling property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future.

"If there were no kamma ripening in the formless-property, would formless-becoming be discerned?"

[Ven. Ānanda:] "No, lord."

[The Buddha:] "Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a refined property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. This is how there is becoming." — *AN 3:77*

§ 91. I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying in Kosambī at Ghosita's park. Then a certain householder, a disciple of the Fatalists [Ājīvakas], went to him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Ānanda, "Among us, sir, whose Dhamma is well-taught? Who has practiced well in this world? Who in the world is well-gone?"

"Very well then, householder, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. Now, what do you think? Those who teach a Dhamma for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—is their Dhamma well-taught or not? Or how does this strike you?"

"Sir, those who teach a Dhamma for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—their Dhamma is well-taught. That's how it strikes me."

"And what do you think, householder? Those who have practiced for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—have they practiced well in this world or not? Or how does this strike you?"

"Sir, those who have practiced for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—they have practiced well in this world. That's how it strikes me."

"And what do you think, householder? Those whose passion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising; those whose aversion is abandoned... whose delusion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: are they, in this world, well-gone or not? Or how does this strike you?"

"Sir, those whose passion... aversion... delusion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: they, in this world, are well-gone. That's how it strikes me."

"In this way, householder, you have answered yourself: 'Those who teach a Dhamma for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—their Dhamma is well-taught. Those who have practiced for the abandoning of passion, for the

abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—they have practiced well in this world. Those whose passion… aversion… delusion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: they, in this world, are well-gone.'"

"How amazing, sir! How astounding! There is neither extolling of one's own Dhamma nor deprecation of another's, but just the teaching of the Dhamma in its proper sphere, speaking to the point without mentioning oneself." — *AN 3:73*

HYPOTHETICALS: ON THE BUDDHA AS TEACHER

§ 92. Then Pāṭaliya the headman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "I have heard that, 'Gotama the contemplative knows magic.' I trust that those who say that, 'Gotama the contemplative knows magic' do not slander the Blessed One with what is unfactual, that they declare the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, and that the legitimate implications of what they say give no grounds for criticism. For I would not want to slander the Blessed One."

"Headman, those who say that, 'Gotama the contemplative knows magic' do not slander me with what is unfactual, they declare the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, and the legitimate implications of what they say give no grounds for criticism."

"Then, good sir, we did not believe the plain truth from those contemplatives & brahmans who said, 'Gotama the contemplative knows magic.' Then the Blessed One is actually a magician!"

"But, headman, is one who says that 'I know magic' also saying that 'I am a magician'?"

"That's just how it is, Blessed One! That's just how it is, One Well-gone!"

"Very well then, headman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Do you know the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down?"

"Yes, lord…."

"What do you think? What is the job of the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down?"

"They arrest any thieves among the Koliyans, and they carry messages for the Koliyans. That is the job of the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down."

"What do you think? Do you know whether the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are virtuous or unvirtuous?"

"I know that the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are unvirtuous and of evil character. They are among those in the world who are unvirtuous and of evil character."

"If someone were to say, 'Pāṭaliya the headman knows that the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are unvirtuous and of evil character; and Pāṭaliya the headman too is unvirtuous and of evil character,' would someone speaking thus be speaking rightly?"

"No, lord. The Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are one thing, and I am something else. Their character is one thing, and mine is something else."

"Then, headman, if you get (to say) that Pāṭaliya the headman knows that the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are unvirtuous and of evil character, yet he is not unvirtuous and of evil character, then why can't the Tathāgata get (to say) that the Tathāgata knows magic, yet the Tathāgata is not a magician?

"I know magic, headman. I know the (kammic) result of magic, and I know how a magician practices so that—with the breakup of the body, after death—he appears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell." — *SN 42:13*

§ 93. "Venerable sir, when wise nobles or brahmans, householders or contemplatives, having formulated questions, come to the Tathāgata and ask him, does this line of reasoning appear to his awareness beforehand —'If those who approach me ask this, I—thus asked—will answer in this way'—or does the Tathāgata come up with the answer on the spot?"

"Very well then, prince, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Are you skilled in the parts of a chariot?"

"Yes, venerable sir. I am skilled in the parts of a chariot."

"And what do you think? When people come & ask you, 'What is the name of this part of the chariot?' does this line of reasoning appear to your awareness beforehand—'If those who approach me ask this, I—thus asked—will answer in this way'—or do you come up with the answer on the spot?"

"Venerable sir, I am renowned for being skilled in the parts of a chariot. All the parts of a chariot are well-known to me. I come up with the answer on the spot."

"In the same way, prince, when wise nobles or brahmans, householders or contemplatives, having formulated questions, come to the Tathāgata and ask him, he comes up with the answer on the spot. Why is that? Because the property of the Dhamma is thoroughly penetrated by the Tathāgata. From his thorough penetration of the property of the Dhamma, he comes up with the answer on the spot."[1]
— *MN 58*

NOTE: 1. This statement is apparently related to the more abstract statement in AN 4:24 [§46], that what the Tathāgata knows is not "established" in him. In other words, he does not define himself or the awakened mind in terms of knowledge or views [§47], even concerning the Dhamma, although the knowledge that led to his awakening and that is born from his awakening [§79] is fully available for him to draw on at any time.

§ 94. When this was said, Gaṇaka Moggallāna the brahman said to the Blessed One, "When Master Gotama's disciples are thus exhorted & instructed by him, do they all attain unbinding, the absolute conclusion, or do some of them not?"

"Brahman, when my disciples are thus exhorted & instructed by me, some attain unbinding, the absolute conclusion, and some don't."

"What is the reason, what is the cause—when unbinding is there, and the path leading to unbinding is there, and Master Gotama is there as the guide—that when Master Gotama's disciples are thus exhorted & instructed by him, some attain unbinding, the absolute conclusion, and some don't?"

"Very well then, brahman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Are you skilled in the road leading to Rājagaha?"

"Yes, sir, I am skilled in the road leading to Rājagaha."

"Now, what do you think? There's the case where a man would come, wanting to go to Rājagaha. Having come to you, he would say, 'I want to go to Rājagaha. Tell me the way to Rājagaha.' You would tell him, 'Well, my good man, this road goes to Rājagaha. Go along it for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a village named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a town named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see Rājagaha with its lovely parks, lovely forests, lovely meadows, lovely ponds.' Having been thus exhorted & instructed by you, he would take a wrong road and arrive out west.

"Then a second man would come, wanting to go to Rājagaha. Having come to you, he would say, 'I want to go to Rājagaha. Tell me the way to Rājagaha.' You would tell him, 'Well, my good man, this road goes to Rājagaha. Go along it for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a village named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a town named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see Rājagaha with its lovely parks, lovely forests, lovely meadows, lovely ponds. Having been thus exhorted & instructed by you, he would arrive safely at Rājagaha. Now, what is the reason, what is the cause—when Rājagaha is there, and the road leading to Rājagaha is there, and you are there as the guide—that when they are thus exhorted & instructed by you, the first man takes the wrong road and arrives out west, while the second man arrives safely at Rājagaha?"

"What can I do about that, Master Gotama? I'm the one who shows the way."

"In the same way, brahman—when unbinding is there, and the path leading to unbinding is there, and I am there as the guide—when my disciples are thus exhorted & instructed by me, some attain unbinding, the absolute conclusion, and some don't. What can I do about that, brahman? The Tathāgata is the one who shows the way." — *MN 107*

§ 95. As he was sitting there, Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One, "Lord, doesn't the Blessed One dwell with sympathy for the benefit of all beings?"

"Yes, headman, the Tathāgata dwells with sympathy for the benefit of all beings."

"Then why is it that the Blessed One teaches the Dhamma with full attentiveness to some, and not with full attentiveness to others?"

"Very well then, headman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There is the case where a farming householder has three fields: one excellent field, one middling, and one poor—sandy, salty, with bad soil. What do you think? If that farming householder wanted to sow seed, where would he sow the seed first: in the excellent field, in the middling field, or in the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil?"

"If that farming householder wanted to sow seed, he would sow the seed first in the excellent field. Having sown it there, he would sow it in the middling field. Having sown it there, he might not sow it in the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil—or he might. Why is that? It would at least go toward cattle fodder."

"In the same way, headman, like the excellent field are the monks & nuns to me. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.

"Like the middling field are the male & female lay followers to me. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.

"Like the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil—are the followers of other sects to me: contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? (I think,) 'Perhaps they might understand even one sentence. That will be for their long-term benefit & happiness.'

"Suppose, headman, that a man had three waterpots: one uncracked that doesn't let water seep out, one uncracked that lets water seep out, and one cracked that lets water seep out. What do you think? If that man wanted to store water, in which pot would he store it first...?"

"... He would store it first in the uncracked waterpot that doesn't let water seep out. Having stored it there, he would store it in the uncracked waterpot that lets water seep out. Having stored it there, he would store it in the cracked waterpot that lets water seep out. Why is that? At least it could go toward washing dishes."

"In the same way, headman, like the uncracked waterpot that doesn't let water seep out are the monks & nuns to me.... Like the uncracked waterpot that lets water seep out are the male & female lay followers to me.... Like the cracked waterpot that lets water seep out are the followers of other sects to me: contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? (I think,) 'Perhaps they might understand even one sentence. That will be for their long-term benefit & happiness.'" — *SN 42:7*

§ 96. When this was said, Prince Bodhi said to the Blessed One, "Lord, when a monk gains a Tathāgata to discipline him, how long does it take for him to reach & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now?"

"Very well then, prince, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Are you skilled in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad?"

"Yes, lord, I am skilled in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad."

"And what do you think? There is the case where a man comes, (thinking,) 'Prince Bodhi knows the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad. I will study the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under him.' But if he were without conviction, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one with conviction. If he had many illnesses, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one of few illnesses. If he were

fraudulent & deceitful, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one neither fraudulent nor deceitful. If he were lazy, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one with aroused persistence. If he were undiscerning, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one who was discerning. What do you think, prince? Would that man be able to train in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under you?"

"Even a man with only one of those qualities, lord, would not be able to train in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under me—to say nothing of one with all five."

"What do you think, prince? There is the case where a man comes, (thinking,) 'Prince Bodhi knows the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad. I will study the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under him.' And if he were to have conviction, he would achieve what could be achieved by one with conviction. If he had few illnesses, he would achieve what could be achieved by one of few illnesses. If he were neither fraudulent nor deceitful, he would achieve what could be achieved by one neither fraudulent nor deceitful. If he had aroused persistence, he would achieve what could be achieved by one with aroused persistence. If he were discerning, he would achieve what could be achieved by one who was discerning. What do you think, prince? Would that man be able to train in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under you?"

"Even a man with only one of those qualities, lord, would be able to train in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under me—to say nothing of one with all five."

"In the same way, prince, there are these five factors for exertion. Which five?

"There is the case where a monk has conviction, is convinced of the Tathāgata's awakening: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed.'

"He is free from illness & discomfort, endowed with good digestion—not too cold, not too hot, of moderate strength—fit for exertion.

"He is neither fraudulent nor deceitful. He declares himself to the Teacher or to his wise friends in the holy life in line with what he actually is.

“He keeps his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful qualities and taking on skillful qualities. He is steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful qualities.

“He is discerning, endowed with discernment leading to the arising of the goal—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress.

“These are the five factors for exertion.

“When a monk endowed with these five qualities gains a Tathāgata to discipline him, he would reach & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now in seven years.

“Let alone seven years. When a monk endowed with these five qualities gains a Tathāgata to discipline him, he would reach & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now in six years… five years… four years… three years… two years… one year… seven months… six months… five months… four months… three months… two months… one month… half a month… seven days… six days… five days… four days… three days… two days… one day.

“Let alone one day. When a monk endowed with these five qualities gains a Tathāgata to discipline him and is instructed in the evening, he will attain distinction by morning; instructed in the morning, he will attain distinction by evening.” — *MN 85*

§ 97. On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Nālandā in Pāvārika’s Mango Grove. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “The brahmans of the Western lands, lord—those who carry water pots, wear garlands of water plants, purify with water, & worship fire—can take [the spirit of] a dead person, lift it out, instruct it, & send it to heaven. But the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, can arrange it so that all the world, with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world.”

“Very well then, headman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There is the case where a man is one who takes life, steals, engages in sexual misconduct; is a liar, one who

speaks divisive speech, coarse speech, & idle chatter; is covetous, bears thoughts of ill will, & holds to wrong views. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) 'May this man, with the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world!' What do you think? Would that man—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—with the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world?"

"No, lord."

"Suppose a man were to throw a large boulder into a deep lake of water, and a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) 'Rise up, O boulder! Come floating up, O boulder! Come float to the shore, O boulder!' What do you think? Would that boulder—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—rise up, come floating up, or come float to the shore?"

"No, lord."

"So it is with any man who takes life, steals, indulges in sexual misconduct; is a liar, one who speaks divisive speech, coarse speech, & idle chatter; is covetous, bears thoughts of ill will, & holds to wrong views. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—(saying,) 'May this man, with the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world!'—still, with the breakup of the body, after death, he would reappear in destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell.

"Now, what do you think? There is the case where a man is one who refrains from taking life, from stealing, & from indulging in sexual misconduct; he refrains from lying, from divisive speech, from coarse speech, & from idle chatter; he is not covetous, bears no thoughts of ill will, & holds to right view. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) 'May this man, with the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell!' What do you think? Would that man—because of the

prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—with the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell?"

"No, lord."

"Suppose a man were to throw a jar of ghee or a jar of oil into a deep lake of water, where it would break. There the shards & jar-fragments would go down, while the ghee or oil would come up. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) 'Sink, O ghee/oil! Submerge, O ghee/oil! Go down, O ghee/oil!' What do you think? Would that ghee/oil, because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people sink, submerge, or go down?"

"No, lord."

"So it is with any man who refrains from taking life, from stealing, & from indulging in sexual misconduct; refrains from lying, from divisive speech, from coarse speech, & from idle chatter; is not covetous, bears no thoughts of ill will, & holds to right view. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—(saying,) 'May this man, with the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell!'—still, with the breakup of the body, after death, he would reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world."

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life." — *SN 42:6*

§ 98. Then Kesin the horse trainer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the

Blessed One said to him, “You, Kesin, are a trained man, a trainer of tamable horses. How do you train a tamable horse?”

“Lord, I train a tamable horse (sometimes) with gentleness, (sometimes) with harshness, (sometimes) with both gentleness & harshness.”

“And if a tamable horse doesn’t submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle & harsh training, Kesin, what do you do?”

“If a tamable horse doesn’t submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle and harsh training, lord, then I kill it. Why is that? (I think,) ‘Don’t let this be a disgrace to my lineage of teachers.’ But the Blessed One, lord, is the unexcelled trainer of tamable people. How do you train a tamable person?”

“Kesin, I train a tamable person (sometimes) with gentleness, (sometimes) with harshness, (sometimes) with both gentleness & harshness.

“In using gentleness, (I teach,) ‘Such is good bodily conduct. Such is the result of good bodily conduct. Such is good verbal conduct. Such is the result of good verbal conduct. Such is good mental conduct. Such is the result of good mental conduct. Such are the devas. Such are human beings.’

“In using harshness, (I teach,) ‘Such is bodily misconduct. Such is the result of bodily misconduct. Such is verbal misconduct. Such is the result of verbal misconduct. Such is mental misconduct. Such is the result of mental misconduct. Such is hell. Such is the animal womb. Such the realm of the hungry shades.’

“In using gentleness & harshness, (I teach,) ‘Such is good bodily conduct. Such is the result of good bodily conduct. Such is bodily misconduct. Such is the result of bodily misconduct. Such is good verbal conduct. Such is the result of good verbal conduct. Such is verbal misconduct. Such is the result of verbal misconduct. Such is good mental conduct. Such is the result of good mental conduct. Such is mental misconduct. Such is the result of mental misconduct. Such are the devas. Such are human beings. Such is hell. Such is the animal womb. Such the realm of the hungry shades.’”

"And if a tamable person doesn't submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle & harsh training, what do you do?"

"If a tamable person doesn't submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle & harsh training, then I kill him, Kesin."

"But it's not proper for our Blessed One to take life! And yet the Blessed One just said, 'I kill him, Kesin.'"

"It is true, Kesin, that it's not proper for a Tathāgata to take life. But if a tamable person doesn't submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle & harsh training, then the Tathāgata doesn't regard him as being worth speaking to or admonishing. His knowledgeable fellows in the holy life don't regard him as being worth speaking to or admonishing. This is what it means to be totally destroyed in the Dhamma & Vinaya: when the Tathāgata doesn't regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing, and one's knowledgeable fellows in the holy life don't regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing."

"Yes, lord, wouldn't one be totally destroyed if the Tathāgata doesn't regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing, and one's knowledgeable fellows in the holy life don't regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing." — *AN 4:111*

HYPOTHETICALS: KINGS, PRINCES, & GENERALS

§ 99. [King Ajātasattu:] "So, venerable sir, I ask the Blessed One as well: There are these common craftsmen: elephant-trainers, horse-trainers, charioteers, archers, standard bearers, camp marshals, supply corps officers, high royal officers, commandos, military heroes, armor-clad warriors, leather-clad warriors, domestic slaves, confectioners, barbers, bath attendants, cooks, garland-makers, laundry men, weavers, basket-makers, potters, calculators, accountants, & any other craftsmen of a similar sort. They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now. They give happiness & pleasure to themselves, to their parents, wives, & children, to their friends & colleagues. They put in place an excellent presentation of offerings to contemplatives & brahmans, leading to heaven, resulting in happiness, conducive to a heavenly

rebirth. Is it possible, venerable sir, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?"

"Yes, it is, great king. But first, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. Suppose there were a man of yours: your slave, your workman, rising in the morning before you, going to bed in the evening only after you, doing whatever you order, always acting to please you, speaking politely to you, always watching for the look on your face. The thought would occur to him, 'Isn't it amazing? Isn't it astounding?—the destination, the results, of meritorious deeds. For this King Ajātasattu is a human being, and I too am a human being, yet King Ajātasattu enjoys himself supplied & replete with the five strings of sensuality—like a deity, as it were—while I am his slave, his workman... always watching for the look on his face. I too should do meritorious deeds. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?'

"So after some time he shaves off his hair & beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness. Having thus gone forth he lives restrained in body, speech, & mind, content with the simplest food & shelter, delighting in solitude. Then suppose one of your men were to inform you: 'You should know, your majesty, that that man of yours—your slave, your workman... always watching for the look on your face... has gone forth from the household life into homelessness... content with the simplest food & shelter, delighting in solitude.' Would you, thus informed, say, 'Bring that man back to me. Make him again be my slave, my workman... always watching for the look on my face!'?"

"Not at all, venerable sir. Rather, I am the one who should bow down to him, rise up out of respect for him, invite him to a seat, invite him to accept gifts of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. And I would provide him with righteous safety, defense, & protection."

"So what do you think, great king? With that being the case, is there a visible fruit of the contemplative life, or is there not?"

"Yes, venerable sir. With that being the case, there certainly is a visible fruit of the contemplative life."

"This, great king, is the first fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now, that I point out to you."

“But is it possible, venerable sir, to point out yet another fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?”

“Yes, it is, great king. But first, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. Suppose there were a man of yours: a farmer, a householder, a taxpayer swelling the royal treasury. The thought would occur to him, ‘Isn’t it amazing? Isn’t it astounding?—the destination, the results, of meritorious deeds! For this King Ajātasattu is a human being, and I too am a human being, yet King Ajātasattu enjoys himself supplied & replete with the five strings of sensuality—like a deity, as it were—while I am a farmer, a householder, a taxpayer swelling the royal treasury. I too should do meritorious deeds. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?’

“So after some time he abandons his mass of wealth, large or small; leaves his circle of relatives, large or small; shaves off his hair & beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness. Having thus gone forth he lives restrained in body, speech, & mind, content with the simplest food & shelter, delighting in solitude. Then suppose one of your men were to inform you: ‘You should know, your majesty, that that man of yours—the farmer, the householder, the taxpayer swelling the royal treasury… has gone forth from the household life into homelessness… content with the simplest food & shelter, delighting in solitude.’ Would you, thus informed, say, ‘Bring that man back to me. Make him again be a farmer, a householder, a taxpayer swelling the royal treasury!’?”

“Not at all, venerable sir. Rather, I am the one who should bow down to him, rise up out of respect for him, invite him to a seat, invite him to accept gifts of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. And I would provide him with righteous safety, defense, & protection.”

“So what do you think, great king? With that being the case, is there a visible fruit of the contemplative life, or is there not?”

“Yes, venerable sir. With that being the case, there certainly is a visible fruit of the contemplative life.”

“This, great king, is the second fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now, that I point out to you.”

“But is it possible, venerable sir, to point out yet another fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?”

“Yes, it is, great king. [And here the Buddha gives his full answer to the king’s question, describing the path of practice in great detail, telling the fruit of jhāna practice, the knowledges based on jhāna, and culminating in the fruit of total release.] — *DN 2*

§ 100. [Ven. Raṭṭhapāla is speaking to King Koravya:] “Great king, there are four Dhamma summaries stated by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Having known & seen & heard them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness. Which four?

“‘The world is swept away. It does not endure’: This is the first Dhamma summary stated by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Having known & seen & heard it, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.

“‘The world is without shelter, without protector’: This is the second Dhamma summary....

“‘The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind’: This is the third Dhamma summary....

“‘The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving’: This is the fourth Dhamma summary....

“These, great king, are the four Dhamma summaries stated by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Having known & seen & heard them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“Master Raṭṭhapāla, you say, ‘The world is swept away. It does not endure.’ Now how is the meaning of this statement to be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? When you were twenty or twenty-five years old—an expert elephant rider, an expert horseman, an expert charioteer, an expert archer, an expert swordsman—were you strong in arm & strong in thigh, fit, & seasoned in warfare?”

“Yes, Master Raṭṭhapāla, when I was twenty or twenty-five years old... I was strong in arm & strong in thigh, fit, & seasoned in warfare. It was as if I had supernormal power. I do not see anyone who was my equal in strength.”

"And what do you think, great king? Are you even now as strong in arm & strong in thigh, as fit, & as seasoned in warfare?"

"Not at all, Master Raṭṭhapāla. I'm now a feeble old man, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 80 years old. Sometimes, thinking, 'I will place my foot here,' I place it somewhere else."

"It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said, 'The world is swept away. It does not endure.' Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

"It's amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It's astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: 'The world is swept away. It does not endure.' For the world really is swept away, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It does not endure.

"Now, in this royal court there are elephant troops & cavalry & chariot troops & infantry that will serve to defend us from dangers. And yet you say, 'The world is without shelter, without protector.' How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

"What do you think, great king? Do you have any recurring illness?"

"Yes, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I have a recurring wind-illness. Sometimes my friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, stand around me saying, 'This time King Koravya will die. This time King Koravya will die.'"

"And what do you think, great king? Can you say to your friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, 'My friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen are commanded: All of you who are present, share out this pain so that I may feel less pain'? Or do you have to feel that pain all alone?"

"Oh, no, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I can't say to my friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, 'All of you who are present, share out this pain so that I may feel less pain.' I have to feel that pain all alone."

"It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said, 'The world is without shelter, without protector.' Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

“It’s amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It’s astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: ‘The world is without shelter, without protector.’ For the world really is without shelter, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It is without protector.

“Now, in this royal court there is a great deal of gold & silver stashed away underground & in attic vaults. And yet you say, ‘The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.’ How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? As you now enjoy yourself endowed & replete with the fives strings of sensuality, can you say, ‘Even in the afterlife I will enjoy myself in the same way, endowed & replete with the very same five strings of sensuality’? Or will this wealth fall to others, while you pass on in accordance with your kamma?”

“Oh, no, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I can’t say, ‘Even in the afterlife I will enjoy myself in the same way, endowed & replete with the very same five strings of sensuality.’ This wealth will fall to others, while I pass on in accordance with my kamma.”

“It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said, ‘The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.’ Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“It’s amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It’s astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: ‘The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.’ For the world really is without ownership, Master Raṭṭhapāla. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.

“Now, Master Raṭṭhapāla, you say, ‘The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving.’ How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? Do you now rule over the prosperous country of Kuru?”

“That is so, Master Raṭṭhapāla. I rule over the prosperous country of Kuru.”

"What do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy, reliable man of yours were to come to you from the east. On arrival he would say to you, 'May it please your majesty to know, I have come from the east. There I saw a great country, powerful & prosperous, populous & crowded with people. Plenty are the elephant troops there, plenty the cavalry troops, chariot troops, & infantry troops. Plenty is the ivory-work there, plenty the gold & silver, both worked & unworked. Plenty are the women for the taking. It is possible, with the forces you now have, to conquer it. Conquer it, great king!' What would you do?"

"Having conquered it, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I would rule over it."

"Now, what do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy, reliable man of yours were to come to you from the west... the north... the south... the other side of the ocean. On arrival he would say to you, 'May it please your majesty to know, I have come from the other side of the ocean. There I saw a great country, powerful & prosperous, populous & crowded with people. Plenty are the elephant troops there, plenty the cavalry troops, chariot troops, & infantry troops. Plenty is the ivory-work there, plenty the gold & silver, both worked & unworked. Plenty are the women for the taking. It is possible, with the forces you now have, to conquer it. Conquer it, great king!' What would you do?"

"Having conquered it, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I would rule over it too."

"It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said, 'The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving.' Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

"It's amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It's astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: 'The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving.' For the world really is insufficient, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It's insatiable, a slave to craving." — *MN 84*

§ 101. Then King Pasenadi Kosala addressed Queen Mallikā, "Mallikā, your contemplative, Gotama, has said this: 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'"

"If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is."

"No matter what Gotama the contemplative says, Mallikā endorses it: 'If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is.' Just as, no matter what his teacher says, a pupil endorses it: 'That's the way it is, teacher. That's the way it is.' In the same way, no matter what Gotama the contemplative says, Mallikā endorses it: 'If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is.' Go away, Mallikā! Out of my sight!"

Then Queen Mallikā called for the brahman Nālijaṅgha: "Come, brahman. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, showing reverence with your head to his feet in my name, ask whether he is free from illness & affliction, is carefree, strong, & living in comfort, saying: 'Queen Mallikā, lord, shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort.' And then say: 'Lord, did the Blessed One say that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear?' Whatever the Blessed One says, remember it well and tell it to me. For Tathāgatas do not speak what is untrue."

"Yes, madam," the brahman Nālijaṅgha responded to Queen Mallikā. Going to the Blessed One, on arrival he exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "Master Gotama, Queen Mallikā shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort. And she says further: 'Lord, did the Blessed One say that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear?'"

"That's the way it is, brahman. That's the way it is. Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear. And it's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear: Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a woman whose mother died. Owing to her mother's death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would

say, 'Have you seen my mother? Have you seen my mother?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a woman whose father died... whose brother died... whose sister died... whose son died... whose daughter died... whose husband died. Owing to his death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my husband? Have you seen my husband?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a man whose mother died. Owing to her death he went mad, out of his mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my mother? Have you seen my mother?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a man whose father died... whose brother died... whose sister died... whose son died... whose daughter died... whose wife died. Owing to her death he went mad, out of his mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my wife? Have you seen my wife?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a wife who went to her relatives' home. Her relatives, having separated her from her husband, wanted to give her to another against her will. So she said to her husband, 'These relatives of mine, having separated us, want to give me to another against my will,' whereupon he cut her in two and slashed himself open, thinking, 'Dead we will be together.' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

Then the brahman Nālijaṅgha, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and went to Queen Mallikā. On arrival, he told her all that had been said in his discussion with the Blessed One.

Then Queen Mallikā went to King Pasenadi Kosala and on arrival said to him, "What do you think, great king? Is Princess Vajīrī dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallikā, Princess Vajīrī is dear to me."

"And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in Princess Vajīrī?"

"Mallikā, any change & aberration in Princess Vajīrī would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?"

"Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy, & rightly self-awakened—said, 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'

"Now, what do you think, great king? Is the noble Queen Vāsabhā dear to you?....Is [your son] General Viḍūḍabha dear to you?... Am I dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallikā, you are dear to me."

"And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in me?"

"Mallikā, any change & aberration in you would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?"

"Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy, & rightly self-awakened—said, 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'

"Now, what do you think, great king? Are [your subjects] the Kāsis & Kosalans dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallikā, the Kāsis & Kosalans are dear to me. It is through the might of the Kāsis & Kosalans that we use Kāsi sandalwood and wear garlands, scents, & ointments."

"And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in the Kāsis & Kosalans?"

"Mallikā, any change & aberration in the Kāsis & Kosalans would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?"

"Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy, & rightly self-awakened—said, 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'"

"It's amazing, Mallikā. It's astounding: how deeply the Blessed One sees, having pierced through, as it were, with discernment. Come Mallikā: Give me the ablution water." Then King Pasenadi Kosala, rising from his seat and arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, paid homage in the direction of the Blessed One with his hands palm-to-palm in front of his heart, and exclaimed three times:

"Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!

Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!

Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!"

— *MN 87*

§ 102. [King Pasenadi:] "Where, lord, should a gift be given?"

[The Buddha:] "Wherever the mind feels confidence, great king."

"But a gift given where, lord, bears great fruit?"

"This [question] is one thing, great king—'Where should a gift be given?'—while this—'A gift given where bears great fruit?'—is something else entirely. What is given to a virtuous person—rather than to an unvirtuous one—bears great fruit.

"Very well then, great king, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit.

"What do you think, great king? There is the case where you have a war at hand, a battle imminent. A noble-warrior youth would come along—untrained, unpracticed, undisciplined, undrilled, fearful, terrified, cowardly, quick to flee. Would you take him on? Would you have any use for a man like that?"

“No, lord, I wouldn’t take him on. I wouldn’t have any use for a man like that.”

“Then a brahman youth… a merchant youth… a worker youth would come along—untrained, unpracticed, undisciplined, undrilled, fearful, terrified, cowardly, quick to flee. Would you take him on? Would you have any use for a man like that?”

“No, lord, I wouldn’t take him on. I wouldn’t have any use for a man like that.”

“Now, what do you think, great king? There is the case where you have a war at hand, a battle imminent. A noble-warrior youth would come along—trained, practiced, disciplined, drilled, fearless, unterrified, not cowardly, not quick to flee. Would you take him on? Would you have any use for a man like that?”

“Yes, lord, I would take him on. I would have use for a man like that.”

“Then a brahman youth… a merchant youth… a worker youth would come along—trained, practiced, disciplined, drilled, fearless, unterrified, not cowardly, not quick to flee. Would take you him on? Would you have any use for a man like that?”

“Yes, lord, I would take him on. I would have use for a man like that.”

“In the same way, great king. When someone has gone forth from the home life into homelessness—no matter from what clan—and he has abandoned five factors and is endowed with five, what is given to him bears great fruit.

“And which five factors has he abandoned? He has abandoned sensual desire… ill will… sloth & drowsiness… restlessness & anxiety… uncertainty. These are the five factors he has abandoned. And with which five factors is he endowed? He is endowed with the aggregate of virtue of one beyond training… the aggregate of concentration of one beyond training… the aggregate of discernment of one beyond training… the aggregate of release of one beyond training… the aggregate of knowledge & vision of release of one beyond training. These are the five factors with which he is endowed.

“What is given to one who has abandoned five factors and is endowed with five factors in this way bears great fruit.” — *SN 3:24*

§ 103. [King Pasenadi:] "Lord, there are these four castes: noble warriors, brahmans, merchants, & workers. Is there any distinction or difference among them?"

[The Buddha:] "Great king, of these four castes, two—noble warriors & brahmans—are held to be foremost in terms of receiving homage, hospitality, salutation, & polite services."

"I'm not asking about the present life, lord. I'm asking about the future life. Is there any distinction or difference among these four castes?"

"Great king, there are these five factors for exertion. Which five?

"There is the case where a monk has conviction, is convinced of the Tathāgata's awakening: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed.'

"He is free from illness & discomfort, endowed with good digestion—not too cold, not too hot, of moderate strength—fit for exertion.

"He is neither fraudulent nor deceitful. He declares himself to the Teacher or to his wise friends in the holy life in line with what he actually is.

"He keeps his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful qualities and taking on skillful qualities. He is steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful qualities.

"He is discerning, endowed with discernment leading to the arising of the goal—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress.

"These are the five factors for exertion.

"As for the four castes, great king: If they were endowed with these five factors for exertion, that would be for their long-term benefit & happiness."

"Lord, if these four castes were endowed with these five factors for exertion, would there be any distinction or difference among them in that respect?"

"I tell you, great king: The difference among them would lie in the diversity of their exertion. Suppose that there were two tamable elephants, tamable horses, or tamable oxen that were well-tamed & well-trained; and two tamable elephants, tamable horses, or tamable oxen that

were untamed & untrained. What do you think? Would the two tamable elephants, tamable horses, or tamable oxen that were well-tamed & well-trained acquire the habits of the tamed and reach the status of the tamed?"

"Yes, lord."

"And would the two tamable elephants, tamable horses, or tamable oxen that were untamed & untrained acquire the habits of the tamed and reach the status of the tamed?"

"No, lord."

"In the same way, great king, it is impossible that what could be attained by one who has confidence, who is free from illness, who is neither fraudulent nor deceitful, whose persistence is aroused, and who is discerning could also be attained by one who is without conviction, who is sickly, fraudulent & deceitful, lazy, and dull."

"What the Blessed One says, lord, seems reasonable. What the Blessed One says seems logical. But with regard to these four castes: if they were endowed with these five factors for exertion, and they had right exertion, would there be any distinction or difference among them in that respect?"

"I tell you, great king, that there would be no difference among them with regard to the release of one and the release of another. Suppose that a man, taking dry sala wood, were to generate a fire and make heat appear. And suppose that another man, taking dry saka [teak?] wood, were to generate a fire and make heat appear. And suppose that another man, taking dry mango wood, were to generate a fire and make heat appear. And suppose that another man, taking dry fig wood, were to generate a fire and make heat appear. Now, what do you think, great king? Among those fires generated from different kinds of wood, would there be any difference between the glow of one and the glow of another, the color of one and the color of another, the radiance of one and the radiance of another?"

"No, lord."

"In the same way, great king, in the power that is kindled by persistence and generated by exertion, I say that there is no difference with regard to the release of one and the release of another."

“What the Blessed One says, lord, seems reasonable. What the Blessed One says seems logical. But, lord, are there devas?”

“But why do you ask, great king, ‘But, lord, are there devas’?”

“Whether the devas come back to this life, lord, or whether they don’t.”

“Those devas who are afflicted come back to this life, whereas those devas who are unafflicted don’t come back to this life.”

When this was said, General Viḍūḍabha said to the Blessed One, “Lord, can the afflicted devas oust or expel the unafflicted devas from that place?”

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda, “This General Viḍūḍabha is the son of King Pasenadi Kosala, and I am the son of the Blessed One. Now is the time for the son to confer with the son.” So Ven. Ānanda turned to General Viḍūḍabha and said, “Very well then, general, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. Through the extent of land conquered by King Pasenadi Kosala—where he exercises sovereign & independent kingship—is he able to oust or expel a contemplative or brahman from that place, regardless of whether that person has merit or not, or follows the holy life or not?”

“Sir, through the extent of land conquered by King Pasenadi Kosala—where he exercises sovereign & independent kingship—he is able to oust or expel a contemplative or brahman from that place, regardless of whether that person has merit or not, or follows the holy life or not.”

“And what do you think, general? Through the extent of land not conquered by King Pasenadi Kosala—where he does not exercise sovereign & independent kingship—is he able to oust or expel a contemplative or brahman from that place, regardless of whether that person has merit or not, or follows the holy life or not?”

“Sir, through the extent of land not conquered by King Pasenadi Kosala—where he does not exercise sovereign & independent kingship—he is not able to oust or expel a contemplative or brahman from that place, regardless of whether that person has merit or not, or follows the holy life or not.”

“And what do you think, general? Have you heard of the Devas of the Thirty-three?”

“Yes, sir, I have heard of the Devas of the Thirty-three, as has King Pasenadi Kosala.”

“And what do you think, general? Could King Pasenadi Kosala oust or expel the Devas of the Thirty-three from that place?”

“Sir, King Pasenadi Kosala can’t even see the Devas of the Thirty-three. How could he oust or expel them from that place?”

“In the same way, general, afflicted devas, who will come back to this life, can’t even see the unafflicted devas who don’t come back to this life. How could they oust or expel them from that place?”

Then King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One, “Lord, what is the name of this monk?”

“His name is Ānanda [Joy], great king.”

“What a joy he is! What a true joy! But, lord, are there Brahmās?”

“But why do you ask, ‘But, lord, are there Brahmās’?”

“Whether the Brahmās come back to this life, lord, or whether they don’t.”

“Those Brahmās who are afflicted come back to this life, great king, whereas those Brahmās who are unafflicted don’t come back to this life.” — *MN 90*

§ 104. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī, in the Great Forest, at the Gabled Pavilion. Then General Sīha went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “Is it possible, lord, to point out a fruit of giving visible in the here & now?”

“It is possible, Sīha. One who gives, who is a master of giving, is dear & charming to people at large. And the fact that one who gives, who is a master of giving, is dear & charming to people at large: This is a fruit of giving visible in the here & now.

“Furthermore, good people, people of integrity, admire one who gives, who is a master of giving. And the fact that good people, people of integrity, admire one who gives, who is a master of giving: This too is a fruit of giving visible in the here & now.

“Furthermore, the fine reputation of one who gives, who is a master of giving, is spread far & wide. And the fact that the fine reputation of one

who gives, who is a master of giving, is spread far & wide: This too is a fruit of giving visible in the here & now.

"Furthermore, when one who gives, who is a master of giving, approaches any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so confidently & without embarrassment. And the fact that when one who gives, who is a master of giving, approaches any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so confidently & without embarrassment: This too is a fruit of giving visible in the here & now.

"Furthermore, with the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world. And the fact that with the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world: This is a fruit of giving in the next life."

When this was said, General Sīha said to the Blessed One: "As for the four fruits of giving visible in the here & now that have been pointed out by the Blessed One, it's not the case that I go by conviction in the Blessed One with regard to them. I know them too. I am one who gives, a master of giving, dear & charming to people at large. I am one who gives, a master of giving; good people, people of integrity, admire me. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and my fine reputation is spread far & wide: 'Sīha is one who gives, a doer, a supporter of the Saṅgha.' I am one who gives, a master of giving, and when I approach any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—I do so confidently & without embarrassment.

"But when the Blessed One says to me, 'With the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world,' that I do not know. That is where I go by conviction in the Blessed One."

"So it is, Sīha. So it is. With the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world." — *AN 5:34*

§ 105. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī, in the Great Forest, at the Gabled Pavilion. Then General Sīha went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat

to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "Is it possible, lord, to point out a fruit of giving visible in the here & now?"

"Very well then, Sīha, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. There is the case where there are two men: one without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive; and one of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support. What do you think? To which of the two would arahants, on feeling sympathy, first show sympathy: the man without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive; or the man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support?"

"Why, lord, would arahants, when feeling sympathy, first show sympathy to the man without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive? The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support: He's the one who arahants, on feeling sympathy, would first show sympathy."

"What do you think? Whom would arahants, when visiting, first visit?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? From whom would arahants, when receiving (gifts), first receive (gifts)?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? Whom would arahants, when teaching, first teach?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? Of whom would a fine reputation spread abroad?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? Who would approach any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—confidently & without embarrassment?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? Which of the two would—with the breakup of the body, after death—appear in a good destination, the heavenly world: the man without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive; or the man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support?"

"Lord, why would the man without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive—with the breakup of the body, after death—reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world? The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support: He's the one who would—with the breakup of the body, after death—appear in a good destination, the heavenly world.

"Lord, as for the six fruits of giving visible in the here & now that have been pointed out by the Blessed One, it's not the case that I go by conviction in the Blessed One with regard to them. I know them too. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and arahants, when feeling sympathy, show sympathy to me first. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and arahants, when visiting, visit me first. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and arahants when receiving (gifts), receive (gifts) from me first. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and arahants when teaching, teach me first. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and my fine reputation is spread far & wide: 'Sīha is one who gives, a doer, a supporter of the Saṅgha.' I am one who gives, a master of giving, and when I approach any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—I do so confidently & without embarrassment.

"But when the Blessed One says to me, 'With the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world,' that I do not know. That is where I go by conviction in the Blessed One."

"So it is, Sīha. So it is. With the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world." — *AN 7:54*

§ 106. Then the thought occurred to Kāpadika, “When Gotama the contemplative meets my gaze with his, I will ask him a question.”

And so the Blessed One, encompassing Kāpadika’s awareness with his awareness, met his gaze. Kāpadika thought, “Gotama the contemplative has turned to me. Suppose I ask him a question.” So he said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, with regard to the ancient hymns of the brahmans —passed down through oral transmission & included in their canon—the brahmans have come to the categorical conclusion that ‘Only this is true; anything else is worthless.’ What does Master Gotama have to say with regard to this?”

“Tell me, Bhāradvāja, is there among the brahmans even one brahman who says, ‘This I know; this I see; only this is true; anything else is worthless?’”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“And has there been among the brahmans even one teacher or teacher’s teacher back through seven generations who said, ‘This I know; this I see; only this is true; anything else is worthless?’”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“And among the brahman seers of the past, the creators of the hymns, the composers of the hymns—those ancient hymns, sung, repeated, & collected, which brahmans at present still sing, still chant, repeating what was said, repeating what was spoken—i.e., Aṭṭhaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Vessāmitta, Yamataggi, Angīrasa, Bhāradvāja, Vāseṭṭha, Kassapa & Bhagu: Was there even one of these who said, ‘This we know; this we see; only this is true; anything else is worthless?’”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“So then, Bhāradvāja, it seems that there isn’t among the brahmans even one brahman who says, ‘This I know; this I see; only this is true; anything else is worthless.’ And there hasn’t been among the brahmans even one teacher or teacher’s teacher back through seven generations who said, ‘This I know; this I see; only this is true; anything else is worthless.’ And there hasn’t been among the brahman seers of the past, the creators of the hymns, the composers of the hymns… even one who said, ‘This we know; this we see; only this is true; anything else is

worthless.' Suppose there were a row of blind men, each holding on to the one in front of him: The first one doesn't see, the middle one doesn't see, the last one doesn't see. In the same way, the statement of the brahmans turns out to be a row of blind men, as it were: The first one doesn't see, the middle one doesn't see, the last one doesn't see. So what do you think, Bhāradvāja? This being the case, doesn't the conviction of the brahmans turn out to be groundless?"

"It's not only out of conviction, Master Gotama, that the brahmans honor this. They also honor it as unbroken tradition."

"Bhāradvāja, first you went with conviction. Now you speak of unbroken tradition...." — *MN 95*

§ 107. Then the brahman Saṅgārava went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "I say, Master Gotama. We brahmans perform sacrifices and get others to perform sacrifices. And whoever performs a sacrifice, whoever gets others to perform a sacrifice, they have all practiced a practice of merit—the business of a sacrifice—[that benefits] countless beings. But whoever, leaving his family, has gone forth from the home life into homelessness, and tames his single self, brings his single self into tune, brings his single self to unbinding: His practice of merit—this business of going forth—is one [that benefits] only one being."

"Very well then, brahman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There is the case where a Tathāgata appears in the world, an arahant, rightly-self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, one who has gone the good way, knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those who can be taught, teacher of human & divine beings, awakened, blessed. He says: 'Here! This is the path, this is the practice that, having practiced, I make known the unexcelled coming ashore in the holy life, having directly known & realized it for myself. Come! You too practice in such a way that you will remain in the unexcelled coming ashore in the holy life, having directly known & realized it for yourselves.' Thus the Teacher teaches the Dhamma, and others practice, for authenticity *[tathattā].* And there are countless hundreds of them, countless thousands of them, countless

hundreds of thousands of them. This being the case, is this practice of merit—this business of going-forth—one that benefits countless beings, or only one being?"

"This being the case, Master Gotama, this practice of merit—this business of going-forth—is one that benefits countless beings."
— *AN 3:61*

§ 108. As he was sitting to one side, Esukārin the brahman said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, brahmans prescribe four levels of service: They prescribe the level of service to a brahman; they prescribe the level of service to a noble warrior; they prescribe the level of service to a merchant; they prescribe the level of service to a worker. Now the level of service to a brahman that the brahmans prescribe is this: A brahman may serve a brahman, or a noble warrior may serve a brahman, or a merchant may serve a brahman, or a worker may serve a brahman. This, Master Gotama, is the level of service to a brahman that the brahmans prescribe. Now the level of service to a noble warrior that the brahmans prescribe is this: A noble warrior may serve a noble warrior, or a merchant may serve a noble warrior, or a worker may serve a noble warrior. This, Master Gotama, is the level of service to a noble warrior that the brahmans prescribe. Now the level of service to a merchant that the brahmans prescribe is this: A merchant may serve a merchant, or a worker may serve a merchant. This, Master Gotama, is the level of service to a merchant that the brahmans prescribe. Now the level of service to a worker that the brahmans prescribe is this: Only a worker may serve a worker, for who else would serve a worker? This, Master Gotama, is the level of service to a worker that the brahmans prescribe. These are the four levels of service that the brahmans prescribe. What does Master Gotama say to that?"

"But, brahman, has the entire world authorized the brahmans to prescribe these four levels of service?"

"No, Master Gotama."

"Brahman, it's as if a man were poor, penniless, & destitute, and people —against his will—were to tie a cut of meat on him, (saying,) 'You must eat this meat, my good man, and pay its price.' In the same way, brahmans—without the consent of those (other) contemplatives & brahmans—prescribe these four levels of service."

“I don’t say, brahman, that all are fit to be served, but neither do I say that all are not fit to be served. For if, when serving someone, one were to become worse from that service, and not better, I say that that person is not fit to be served. But if when serving someone, one were to become better from that service, and not worse, I say that that person is fit to be served.

“If they were to ask a noble warrior, ‘Which would you serve: one who, when serving him, you became worse from that service, and not better; or one who, when serving him, you became better from that service, and not worse?’ The noble warrior, answering rightly, would say, ‘I would not serve the one who, when serving him, I became worse from that service, and not better; but I would serve the one who, when serving him, I became better from that service, and not worse.’

“If they were to ask a brahman…

“If they were to ask a merchant…

“If they were to ask a worker, ‘Which would you serve: one who, when serving him, you became worse from that service, and not better; or one who, when serving him, you became better from that service, and not worse?’ The worker, answering rightly, would say, ‘I would not serve the one who, when serving him, I became worse from that service, and not better; but I would serve the one who, when serving him, I became better from that service, and not worse.’

“I don’t say that coming from a high-born family is better, but neither do I say that coming from a high-born family is worse. I don’t say that having great beauty is better, but neither do I say that having great beauty is worse. I don’t say that having great wealth is better, but neither do I say that having great wealth is worse. For there is the case where one from a high-born family is one who kills living beings, steals, engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, speaks divisive speech, speaks coarse speech, engages in idle chatter, is covetous, bears thoughts of ill will, and has wrong views. Therefore I don’t say that coming from a high-born family is better. And yet there is also the case where one from a high-born family is one who doesn’t kill living beings, doesn’t steal, doesn’t engage in sexual misconduct, doesn’t tell lies, doesn’t speak divisive speech, doesn’t speak coarse speech, doesn’t engage in idle chatter, isn’t covetous, doesn’t bear

thoughts of ill will, and doesn't have wrong views. Therefore I don't say that coming from a high-born family is worse.

[Similarly with people of great beauty or great wealth.]

"I don't say, brahman, that all are fit to be served, but neither do I say that all are not fit to be served. If when serving someone, one grows in conviction, grows in virtue, grows in learning, grows in generosity, grows in discernment, I say that that person is fit to be served.

When this was said, Esukārin the brahman said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, the brahmans prescribe these four types of wealth: They prescribe the proper wealth of a brahman; they prescribe the proper wealth of a noble warrior; they prescribe the proper wealth of a merchant; and they prescribe the proper wealth of a worker. Now the proper wealth of a brahman that the brahmans prescribe is this: going for alms. And if a brahman despises his proper wealth—going for alms—he is one who neglects his duty, like a cowherd who steals. This, Master Gotama, is the proper wealth of a brahman that the brahmans prescribe. Now the proper wealth of a noble warrior that the brahmans prescribe is this: the bow & quiver. And if a noble warrior despises his proper wealth—the bow & quiver—he is one who neglects his duty, like a cowherd who steals. This, Master Gotama, is the proper wealth of a noble warrior that the brahmans prescribe. Now the proper wealth of a merchant that the brahmans prescribe is this: farming & keeping herds of cattle. And if a merchant despises his proper wealth—farming & keeping herds of cattle—he is one who neglects his duty, like a cowherd who steals. This, Master Gotama, is the proper wealth of a merchant that the brahmans prescribe. Now the proper wealth of a worker that the brahmans prescribe is this: the sickle & the carrying pole. And if a worker despises his proper wealth—the sickle & the carrying pole—he is one who neglects his duty, like a cowherd who steals. This, Master Gotama, is the proper wealth of a worker that the brahmans prescribe. These are the four types of wealth that the brahmans prescribe. What does Master Gotama say to that?"

"But, brahman, has the entire world authorized the brahmans to prescribe these four types of wealth?"

"No, Master Gotama."

"Brahman, it's as if a man were poor, penniless, & destitute, and people —against his will—were to tie a cut of meat on him, (saying,) 'You must

eat this meat, my good man, and pay its price.' In the same way, brahmans—without the consent of those (other) contemplatives & brahmans—prescribe these four types of wealth.

"Brahman, I prescribe the noble, transcendent Dhamma as a person's proper wealth." — *MN 96*

HYPOTHETICALS: KAMMA

§ 109. Then the Blessed One said to Ven. MahāMoggallāna, "For what discussion are you now sitting here together? Or what was your discussion that was interrupted in mid-course?"

"Just now, lord, I said to Vappa the Sakyan, the disciple of the Niganṭhas, 'In case there were a person who—from the fading of ignorance, and from the arising of clear knowing—were restrained in body, restrained in speech, & restrained in mind, do you see the possibility that, from any cause, fermentations to be experienced as pain would flow toward that person in a future life?' When this was said, Vappa the Sakyan said to me, 'I do see the possibility where there would be a case where—from the cause of a previously done evil action whose results have yet to ripen—fermentations to be experienced as pain would flow toward that person in a future life.' This was my discussion with Vappa the Sakyan that was interrupted when the Blessed One arrived."

Then the Blessed One said to Vappa the Sakyan, "Vappa, if you will allow of me what should be allowed, protest what should be protested, and further cross-question me directly then & there on the meaning of any statement of mine that you don't understand—'How is this, lord? What is the meaning of this?'—then we could have a discussion here."

"Lord, I will allow of the Blessed One what should be allowed, protest what should be protested, and further cross-question the Blessed One directly on the meaning of any statement of his that I don't understand —'How is this, lord? What is the meaning of this?' Let us have a discussion here."

"Vappa, as for any fermentations causing trouble & vexation that arise in dependence on bodily activity: When one has abandoned bodily activity, those fermentations causing trouble & vexation do not exist for him. He does no new action *[kamma],* and as for old action, he destroys it

with each contact: a wasting away that is visible here & now, timeless, inviting inspection, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves. Do you see the possibility that, from any cause, fermentations to be experienced as pain would flow toward that person in a future life?"

"No, lord."

"Vappa, as for any fermentations causing trouble & vexation that arise in dependence on verbal activity... any fermentations causing trouble & vexation that arise in dependence on mental activity... any fermentations causing trouble & vexation that arise in dependence on ignorance: From the fading of ignorance, and from the arising of clear knowing, those fermentations causing trouble & vexation do not exist for him. He does no new action, and as for old action, he destroys it with each contact: a wasting away that is visible here & now, timeless, inviting inspection, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves. Do you see the possibility that, from any cause, fermentations to be experienced as pain would flow toward that person in a future life?"

"No, lord."

"For a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, Vappa, six continual dwellings have been attained. When seeing a form via the eye, he is neither glad nor sad, but dwells equanimous, mindful, & alert.

"When hearing a sound via the ear....

"When smelling an aroma via the nose....

"When tasting a flavor via the tongue....

"When feeling a tactile sensation via the body....

"When cognizing an idea via the mind, he is neither glad nor sad, but dwells equanimous, mindful, & alert.

"When sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' He discerns that 'With the breakup of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'

"Vappa, suppose a shadow were to be discernable in dependence on a stump. A man would come along carrying a shovel. He would cut the stump at the base. Having cut it at the base, he would dig it out. Having dug it out, he would pull out the roots, down to the rootlets. Then he

would cut the stump into pieces. Having cut it into pieces, he would split the pieces. Having split the pieces, he would make them into splinters. Having made them into splinters, he would dry them in the wind & sunlight. Having dried them in the wind & sunlight, he would burn them with fire. Having burned them with fire, he would make them into ashes. Having made them into ashes, he would winnow them before a high wind or dump them into a swift-flowing stream. Thus the shadow dependent on the stump would be destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

"In the same way, Vappa, for a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, six continual dwellings have been attained. When seeing a form via the eye.... When hearing a sound via the ear.... When smelling an aroma via the nose.... When tasting a flavor via the tongue.... When feeling a tactile sensation via the body.... When cognizing an idea via the mind, he is neither glad nor sad, but dwells equanimous, mindful, & alert.

"When sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' He discerns that 'With the breakup of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'"

When this was said, Vappa the Sakyan, the disciple of the Niganṭhas, said to the Blessed One, "Lord, suppose that there were a man desiring profit who raised horses for sale but he didn't gain any profit, and furthermore had his share of trouble & torment. In the same way, I—desiring profit—have attended to the foolish Niganṭhas but I haven't gained any profit, and furthermore have had my share of trouble & torment. From this day forward, lord, I take my faith in the foolish Niganṭhas and winnow it before a high wind or dump it into a swift-flowing stream." — *AN 4:195*

§ 110. "Monks, for anyone who says, 'In whatever way a person makes kamma, that is how it is experienced,' there is no living of the holy life, there is no opportunity for the right ending of stress. But for anyone who says, 'When a person makes kamma to be felt in such & such a way, that is how its result is experienced,' there is the living of the holy life, there is the opportunity for the right ending of stress.

"There is the case where a trifling evil act done by a certain individual takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling act done by another individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Now, a trifling evil act done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in the body [i.e., pleasant feelings can invade the mind and stay there—see MN 36], undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind [i.e., painful feelings can invade the mind and stay there], undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil act done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

"Now, a trifling evil act done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in the body [i.e., pleasant feelings cannot invade the mind and stay there], developed in virtue, developed in mind [i.e., painful feelings cannot invade the mind and stay there], developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the unlimited. A trifling evil act done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Suppose that a man were to drop a lump of salt into a small amount of water in a cup. What do you think? Would the water in the cup become salty because of the lump of salt, and unfit to drink?"

"Yes, lord...."

"Now suppose that a man were to drop a lump of salt into the River Ganges. What do you think? Would the water in the River Ganges become salty because of the lump of salt, and unfit to drink?"

"No, lord...."

"In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil act done by one individual [the first] takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling act done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment."
— *AN 3:101*

§ 111. Now, on that occasion Ven. Sāriputta was wandering in the Southern Mountains with a large community of monks. Then a certain

monk who had spent the Rains in Rājagaha went to the Southern Mountains, to Ven. Sāriputta. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with Ven. Sāriputta and—after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies—sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to him, "I trust, friend, that the Blessed One is strong & free from illness?"

"The Blessed One, friend, is strong & free from illness."

"I trust that the community of monks is strong & free from illness?"

"The community of monks is also strong & free from illness."

"At the Taṇḍulapāla Gate is a brahman named Dhanañjāni. I trust that he is strong & free from illness?"

"Dhanañjāni the brahman is also strong & free from illness."

"And I trust that Dhanañjāni the brahman is heedful?"

"From where would our Dhanañjāni the brahman get any heedfulness, friend? Relying on the king, he plunders brahmans & householders. Relying on the brahmans & householders, he plunders the king. His wife —a woman of faith, fetched from a family with faith—has died. He has fetched another wife—a woman of no faith—from a family with no faith."

"What a bad thing to hear, my friend—when we hear that Dhanañjāni the brahman is heedless. Perhaps sooner or later we might meet with Dhanañjāni the brahman. Perhaps there might be some discussion."

Then Ven. Sāriputta, having stayed in the Southern Mountains as long as he liked, wandered in the direction of Rājagaha. After wandering by stages, he arrived at Rājagaha. There he stayed near Rājagaha in the Squirrels' Sanctuary.

Then early in the morning, Ven. Sāriputta put on his robes and, carrying his bowl & outer robe, went into Rājagaha for alms. And on that occasion Dhanañjāni the brahman was milking cows in a cow pen outside the city. Then Ven. Sāriputta, having gone for alms in Rājagaha, after his meal, on his way back from his almsround, went to Dhanañjāni the brahman. Dhanañjāni the brahman saw Ven. Sāriputta coming from afar. On seeing him, he went to him and said, "Drink some of this fresh milk, Master Sāriputta. It must be time for your meal."

"That's all right, brahman. I have finished my meal for today. My day's abiding will be under that tree over there. You may come there."

"As you say, master," Dhanañjāni responded to Ven. Sāriputta. Then after he had finished his morning meal, he went to Ven. Sāriputta. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with Ven. Sāriputta and—after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies—sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to him, "I trust, Dhanañjāni, that you are heedful?"

"From where would we get any heedfulness, master?—when parents are to be supported, wife & children are to be supported, slaves & workers are to be supported, friend-&-companion duties are to be done for friends & companions, kinsmen-&-relative duties for kinsmen & relatives, guest duties for guests, departed-ancestor duties for departed ancestors, devatā duties for devatās, king duties for the king, and this body also has to be refreshed & nourished."

"What do you think, Dhanañjāni? There is the case where a certain person, for the sake of his mother & father, does what is unrighteous, does what is discordant *(visama).* Then, because of his unrighteous, discordant behavior, hell-wardens drag him off to hell. Would he gain anything by saying, 'I did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for the sake of my mother & father. Don't [throw] me into hell, hell-wardens!' Or would his mother & father gain anything for him by saying, 'He did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for our sake. Don't [throw] him into hell, hell-wardens!'?"

"No, Master Sāriputta. Even right while he was wailing, they'd cast him into hell."

"What do you think, Dhanañjāni? There is the case where a certain person, for the sake of his wife & children.... his slaves & workers.... his friends & companions.... his kinsmen & relatives.... his guests.... his departed ancestors.... the devatās.... the king, does what is unrighteous, does what is discordant. Then, because of his unrighteous, discordant behavior, hell-wardens drag him off to hell. Would he gain anything by saying, 'I did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for the sake of the king. Don't [throw] me into hell, hell-wardens!' Or would the king gain anything for him by saying, 'He did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for our sake. Don't [throw] him into hell, hell-wardens!'?"

"No, Master Sāriputta. Even right while he was wailing, they'd cast him into hell."

"What do you think, Dhanañjāni? There is the case where a certain person, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body, does what is unrighteous, does what is discordant. Then, because of his unrighteous, discordant behavior, hell-wardens drag him off to hell. Would he gain anything by saying, 'I did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing my body. Don't [throw] me into hell, hell-wardens!' Or would others gain anything for him by saying, 'He did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body. Don't [throw] him into hell, hell-wardens!'?"

"No, Master Sāriputta. Even right while he was wailing, they'd cast him into hell."

"Now, what do you think, Dhanañjāni? Which is the better: one who, for the sake of his mother & father, would do what is unrighteous, what is discordant; or one who, for the sake of his mother & father, would do what is righteous, what is concordant *(sama)?"*

"Master Sāriputta, the one who, for the sake of his mother & father, would do what is unrighteous, what is discordant, is not the better one. The one who, for the sake of his mother & father, would do what is righteous, what is concordant would be the better one there. Righteous behavior, concordant behavior, is better than unrighteous behavior, discordant behavior."

"Dhanañjāni, there are other activities—reasonable, righteous—by which one can support one's mother & father, and at the same time both not do evil and practice the practice of merit.

"What do you think, Dhanañjāni? Which is the better: one who, for the sake of his wife & children.... his slaves & workers.... his friends & companions.... his kinsmen & relatives.... his guests.... his departed ancestors.... the devatās.... the king... refreshing & nourishing his body, would do what is unrighteous, what is discordant; or one who, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body, would do what is righteous, what is concordant?"

"Master Sāriputta, the one who, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body, would do what is unrighteous, what is discordant, is not the better one. The one who, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body, would do what is righteous, what is concordant would be the better one

there. Righteous behavior, concordant behavior, is better than unrighteous behavior, discordant behavior."

"Dhanañjāni, there are other activities—reasonable, righteous—by which one can refresh & nourish one's body, and at the same time both not do evil and practice the practice of merit."

Then Dhanañjāni the brahman, delighting & rejoicing in Ven. Sāriputta's words, got up from his seat and left. — *MN 97*

§ 112. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha, on Vulture Peak Mountain. And on that occasion Ven. Soṇa was staying near Rājagaha in the Cool Wood. Then, as Ven. Soṇa was meditating in seclusion [after doing walking meditation until the skin of his soles was split & bleeding], this train of thought arose in his awareness: "Of the Blessed One's disciples who have aroused their persistence, I am one, but my mind is not released from fermentations through lack of clinging/sustenance. Now, my family has enough wealth that it would be possible to enjoy wealth & make merit. What if I were to disavow the training, return to the lower life, enjoy wealth, & make merit?"

Then the Blessed One, as soon as he perceived with his awareness the train of thought in Ven. Soṇa's awareness, disappeared from Vulture Peak Mountain—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—appeared in the Cool Wood right in front of Ven. Soṇa, and sat down on a prepared seat. Ven. Soṇa, after bowing down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Just now, as you were meditating in seclusion, didn't this train of thought appear to your awareness: 'Of the Blessed One's disciples who have aroused their persistence, I am one, but my mind is not released from fermentations.... What if I were to disavow the training, return to the lower life, enjoy wealth, & make merit?'"

"Yes, lord."

"Now, what do you think, Soṇa? Before, when you were a house-dweller, were you skilled at playing the vina?"

"Yes, lord."

"And what do you think? When the strings of your vina were too taut, was your vina in tune & playable?"

"No, lord."

"And what do you think? When the strings of your vina were too loose, was your vina in tune & playable?"

"No, lord."

"And what do you think? When the strings of your vina were neither too taut nor too loose, but tuned to be right on pitch *(sama),* was your vina in tune & playable?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, Soṇa, over-aroused persistence leads to restlessness, overly slack persistence leads to laziness. Thus you should determine the right pitch for your persistence, attune the pitch of the (five) faculties[1] (to that), and there pick up your theme."

"Yes, lord," Ven. Soṇa answered the Blessed One. Then, having given this exhortation to Ven. Soṇa, the Blessed One—as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—disappeared from the Cool Wood and appeared on Vulture Peak Mountain.

So after that, Ven. Soṇa determined the right pitch for his persistence, attuned the pitch of the (five) faculties (to that), and there picked up his theme. Dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And thus Ven. Soṇa became another one of the arahants.
— *AN 6:55*

NOTE: 1. The five faculties are conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment. These are explained in detail in SN 48:10. The Buddha's explanation here parallels the way a multi-stringed instrument is tuned. First one string is tuned, and then the others are tuned to it. The point is that the level of one's energy/persistence has to be the determining factor in how intense one's conviction, etc., can skillfully be developed at any particular time.

§ 113. Then Gandhabhaka the headman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the origination & ending of stress."

"Headman, if I were to teach you the origination & ending of stress with reference to the past, saying, 'Thus it was in the past,' you would be doubtful & confused. If I were to teach you the origination & ending of stress with reference to the future, saying, 'Thus it will be in the future,' you would be doubtful & confused. So instead, I—sitting right here—will teach you sitting right there the origination & ending of stress. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," Gandhabhaka the headman replied.

The Blessed One said, "Now, what do you think, headman? Are there any people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in you?"

"Yes, lord, there are people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in me."

"And are there any people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in you?"

"Yes, lord, there are people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in me."

"Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why the murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure of some of the people in Uruvelakappa would cause you sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair, whereas the murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure of others would cause you no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair?"

"Those people in Uruvelakappa whose murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure would cause me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair are those for whom I feel desire & passion. Those people in Uruvelakappa whose murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure would cause me no

sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair are those for whom I feel no desire or passion."

"Now, headman, from what you have realized, fathomed, attained right now in the present, without regard to time, you may draw an inference with regard to the past and future: 'Whatever stress, in arising, arose for me in the past, all of it had desire as its root, had desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress. And whatever stress, in arising, will arise for me in the future, all of it will have desire as the root, will have desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.'"

"How amazing, lord! How astounding! How well the Blessed One has put it: 'Whatever stress, in arising, arose for me in the past, all of it had desire as its root, had desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress. And whatever stress, in arising, will arise for me in the future, all of it will have desire as the root, will have desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.' I have a son, lord, named Cīravāsin, who lives far away from here. When I get up in the morning, I send a man, saying, 'Go, learn how Cīravāsin is doing.' And as long as that man has not returned, I am simply beside myself, (thinking), 'Don't let Cīravāsin be sick!'"

"Now, what do you think, headman? If Cīravāsin were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would you feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?"

"Lord, if my son Cīravāsin were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, my very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?"

"Thus, headman, by this line of reasoning it may be realized how stress, when arising, arises: All of it has desire as its root, has desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.

"Now, what do you think, headman? Before you had seen or heard of Cīravāsin's mother, did you feel desire, passion, or love for her?"

"No, lord."

"And after you had seen or heard of Cīravāsin's mother, did you feel desire, passion, or love for her?"

"Yes, lord."

"What do you think? If Cīravāsin's mother were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would you feel sorrow, lamentation,

pain, distress, & despair?"

"Lord, if Cīravāsin's mother were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, my very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?"

"Thus, headman, by this line of reasoning it may be realized how stress, when arising, arises: All of it has desire as its root, has desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress." — *SN 42:11*

§ 114. "Māgaṇḍiya, suppose that there was a leper covered with sores and infections, devoured by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a pit of glowing embers. His friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him, and thanks to the medicine he would be cured of his leprosy: well & happy, free, master of himself, going wherever he liked. Then suppose two strong men, having seized hold of him by both arms, were to drag him to a pit of glowing embers. What do you think? Wouldn't he twist his body this way & that?"

"Yes, Master Gotama. Why is that? The fire is painful to the touch, very hot & scorching."

"Now, what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Is the fire painful to the touch, very hot & scorching, only now, or was it also that way before?"

"Both now & before is it painful to the touch, very hot & scorching, Master Gotama. It's just that when the man was a leper covered with sores and infections, devoured by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, his faculties were impaired, which was why, even though the fire was actually painful to the touch, he had the skewed perception of 'pleasant.'"

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, sensual pleasures in the past were painful to the touch, very hot & scorching; sensual pleasures in the future will be painful to the touch, very hot & scorching; sensual pleasures at present are painful to the touch, very hot & scorching; but when beings are not free from passion for sensual pleasures—devoured by sensual craving, burning with sensual fever—their faculties are impaired, which is why, even though sensual pleasures are actually painful to the touch, they have the skewed perception of 'pleasant.'

“Now suppose that there was a leper covered with sores & infections, devoured by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a pit of glowing embers. The more he cauterized his body over the pit of glowing embers, the more disgusting, foul-smelling, & putrid the openings of his wounds would become, and yet he would feel a modicum of enjoyment & satisfaction because of the itchiness of his wounds. In the same way, beings not free from passion for sensual pleasures—devoured by sensual craving, burning with sensual fever—indulge in sensual pleasures. The more they indulge in sensual pleasures, the more their sensual craving increases and the more they burn with sensual fever, and yet they feel a modicum of enjoyment & satisfaction dependent on the five strings of sensuality.

“Now, what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Have you ever seen or heard of a king or king’s minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strings of sensuality, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Very good, Māgaṇḍiya. Neither have I ever seen or heard of a king or king’s minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strings of sensuality, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace. But whatever contemplatives or brahmans who have dwelt or will dwell or are dwelling free from thirst, their minds inwardly at peace, all have done so having realized—as it has come to be—the origination & disappearance, the allure, the danger, & the escape from sensual pleasures, having abandoned sensual craving and removed sensual fever.”

Then at that moment the Blessed One exclaimed,

“Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune.
Unbinding: the foremost ease.
The eightfold: the foremost of paths
going to the
deathless,
safe.”

When this was said, Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer said to the Blessed One, "How amazing, Master Gotama! How astounding!—how this too is well-stated by Master Gotama: 'Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease.' We have also heard this said by earlier wanderers in the lineage of our teachers: 'Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease.' This agrees with that."

"But as for what you have heard said by earlier wanderers in the lineage of your teachers, Māgaṇḍiya—'Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease'—which freedom from disease is that, which unbinding?"

When this was said, Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer rubbed his own limbs with his hand. "This is that freedom from disease, Master Gotama," he said. "This is that unbinding. For I am now free from disease, at ease, and nothing afflicts me."

"Māgaṇḍiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects... white... blue... yellow... red... or pink objects; who couldn't see even or uneven places, the stars, the sun, or the moon. He would hear a man with good eyesight saying, 'How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' He would go in search of something white. Then another man would fool him with a grimy, oil-stained rag: 'Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' The blind man would take it and put it on. Having put it on, gratified, he would exclaim words of gratification, 'How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' Now, what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? When that man blind from birth took the grimy, oil-stained rag and put it on; and, having put it on, gratified, exclaimed words of gratification, 'How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean': Did he do so knowing & seeing, or out of faith in the man with good eyesight?"

"Of course he did it not knowing & not seeing, Master Gotama, but out of faith in the man with good eyesight."

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. Without knowing freedom from disease, without seeing unbinding, they still speak this verse:

‘Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune.
Unbinding: the foremost ease.’

This verse was stated by earlier arahants, fully self-awakened:

‘Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune.
Unbinding: the foremost ease.
The eightfold: the foremost of paths
going to the
deathless,
safe.’

“But now it has gradually become a verse of run-of-the-mill people.

“This body, Māgaṇḍiya, is a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction. And yet you say, with reference to this body, which is a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction: ‘This is that freedom from disease, Master Gotama. This is that unbinding,’ for you don’t have the noble vision with which you would know freedom from disease and see unbinding.”

“I’m convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I would know freedom from disease, that I would see unbinding.”

“Māgaṇḍiya, it’s just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn’t see black objects… white… blue… yellow… red… the sun or the moon. His friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him, but in spite of the medicine his eyesight would not appear or grow clear. What do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Would that doctor have nothing but his share of weariness & disappointment?”

“Yes, Master Gotama.”

“In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, if I were to teach you the Dhamma —‘This is that freedom from disease; this is that unbinding’—and you on your part did not know freedom from disease or see unbinding, that would be wearisome for me; that would be troublesome for me.”

“I’m convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I would know freedom from disease, that I would see unbinding.”

"Māgaṇḍiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects... white... blue... yellow... red... the sun or the moon. Now suppose that a certain man were to take a grimy, oil-stained rag and fool him, saying, 'Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' The blind man would take it and put it on.

"Then his friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him: purges from above & purges from below, ointments & counter-ointments and treatments through the nose. And thanks to the medicine his eyesight would appear & grow clear. Then together with the arising of his eyesight, he would abandon whatever passion & delight he felt for that grimy, oil-stained rag. And he would regard that man as an enemy & no friend at all, and think that he deserved to be killed. 'My gosh, how long have I been fooled, cheated, & deceived by that man & his grimy, oil-stained rag!—"Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean."'

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, if I were to teach you the Dhamma —'This is that freedom from disease; this is that unbinding'—and you on your part were to know that freedom from disease and see that unbinding, then together with the arising of your eyesight you would abandon whatever passion & delight you felt with regard for the five clinging-aggregates. And it would occur to you, 'My gosh, how long have I been fooled, cheated, & deceived by this mind! For in clinging, it was just form that I was clinging to... it was just feeling... just perception... just fabrications... just consciousness that I was clinging to. With my clinging as a requisite condition, there arises becoming... birth... aging-&-death... sorrow, lamentation, pains, distresses, & despairs. And thus is the origin of this entire mass of stress.'"

"I'm convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might rise up from this seat cured of my blindness."

"In that case, Māgaṇḍiya, associate with men of integrity. When you associate with men of integrity, you will hear the true Dhamma. When you hear the true Dhamma, you will practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. When you practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, you will know & see for yourself: 'These things are diseases, cancers, arrows. And here is where diseases, cancers, & arrows cease without trace. With the cessation of my clinging comes the cessation of

becoming. With the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. With the cessation of birth then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress." — *MN 75*

§ 115. On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Āḷavī on a spread of leaves by a cattle track in a siṁsapā forest. Then Hatthaka of Āḷavī, out roaming & rambling for exercise, saw the Blessed One sitting on a spread of leaves by the cattle track in the siṁsapā forest. On seeing him, he went to him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, I hope the Blessed One has slept in ease."

"Yes, young man. I have slept in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, I am one."

"But cold, lord, is the winter night. The 'Between-the-Eights' [the coldest part of winter, between the eighth night of the waxing moon and the eighth night of the waning moon in February] is a time of snowfall. Hard is the ground trampled by cattle hooves. Thin is the spread of leaves. Sparse are the leaves in the trees. Thin are your ochre robes. And cold blows the Veramba wind. Yet still the Blessed One says, 'Yes, young man. I have slept in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, I am one.'"

"Very well then, young man, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. Now, what do you think? Suppose a householder or householder's son has a house with a gabled roof, plastered inside & out, draft-free, with close-fitting doors & windows shut against the wind. Inside he has a couch with a long-fleeced coverlet, a white wool coverlet, an embroidered coverlet, a rug of kadali-deer hide, with a canopy above, & red cushions on either side. And there a lamp would be burning, and his four wives, with their many charms, would be attending to him. Would he sleep in ease or not? Or how does this strike you?"

"Yes, lord, he would sleep in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, he would be one."

"But what do you think, young man? Might there arise in that householder or householder's son any bodily fevers or fevers of mind born of passion so that—burned with those passion-born fevers—he would sleep miserably?"

"Yes, lord."

"As for those passion-born fevers—burned with which the householder or householder's son would sleep miserably—that passion has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore he sleeps in ease.

"Now, what do you think, young man? Might there arise in that householder or householder's son any bodily fevers or fevers of mind born of aversion so that—burned with those aversion-born fevers—he would sleep miserably?"

"Yes, lord."

"As for those aversion-born fevers—burned with which the householder or householder's son would sleep miserably—that aversion has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore he sleeps in ease.

"Now, what do you think, young man? Might there arise in that householder or householder's son any bodily fevers or fevers of mind born of delusion so that—burned with those delusion-born fevers—he would sleep miserably?"

"Yes, lord."

"As for those delusion-born fevers—burned with which the householder or householder's son would sleep miserably—that delusion has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore he sleeps in ease." — *AN 3:35*

§ 116. [Some Nigaṇṭhas:] "'But, friend Gotama, it's not the case that pleasure is to be attained through pleasure. Pleasure is to be attained through pain. For if pleasure were to be attained through pleasure, then King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha would attain pleasure, for he lives in greater pleasure than you, friend Gotama.'

"'Surely the venerable Nigaṇṭhas said that rashly and without reflecting… for instead, I should be asked, "Who lives in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or venerable Gotama?"'

"'Yes, friend Gotama, we said that rashly and without reflecting... but let that be. We now ask you, venerable Gotama: Who lives in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or venerable Gotama?'

"'Very well then, Niganṭhas, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Can King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha—without moving his body, without uttering a word—dwell sensitive to unalloyed pleasure for seven days & nights?'

"'No, friend.'

"'... for six days & nights... for five days & nights... for a day & a night?'

"'No, friend.'

"'Now, I—without moving my body, without uttering a word—can dwell sensitive to unalloyed pleasure for a day and a night... for two days & nights... for three... four... five... six... seven days & nights. So what do you think? That being the case, who dwells in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or me?'

"'That being the case, venerable Gotama dwells in greater pleasure than King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha.'" — *MN 14* *[See also §78]*

PEOPLE WORTH TALKING TO (& NOT)

§ 117. "Let an observant person come, one neither fraudulent nor deceitful, one of straightforward nature. I instruct him, I teach him the Dhamma. Practicing as instructed, he in no long time rightly knows, rightly sees, 'So this, it appears, is liberation from the bond, i.e., the bond of ignorance.'" — *MN 80*

§ 118. "Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a person can be known as fit to talk with or unfit to talk with. If a person, when asked a question, doesn't give a categorical answer to a question deserving a categorical answer, doesn't give an analytical answer to a question deserving an analytical answer, doesn't cross-question a question deserving cross-questioning, doesn't put aside a question deserving to be put aside, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, gives a categorical answer to a question deserving a categorical answer, gives an analytical answer to a question deserving an analytical answer, cross-questions a question deserving

cross-questioning, and puts aside a question deserving to be put aside, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with.

"Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a person can be known as fit to talk with or unfit to talk with. If a person, when asked a question, doesn't stand by what is possible and impossible, doesn't stand by agreed-upon assumptions, doesn't stand by teachings known to be true,[1] doesn't stand by standard procedure, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, stands by what is possible and impossible, stands by agreed-upon assumptions, stands by teachings known to be true, stands by standard procedure, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with.

"Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a person can be known as fit to talk with or unfit to talk with. If a person, when asked a question, wanders from one thing to another, pulls the discussion off the topic, shows anger & aversion and sulks, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, doesn't wander from one thing to another, doesn't pull the discussion off the topic, doesn't show anger or aversion or sulk, then —that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with.

"Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a person can be known as fit to talk with or unfit to talk with. If a person, when asked a question, puts down [the questioner], crushes him, ridicules him, grasps at his little mistakes, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, doesn't put down [the questioner], doesn't crush him, doesn't ridicule him, doesn't grasp at his little mistakes, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with.

"Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a person can be known as drawing near or not drawing near. One who lends ear draws near; one who doesn't lend ear doesn't draw near. Drawing near, one clearly knows one quality, comprehends one quality, abandons one quality, and realizes one quality.[2] Clearly knowing one quality, comprehending one quality, abandoning one quality, and realizing one quality, one touches right release. For that's the purpose of discussion, that's the purpose of counsel, that's the purpose of drawing near, that's

the purpose of lending ear: i.e., the liberation of the mind through no clinging.

> Those who discuss
> when angered, dogmatic, arrogant,
> following what's not the noble ones' way,
> seeking to expose each other's faults,
> delight in each other's misspoken word,
> slip, stumble, defeat.
> Noble ones
> don't speak in that way.
>
> If wise people, knowing the right time,
> want to speak,
> then, words connected with justice,
> following the ways of the noble ones:
> That's what the enlightened ones speak,
> without anger or arrogance,
> with a mind not boiling over,
> without vehemence, without spite.
> Without envy,
> they speak from right knowledge.
> They would delight in what's well-said
> and not disparage what's not.
> They don't study to find fault,
> don't grasp at little mistakes,
> don't put down, don't crush,
> don't speak random words.
>
> For the purpose of knowledge,
> for the purpose of [inspiring] clear confidence,
> counsel that's true:
> That's how noble ones give counsel,
> That's the noble ones' counsel.
> Knowing this, the wise
> should give counsel without arrogance. — *AN 3:68*

NOTES

1. Reading *aññātavāda* with the Burmese edition. An alternate translation would be, "the teachings of those who know."

2. According to the Commentary, these qualities are, respectively, the noble truth of the path, the noble truth of stress, the noble truth of the origination of stress, and the noble truth of the cessation of stress.

§ 119.

There are some who dispute
        corrupted at heart,
and those who dispute
        their hearts set on truth,
but a sage doesn't enter
a dispute that's arisen,
which is why he is
        nowhere constrained.

                Now, how would one
        led on by desire,
        entrenched in his likes,
        forming his own conclusions,
overcome his own views?
He'd dispute in line
with the way that he knows...

Because entrenchments in views
aren't easily overcome
when considering what's grasped
among doctrines,
        that's why
a person embraces or rejects a doctrine—
                in light of these very
                entrenchments.
Now, one who is cleansed
        has no preconceived view
about states of becoming
                        or not-
        anywhere in the world.
Having abandoned conceit & illusion,

by what means would he go?
He isn't involved.

For one who's involved
gets into disputes
over doctrines,
but how—in connection with what—
would you argue
with one uninvolved?
He has nothing
embraced or rejected,
has sloughed off every view
right here—every one. — *Sn 4:3*

§ 120.

"Only here is there purity"
—that's what they say—
"No other doctrines are pure"
—so they say.
Insisting that what they depend on is good,
they are deeply entrenched in their personal truths.
Seeking controversy, they plunge into an assembly,
regarding one another as fools.
Relying on others' authority,
they speak in debate.
Desiring praise, they claim to be skilled.
Engaged in disputes in the midst of the assembly,
—anxious, desiring praise—
the one defeated is
chagrined.
Shaken with criticism, he seeks for an opening.
He whose doctrine is [judged as] demolished,
defeated, by those judging the issue:
He laments, he grieves—the inferior exponent.
"He beat me," he mourns.
These disputes have arisen among contemplatives.
In them are

elation,
dejection.
Seeing this, one should abstain from disputes,
for they have no other goal
than the gaining of praise.
He who is praised there
for expounding his doctrine
in the midst of the assembly,
laughs on that account & grows haughty,
attaining his heart's desire.
That haughtiness will be his grounds for vexation,
for he'll speak in pride & conceit.
Seeing this, one should abstain from debates.
No purity is attained by them, say the skilled.
Like a strong man nourished on royal food,
you go about, roaring, searching out an opponent.
Wherever the battle is,
go there, strong man.
As before, there's none here.
Those who dispute, taking hold of a view,
saying, "This, and this only, is true,"
those you can talk to.
Here there is nothing—
no confrontation
at the birth of disputes.
Among those who live above confrontation
not pitting view against view,
whom would you gain as opponent, Pasūra,
among those here
who are grasping no more?
So here you come,
conjecturing,
your mind conjuring
viewpoints.
You're paired off with a pure one
and so cannot proceed. — *Sn 4:8*

§ 121.

“Dwelling on
their own views,
quarreling,
different skilled people say:
‘Whoever knows this, understands Dhamma.
Whoever rejects this, is
imperfect.’
Thus quarreling, they dispute:
‘My opponent’s a fool & unskilled.’
Which of these statements is true
when all of them say they are skilled?”

“If, in not accepting
an opponent’s doctrine,
one’s a fool, a beast of inferior discernment,
then *all* are fools
of inferior discernment—
all of these
who dwell on their views.
But if, in siding with a view,
one’s cleansed,
with discernment made pure,
intelligent, skilled,
then none of them
are of inferior discernment,
for all of them
have their own views.
I don’t say, ‘That’s how it is,’
the way fools say to one another.
They each make out their views to be true
and so regard their opponents as fools.”

“What some say is true
—‘That’s how it is’—
others say is ‘falsehood, a lie.’
Thus quarreling, they dispute.
Why can’t contemplatives

say one thing & the same?"

"The truth is one,
there is no second
about which a person who knows it
would argue with one who knows.
Contemplatives promote
their various personal truths,
that's why they don't say
one thing & the same."

"But why do they say
various truths,
those who say they are skilled?
Have they learned many various truths
or do they follow conjecture?"

"Apart from their perception
there are no
many
various
constant truths
in the world.
Preconceiving conjecture
with regard to views,
they speak of a pair: true
& false.
Dependent on what's seen,
heard,
& sensed,
dependent on habits & practices,
one shows disdain [for others].
Taking a stance on his decisions,
praising himself, he says,
'My opponent's a fool & unskilled.'
That by which
he regards his opponents as fools
is that by which
he says he is skilled.

Calling himself skilled
he despises another
who speaks the same way.

Agreeing on a view gone out of bounds,
drunk with conceit, thinking himself perfect,
he has consecrated, with his own mind,
himself
as well as his view.

If, by an opponent's word,
one's inferior,
the opponent's
of inferior discernment as well.
But if, by one's own word
one's an attainer-of-wisdom, enlightened,
no one
among contemplatives
is a fool.

'Those who teach a doctrine other than this
are lacking in purity,
imperfect.'
That's what the many sectarians say,
for they're smitten with passion
for their own views.
'Only here is there purity,'
that's what they say.
'In no other doctrine
is purity,' they say.
That's how the many sectarians
are entrenched,
speaking firmly there
concerning their own path.
Speaking firmly concerning your own path,
what opponent here would you take as a fool?
You'd simply bring quarrels on yourself
if you said your opponent's a fool
with an impure doctrine.

Taking
a stance on your decisions,
& yourself as your measure,
you dispute further down
into the world.
But one who's abandoned
all decisions
creates in the world
quarrels no more." — *Sn 4:12*

§ 122.

"Those who, dwelling on views,
dispute, saying, 'Only this is true':
do they all incur blame,
or also earn praise there?"

"[The praise:] It's such a little thing,
not at all appeasing.
I speak of two fruits of dispute;
and seeing this, you shouldn't dispute—
seeing the state
where there's no dispute
as safe.
One who knows
doesn't get involved
in whatever are
commonplace
conventional
views.
One who is uninvolved:
When he's forming no preference
for what's seen, for what's heard,
why would he get
involved?" — *Sn 4:13*

§ 123. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was living among the Sakyans near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Then in the

early morning, having put on his robes and carrying his bowl & outer robe, he went into Kapilavatthu for alms. Having gone for alms in Kapilavatthu, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he went to the Great Wood for the day's abiding. Plunging into the Great Wood, he sat down at the root of a bilva sapling for the day's abiding.

Daṇḍapāṇin ["Stick-in-hand"] the Sakyan, out roaming & rambling for exercise, also went to the Great Wood. Plunging into the Great Wood, he went to where the Blessed One was under the bilva sapling. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, "What is the contemplative's doctrine? What does he proclaim?"

"The sort of doctrine, friend, where one does not keep quarreling with anyone in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk; the sort [of doctrine] where perceptions no longer obsess the brahman who remains dissociated from sensual pleasures, free from perplexity, his uncertainty cut away, devoid of craving for becoming & non-becoming. Such is my doctrine, such is what I proclaim."

When this was said, Daṇḍapāṇin the Sakyan—shaking his head, wagging his tongue, raising his eyebrows so that his forehead was wrinkled in three furrows—left, leaning on his stick. — *MN 18*

DEBATES

§ 124. As he was sitting to one side, Upāli the householder said to the Blessed One, "Lord, did Dīgha Tapassin the Nigaṇṭha come here?"

"Yes, householder, Dīgha Tapassin the Nigaṇṭha came here."

"And did you have any discussion with him?"

"I had some discussion with him."

"What sort of discussion did you have with him?"

Then the Blessed One related the entire extent of his discussion with Dīgha Tapassin the Nigaṇṭha [in which Dīgha Tapassin had asserted that the bodily "rod," i.e., bodily action, was more reprehensible for the doing of evil action than the mental "rod"].

When this was said, Upāli the householder said to the Blessed One, "That was good, very good of Tapassin. The way an instructed disciple would rightly understand the message of the Teacher is how Dīgha Tapassin the Nigaṇṭha answered the Blessed One. For what does the trivial mental rod count for in comparison with the gross bodily rod? On the contrary, the bodily rod is more greatly reprehensible for the doing of evil action, for the perpetration of evil action, not so much the verbal rod, not so much the mental rod."

"If, householder, you will confer taking a stand on the truth, we might have some discussion here."

"Lord, I will confer taking a stand on the truth; let us have some discussion here."

"What do you think, householder? There might be the case where a Nigaṇṭha is diseased, pained, severely ill, refusing cold water and taking warm water. He, not getting cold water, would die. Where would Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta describe his reappearance?"

"Lord, there are the devas called Attached-in-Mind. He reappears there. Why is that? He is bound in mind when he dies."

"Householder, householder, pay attention, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn't consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after. And yet you made this statement: 'Lord, I will confer taking a stand on the truth; let us have some discussion here.'"

"Lord, even though the Blessed One says that, still the bodily rod is more greatly reprehensible for the doing of evil action, for the perpetration of evil action, not so much the verbal rod, not so much the mental rod."

"What do you think, householder? There might be the case where a Nigaṇṭha is restrained with the fourfold restraint: constrained by all constraints, yoked to all constraints, cleansed by all constraints, attained to all constraints. As he goes back and forth, he brings many small beings to destruction. What (kammic) result would Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta describe for him?"

"What is unintended, lord, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta does not describe as greatly reprehensible."

"But if he intends it?"

"Greatly reprehensible, lord."

"And under what does Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta classify intention?"

"Under the mental rod, lord."

"Householder, householder, pay attention, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn't consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after. And yet you made this statement: 'Lord, I will confer taking a stand on the truth; let us have some discussion here.'"

"Lord, even though the Blessed One says that, still the bodily rod is more greatly reprehensible for the doing of evil action, for the perpetration of evil action, not so much the verbal rod, not so much the mental rod."

"What do you think, householder? Is this Nālandā powerful & rich, populous & crowded with people?"

"Yes, lord."

"What do you think? There is the case where a man might come with uplifted sword. He would say, 'In a single moment, in a single instant, I will turn whatever beings there are in this Nālandā into a single pile of flesh, a single heap of flesh.' What do you think? Would that man be able—in a single moment, in a single instant—to turn whatever beings there are in this Nālandā into a single pile of flesh, a single heap of flesh?"

"Lord, not even ten men, twenty men, thirty men, forty men, fifty men would be able—in a single moment, in a single instant—to turn whatever beings there are in this Nālandā into a single pile of flesh, a single heap of flesh. So what would one trivial man count for?"

"What do you think, householder? There is the case where a contemplative or brahman with supernormal power, attained to mastery of mind, might come. He would say, 'With a single mental act of hatred, I will turn this Nālandā to ash.' What do you think? Would that contemplative or brahman with supernormal power, attained to mastery of mind, be able—with a single mental act of hatred—to turn this Nālandā to ash?"

"Lord, with a single mental act of hatred he would be able to turn even ten Nālandās, twenty Nālandās, thirty Nālandās, forty Nālandās, fifty

Nālandās to ash. So what would one trivial Nālandā count for?"

"Householder, householder, pay attention, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn't consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after. And yet you made this statement: 'Lord, I will confer taking a stand on the truth; let us have some discussion here.'"

"Lord, even though the Blessed One says that, still the bodily rod is more greatly reprehensible for the doing of evil action, for the perpetration of evil action, not so much the verbal rod, not so much the mental rod."

"What do you think, householder? Have you heard how the Daṇḍakī wilderness, the Kāliṅga wilderness, the Mejjha wilderness, and the Mātaṅga wilderness became wildernesses?"

"Yes, lord, I have...."

"What do you think, householder? From what you have heard, how did the Daṇḍakī wilderness, the Kāliṅga wilderness, the Mejjha wilderness, and the Mātaṅga wilderness become wildernesses?"

"Lord, I have heard that it was through a mental act of hatred on the part of seers that the Daṇḍakī wilderness, the Kāliṅga wilderness, the Mejjha wilderness, and the Mātaṅga wilderness became wildernesses."

"Householder, householder, pay attention, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn't consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after. And yet you made this statement: 'Lord, I will confer taking a stand on the truth; let us have some discussion here.'"

"Lord, I was gratified and won over by the Blessed One's very first simile. But wanting to hear these very artful ways of handling questions from the Blessed One, I thought I should treat him as an opponent. Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One

remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life." — *MN 56*

§ 125. Now on that occasion 500 brahmans from various provinces were staying at Sāvatthī on some business or other. The thought occurred to them, "This Gotama the contemplative prescribes purity for the four castes. Now who is capable of disputing with him on this statement?" And on that occasion the brahman student Assalāyana was staying at Sāvatthī. Young, shaven-headed, 16 years old, he was a master of the Three Vedas with their vocabularies, liturgy, phonology, etymology, & histories as a fifth; skilled in philology & grammar, he was fully versed in cosmology and in the marks of a Great Man. The thought occurred to the brahmans, "This brahman student Assalāyana is staying in Sāvatthī... He is capable of disputing with Gotama the contemplative on this statement."

So the brahmans went to the brahman student Assalāyana and said to him, "Master Assalāyana, this Gotama the contemplative prescribes purity for the four castes. Come and dispute with him on this statement."

When this was said, the brahman student Assalāyana said to the brahmans, "Sirs, Gotama the contemplative is one who speaks Dhamma. And those who speak Dhamma are hard to dispute with. I can't dispute with him on this statement."

A second time.... A third time, the brahmans said to the brahman student Assalāyana, "Master Assalāyana, this Gotama the contemplative prescribes purity for the four castes. Come and dispute with him on this statement, for you have lived the life of a wanderer. Don't be defeated without being defeated in battle."

When this was said, the brahman student Assalāyana said to the brahmans, "Apparently, sirs, I don't get leave from you [to avoid the matter by saying], 'Gotama the contemplative is one who speaks Dhamma. And those who speak Dhamma are hard to dispute with. I can't dispute with him on this statement.' But at your bidding I will go."

Then the brahman student Assalāyana went with a large group of brahmans to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One:

“Master Gotama, the brahmans say, ‘Brahmans are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior. Only brahmans are the fair caste; any other caste is dark. Only brahmans are pure, not non-brahmans. Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’ What does Master Gotama have to say with regard to that?”

“But, Assalāyana, the brahmans’ brahman-women are plainly seen having their periods, becoming pregnant, giving birth, and nursing [their children]. And yet the brahmans, being born through the birth canal, say, ‘Brahmans are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior. Only brahmans are the fair caste; any other caste is dark. Only brahmans are pure, not non-brahmans. Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”

“Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmans think, ‘Brahmans are the superior caste… the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”

“What do you think, Assalāyana? Have you heard that in Yona & Kamboja and other outlying countries there are only two castes—masters & slaves—and that having been a master one (can) become a slave, and that having been a slave one (can) become a master?”

“Yes, Master Gotama….”

“So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmans say, ‘Brahmans are the superior caste… the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā’?”

“Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmans think, ‘Brahmans are the superior caste… the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”

“What do you think, Assalāyana? Is it only a noble warrior who—taking life, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, telling lies, speaking divisive speech, speaking coarse speech, engaging in idle chatter, covetous, bearing thoughts of ill will, & holding wrong views—with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell, and not a brahman? Is it only a merchant…? Is it only a worker who—taking life, stealing, engaging

in sexual misconduct, telling lies, speaking divisive speech, speaking coarse speech, engaging in idle chatter, covetous, bearing thoughts of ill will, and holding wrong views—with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell, and not a brahman?"

"No, Master Gotama. Even a noble warrior.... Even a brahman.... Even a merchant.... Even a worker.... (Members of) all four castes—if they take life, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, tell lies, speak divisive speech, speak coarse speech, engage in idle chatter, are covetous, bear thoughts of ill will, & hold wrong views—with the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell."

"So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmans say, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā'?"

"Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmans think, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.'"

"What do you think, Assalāyana? Is it only a brahman who—refraining from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from telling lies, from divisive speech, from coarse speech, & from idle chatter, not covetous, bearing no thoughts of ill will, & holding to right view—with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in the good destination, the heavenly world, and not a noble warrior, not a merchant, not a worker?"

"No, Master Gotama. Even a noble warrior.... Even a brahman.... Even a merchant.... Even a worker.... (Members of) all four castes—if they refrain from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from telling lies, from divisive speech, from coarse speech, & from idle chatter, are not covetous, bear no thoughts of ill will, & hold to right view—with the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in the good destination, the heavenly world."

"So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmans say, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of

Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā'?"

"Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmans think, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.'"

"What do you think, Assalāyana? Is it only a brahman who is capable of developing in any direction a heart of good will—free from animosity, free from ill will—and not a noble warrior, not a merchant, not a worker?"

"No, Master Gotama. Even a noble warrior.... Even a brahman.... Even a merchant.... Even a worker.... (Members of) all four castes are capable of developing in any direction a heart of good will—free from animosity, free from ill will."

"So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmans say, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā'?"

"Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmans think, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.'"

"What do you think, Assalāyana? Is it only a brahman who is capable of taking a loofah & bath powder, going to a river, and scrubbing off dust & dirt, and not a noble warrior, not a merchant, not a worker?"

"No, Master Gotama. Even a noble warrior.... Even a brahman.... Even a merchant.... Even a worker.... (Members of) all four castes are capable of taking a loofah & bath powder, going to a river, and scrubbing off dust & dirt."

"So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmans say, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... Only brahmans are pure, not non-brahmans. Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā'?"

"Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmans think, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... Only brahmans are pure, not non-brahmans. Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.'"

"What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where a consecrated noble warrior king might call together 100 men of different births (and say to them), 'Come, masters. Those of you there born from a noble warrior clan, from a brahman clan, or from a royal clan: taking an upper fire-stick of sāla wood, salala wood, sandalwood, or padumaka wood, produce fire & make heat appear. And come, masters. Those of you there born from an outcast clan, a trapper clan, a wicker workers' clan, a cartwrights' clan, or a scavengers' clan: taking an upper fire-stick from a dog's drinking trough, from a pig's trough, from a dustbin, or of castor-oil wood, produce fire & make heat appear.' What do you think, Assalāyana? Would the fire made by those born from a noble warrior clan, a brahman clan, or a royal clan—who had produced fire & made heat appear by taking an upper fire-stick of sāla wood, salala wood, sandalwood, or padumaka wood—be the only one with flame, color, & radiance, able to do whatever a fire might be needed to do? And would the fire made by those born from an outcast clan, a trapper clan, a wicker workers' clan, a cartwrights' clan, or a scavengers' clan—who had produced fire & made heat appear by taking an upper fire-stick from a dog's drinking trough, from a pig's trough, from a dustbin, or of castor-oil wood—be without flame, color, & radiance, unable to do what a fire might be needed to do?"

"No, Master Gotama. The fire made by those born from a noble warrior clan, a brahman clan, or a royal clan... would have flame, color, & radiance, able to do whatever a fire might be needed to do. And the fire made by those born from an outcast clan, a trapper clan, a wicker workers' clan, a cartwrights' clan, or a scavengers' clan... would have flame, color, & radiance, able to do whatever a fire might be needed to do. For all fire has flame, color, & radiance, and is able to do whatever a fire might be needed to do."

"So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmans say, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... Only brahmans are pure, not non-brahmans. Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā'?"

"Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmans think, 'Brahmans are the superior caste... Only brahmans are pure, not non-

brahmans. Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.'"

"What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where a noble warrior youth might cohabit with a brahman maiden, and from their cohabitation a son would be born. Would the son born from the noble warrior youth & brahman maiden be like the father and like the mother? Should he be called a noble warrior & a brahman?"

"Yes, Master Gotama...."

"What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where a brahman youth might cohabit with a noble warrior maiden, and from their cohabitation a son would be born. Would the son born from the brahman youth & noble warrior maiden be like the father and like the mother? Should he be called a noble warrior & a brahman?"

"Yes, Master Gotama...."

"What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where a mare might mate with a donkey, and from their mating a foal would be born. Would the foal born from the mare & the donkey be like the father and like the mother? Should it be called a horse & a donkey?"

"Master Gotama, from the mixed breeding it would be a mule. Here I see that it [the mixed breeding] makes a difference, but there [in the other two cases] I don't see that it makes a difference."

"What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where there might be two brahman-student brothers, born of the same mother: one learned & initiated, the other not learned & uninitiated. Which of the two would the brahmans serve first at a funeral feast, a milk-rice offering, a sacrifice, or a feast for guests?"

"The brahman student who was learned & initiated, Master Gotama.... For what great fruit would there be for what is given to one who is not learned & uninitiated?"

"What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where there might be two brahman-student brothers, born of the same mother: one learned & initiated (but) unvirtuous & of evil character, the other not learned & uninitiated, (but) virtuous & of fine character. Which of the two would the brahmans serve first at a funeral feast, a milk-rice offering, a sacrifice, or a feast for guests?"

"The brahman student who was not learned & uninitiated, (but) virtuous & of fine character, Master Gotama.... For what great fruit would there be for what is given to one who is unvirtuous & of evil character?"

"First, Assalāyana, you went by birth. Then, having gone by birth, you went by mantras. Then, having gone by mantras, putting them both aside, you have come around to the purity of the four castes that I prescribe."

When this was said, the brahman student Assalāyana sat silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Then the Blessed One—seeing that the brahman student Assalāyana was sitting silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words—said to him, "Once, Assalāyana, this evil viewpoint arose in the seven brahman seers as they were consulting together in leaf huts in the wilderness: 'Brahmans are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior. Only brahmans are the fair caste; any other caste is dark. Only brahmans are pure, not non-brahmans. Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.' Then the seer Devala the Dark heard, 'This evil viewpoint has arisen in the seven brahman seers as they are consulting together in leaf huts in the wilderness: "Brahmans are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior.... Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā."' So, arranging his hair & beard, putting on crimson garments, wearing multi-layered sandals, and carrying a staff made of gold, he appeared in the courtyard of the seven brahman seers. Then he walked back & forth in the courtyard of the seven brahman seers saying, 'Well, now, where have these masters, the brahman seers, gone? Well, now, where have these masters, the brahman seers, gone?'

"Then the seven brahman seers said to the seer Devala the Dark, 'Now who is this, walking back & forth in the courtyard of the seven brahman seers like a village lout, saying, "Well, now, where have these masters, the brahman seers, gone? Well, now, where have these masters, the brahman seers, gone?" Let's curse him!' So the seven brahman seers cursed the seer Devala the Dark: 'Be ashes, dribble-spit *[capalī]!* Be ashes, dribble-spit! Be ashes, dribble-spit!' But the more they cursed him, the more beautiful,

good-looking, & inspiring he became. Then the thought occurred to the seven brahman seers, 'Our asceticism is in vain! Our holy-life is fruitless! For before, whenever we cursed anyone, "Be ashes, dribble-spit!" he would always become ashes. But the more we curse this one, the more beautiful, good-looking, & inspiring he becomes!'

"'Masters, your asceticism is not in vain, and your holy-life not fruitless. Please, masters, abandon your hatred toward me.'

"'We abandon our hatred toward you, master. Who are you?'

"'Have you heard of the seer Devala the Dark?'

"'Yes, master.'

"'I am he.'

"Then the seven brahman seers approached him to bow down to him, and he said to them, 'I have heard that this evil viewpoint has arisen in the seven brahman seers as they are consulting together in leaf huts in the wilderness: "Brahmans are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior.... Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā."'

"'That is so, master.'

"'But do you know, masters, if the mother who bore you went only with a brahman, and not with a non-brahman?'

"'No, master.'

"'And do you know if the mothers of the mother who bore you—back seven generations of mothers—went only with brahmans, and not with non-brahmans?'

"'No, master.'

"'And do you know if the father who sired you went only with a brahman woman, and not with a non-brahman woman?'

"'No, master.'

"'And do you know if the fathers of the father who bore you—back seven generations of fathers—went only with brahman women, and not with non-brahman women?'

"'No, master.'

"'Do you know how there is the descent of an embryo?'

"'Yes, master, we know how there is the descent of an embryo. There is the case where the mother & father have come together, the mother is fertile, and a gandhabba [the being about to be reborn] is standing present. The coming together of these three is the descent of the embryo.'

"'But do you know for sure whether the gandhabba is a noble warrior, a brahman, a merchant, or a worker?'

"'No, master.'

"'That being the case, do you know who you are?'

"'That being the case, master, we don't know who we are.'

"Now, Assalāyana, when those seven brahman seers couldn't defend their own birth-statement when interrogated, pressed, & rebuked by the seer Devala the Dark, how can you now defend your own birth-statement when interrogated, pressed, & rebuked by me—you, their lineage holder, but not [the equal of] Puṇṇa, their ladle holder?" — *MN 93*

§ 126. Then Saccaka the Niganṭha-son together with a large group of Licchavis plunged into the Great Wood and went to the Blessed One [after announcing to the Licchavis that he would drag the Buddha back and forth in a debate]. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side.... As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "I would like to question Master Gotama on a certain point, if Master Gotama would grant me the favor of an answer to the question."

"Ask, Aggivessana, as you see fit."

"How does Master Gotama discipline his disciples? Or what part of his instruction is generally presented to his disciples?"

"Aggivessana, I discipline my disciples in this way; this part of my instruction is generally presented to my disciples: 'Form is inconstant. Feeling is inconstant. Perception is inconstant. Fabrications are inconstant. Consciousness is inconstant. Form is not-self. Feeling is not-self. Perception is not-self. Fabrications are not-self. Consciousness is not-self. All fabrications are inconstant. All phenomena are not-self.'..."

"A simile occurs to me, Master Gotama."

"Let it occur to you, Aggivessana."

"Just as any seeds that exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation, all do so in dependence on the earth; or just as any activities requiring strength that are done, all are done in dependence on the earth; in the same way, Master Gotama, an individual with form as self, taking a stance on form, produces merit or demerit. An individual with feeling as self... with perception as self... with fabrications as self... with consciousness as self, taking a stance on consciousness, produces merit or demerit."

"Then, Aggivessana, are you saying, 'Form is my self, feeling is my self, perception is my self, fabrications are my self, consciousness is my self'?"

"Yes, Master Gotama, I'm saying that 'Form is my self, feeling is my self, perception is my self, fabrications are my self, consciousness is my self.' As does this great multitude."

"What does this great multitude have to do with you? Please focus just on your own assertion."

"Yes, Master Gotama, I'm saying that 'Form is my self, feeling is my self, perception is my self, fabrications are my self, consciousness is my self.'"

"Very well then, Aggivessana, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Would a consecrated, noble-warrior king—such as King Pasenadi of Kosala or King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha—wield the power in his own domain to execute those who deserve execution, to fine those who deserve to be fined, and to banish those who deserve to be banished?"

"Yes, Master Gotama, he would... Even these oligarchic groups, such as the Vajjians & Mallans, wield the power in their own domains to execute those who deserve execution, to fine those who deserve to be fined, and to banish those who deserve to be banished, to say nothing of a consecrated, noble-warrior king such as King Pasenadi of Kosala, or King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha. He would wield it, and he would deserve to wield it."

"What do you think, Aggivessana? When you say, 'Form is my self,' do you wield power over that form: 'May my form be thus, may my form not be thus'?"

When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son was silent.

A second time, the Blessed One said to Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son: "What do you think, Aggivessana? When you say, 'Form is my self,' do you wield power over that form: 'May my form be thus, may my form not be thus'?"

When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son was silent a second time.

Then the Blessed One said to him, "Answer now, Aggivessana. This is not the time to be silent. When anyone doesn't answer when asked a legitimate question by the Tathāgata up to three times, his head splits into seven pieces right here."

Now on that occasion the spirit *(yakkha)* Vajirapāṇin [Thunderbolt-in-Hand], carrying an iron thunderbolt, was poised in the air above Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son, (thinking,) "If Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son doesn't answer when asked a legitimate question by the Blessed One up to three times, I will split his head into seven pieces right here."

The Blessed One saw the spirit Vajirapāṇin, as did Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son. So Saccaka—afraid, terrified, his hair standing on end—seeking shelter in the Blessed One, seeking a cave/asylum in the Blessed One, seeking refuge in the Blessed One—said to the Blessed One, "Let Master Gotama ask me. I will answer."

"What do you think, Aggivessana? When you say, 'Form is my self,' do you wield power over that form: 'May my form be thus, may my form not be thus'?"

"No, Master Gotama."

"Pay attention, Aggivessana, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn't consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after.

"What do you think, Aggivessana? When you say, 'Feeling is my self... Perception is my self... Fabrications are my self... Consciousness is my self,' do you wield power over that consciousness: 'May my consciousness be thus, may my consciousness not be thus'?"

"No, Master Gotama."

"Pay attention, Aggivessana, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn't consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after.

“What do you think, Aggivessana? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, Master Gotama.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, Master Gotama.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“...Is feeling constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, Master Gotama.”...

“...Is perception constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, Master Gotama.”...

“...Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, Master Gotama.”...

“What do you think, Aggivessana? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, Master Gotama.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, Master Gotama.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“What do you think, Aggivessana? When one adheres to stress, holds to stress, is attached to stress, and envisions of stress that ‘This is mine; this is my self; this is what I am,’ would he comprehend stress or dwell having totally destroyed stress?”

“How could that be, Master Gotama? No, Master Gotama.”

“That being the case, Aggivessana, don’t you adhere to stress, hold to stress, aren’t you attached to stress, and don’t you envision of stress that ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“How could that not be the case, Master Gotama? Yes, Master Gotama.”

“Suppose a man—in need of heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood—were to enter a forest taking a sharp

ax. There he would see a large plantain trunk: straight, young, immature. He would cut it at the root and, having cut it at the root, cut off the crown. Having cut off the crown, he would unfurl the leaf sheaths. Unfurling the leaf sheaths, he wouldn't even find sapwood there, to say nothing of heartwood. In the same way, Aggivessana, when you are interrogated, rebuked, & pressed by me with regard to your own statement, you are empty, void, mistaken. But it was you who made this statement before the assembly in Vesālī: 'I see no contemplative or brahman, the head of an order, the head of a group, or even one who claims to be an arahant, rightly self-awakened, who—engaged in debate with me—would not shiver, quiver, shake, & break out in sweat under the armpits. Even if I were to engage a senseless stump in debate, it—engaged with me in debate—would shiver, quiver, & shake, to say nothing of a human being.' But now some drops of sweat coming out of your forehead, drenching your upper robe, are landing on the ground, whereas now I have no sweat on my body." And the Blessed One uncovered his golden-colored body to the assembly. When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son fell silent, abashed, sitting with his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Then Dummukha [BadMouth] the Licchavi-son... said to the Blessed One, "Lord, a simile has occurred to me."

"Let it occur to you, Dummukha," the Blessed One said.

"Suppose, lord, that not far from a village or town was a pond. There in it was a crab. Then a number of boys & girls, leaving the village or town, would go to the pond and, on arrival, would go down to bathe in it. Taking the crab out of the water, they would place it on the ground. And whenever the crab extended a leg, the boys or girls would cut it off, break it, and smash it with sticks or stones right there, so that the crab—with all its legs cut off, broken, & smashed—would be unable to get back in the water as before. In the same way, whatever Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son's writhings, capers, & contortions, the Blessed One has cut them off, broken them, and smashed them all, so that Saccaka is now unable to approach the Blessed One again for the purpose of debate."

When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son said to Dummukha the Licchavi-son, "Just you wait, Dummukha. Just you wait, Dummukha. You're a big-mouth, Dummukha. We're not taking counsel with you.

We're here taking counsel with Master Gotama." [Then, turning to the Buddha,] "Let that be, Master Gotama, our words & those of other ordinary contemplatives & brahmans—prattled prattling, as it were...."
— *MN 35*

§ 127. As he was sitting there, Uṇṇabhā the brahman said to Ven. Ānanda: "Master Ānanda, what is the aim of this holy life lived under Gotama the contemplative?"

"Brahman, the holy life is lived under the Blessed One with the aim of abandoning desire."

"Is there a path, is there a practice, for the abandoning of that desire?"

"Yes, there is a path, there is a practice, for the abandoning of that desire."

"What is the path, the practice, for the abandoning of that desire?"

"Brahman, there is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence... concentration founded on intent... concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion. This, brahman, is the path, this is the practice for the abandoning of that desire."

"If that's so, Master Ānanda, then it's an endless path, and not one with an end, for it's impossible that one could abandon desire by means of desire."

"Very well then, brahman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Didn't you first have desire, thinking, 'I'll go to the park,' and then when you reached the park, wasn't the corresponding desire allayed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't you first have persistence, thinking, 'I'll go to the park,' and then when you reached the park, wasn't the corresponding persistence allayed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't you first have the intent, thinking, 'I'll go to the park,' and then when you reached the park, wasn't the corresponding intent

allayed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't you first have [an act of] discrimination, thinking, 'I'll go to the park,' and then when you reached the park, wasn't the corresponding act of discrimination allayed?"

"Yes, sir."

"So it is with an arahant whose fermentations are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who is released through right gnosis. Whatever desire he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship the corresponding desire is allayed. Whatever persistence he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship the corresponding persistence is allayed. Whatever intent he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship the corresponding intent is allayed. Whatever discrimination he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship the corresponding discrimination is allayed. So what do you think, brahman? Is this an endless path, or one with an end?"

"You're right, Master Ānanda. This is a path with an end, and not an endless one." — *SN 51:15*

Chapter six

Cross-questioning: II

The standard passage in praise of the Buddha's Dhamma states that it is *sandiṭṭhiko:* "to be seen here & now." AN 6:47 [§89] explains this term with an illustration: One can see when the dhammas he teaches about—skillful and unskillful qualities—are present or absent in the mind.

The practical implication of this principle is that doubt about the Dhamma cannot be overcome simply through force of conviction. Instead, it is overcome through investigation into the mind in the present, equipped with questions that focus on the issue of what events in the mind are skillful or not. The Buddha makes this point by implication in SN 46:51 [§23], where he states that uncertainty is starved by the same activity that feeds the analysis of qualities *(dhamma-vicaya)* as a factor for awakening: fostering appropriate attention to "qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light."

Thus the proper investigation of the mind in the present is done with questions framed in terms that deserve categorical answers. And, as it turns out, these are precisely the sorts of questions that the Buddha encourages in the final two situations in which he employs the strategy of cross-questioning: the questions he asks his listeners about their experience in the present, and the questions he recommends they ask themselves. Because the questions appropriate to these two situations are so similar—and in many instances actually overlap—we will discuss the two situations as one: self cross-examination.

Given that skillful questions of self cross-examination foster the analysis of qualities as a factor of awakening, and given that this factor is equated with discernment, it is only fitting that these questions build on the questions that MN 135 [§43] says are most conducive to the arising of discernment:

> "What is skillful, venerable sir? What is unskillful? What is blameworthy? What is blameless? What should be cultivated? What should not be cultivated? What, having been done by me, will be for my long-term harm & suffering? Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term benefit & happiness?"

On the beginning level, the questions of self cross-examination continue the thrust of these questions, seeking to identify what is skillful and unskillful in general terms. Then they shift focus more to the particulars of one's own activities, showing how to observe one's intentions and actions, and the results of those intentions and actions, both in the immediate present and over time, so as to judge whether they are actually skillful or not. Ultimately they pursue this line of inquiry into more and more subtle levels of activity in the mind until they can uproot the subtlest levels of attachment, thus bringing about the total freedom of unbinding.

When we compare these types of cross-questioning with the sixth and seventh types listed in the preceding chapter—exploring hypotheticals—we see that their formal relationship parallels the relationship between the two major stages in the first type: cross-examining a monk accused of an offense against the Vinaya. In the preliminary stage of a Vinaya cross-examination, a learned monk is questioned about the rules relevant to the planned accusation in a way that (1) establishes, for those who may have not yet learned it, the general framework of principles on which the specific action is to be judged; and (2) reminds those who *have* learned the framework of points they may have forgotten. In a similar way, the act of cross-questioning a listener about a hypothetical analogy or example is meant to remind the listener of a framework or pattern with which he is already familiar and to establish the fact that the framework is useful for understanding a specific teaching or answer. In other words, this type of cross-questioning is an aid to mindfulness, in the canonical sense of the word: calling something to mind and keeping it there. The obvious difference is that in a Vinaya cross-examination the framework is provided by a set body of rules, whereas in the act of exploring a hypothetical it's provided by the listener's personal range of knowledge and skills.

However, in the second stage of a Vinaya cross-examination—the actual cross-examination of the accused—the questions are aimed at ferreting out particular actions so that they can be judged against general principles as to whether they constitute an offense. This is the basic pattern of the self cross-examination covered in this chapter: Particular actions and mind-states—also viewed as actions—are ferreted out so that they can be judged as skillful or not. The major difference here is that, in a Vinaya cross-examination, if the action is judged as an offense, the monk is penalized by his fellows so that he can achieve restraint in the future; whereas in self cross-examination, when an activity is judged as unskillful, the response is largely an individual matter. Seeing the harm the action entails, one tries to achieve restraint—preferably in the present, but if not, in the future—on one's own initiative.

Thus, in simple terms, the exploration of hypotheticals uses cross-questioning to remind the listener of general principles and to establish their relevance, whereas self cross-examination uses cross-questioning to ferret out specific actions with the purpose of judging them against general principles that have already been established but whose implications in practice are still being mastered. Although both types of cross-questioning aim ultimately at greater discernment, they approach that discernment through different proximate aims: improved understanding and mindfulness in the case of exploring hypotheticals, and heightened alertness in the case of self cross-examination. When this trio of mental qualities—understanding, mindfulness, and alertness—is combined with ardency in abandoning unskillful qualities and developing skillful ones, the mind is imbued with the qualities it needs to develop the path factor of right mindfulness [§33] leading to right concentration and release. This is how the process of self cross-examination fosters the standard factors of the path.

As we noted in the Introduction, self cross-examination can function as a way of testing the initial frame of one's questions: If all the possible answers suggested by a particular way of framing questions do not pass the test, the frame has to be readjusted or replaced. This was one of the ways the bodhisatta had to employ this sort of questioning in his quest for awakening, as he kept refining his ideas of what is skillful and not. When he became the Buddha, he was thus able to provide his students with a

reliable way of framing the initial questions related to the issue of stress and its end. Because he was so confident in the reliability of those questions, he invited his students to test them through self cross-examination for themselves—although this testing often measures not only the validity of the Buddha's framework of categorical questions, but also the validity of one's own comprehension of that framework. This is one of the uses of self cross-examination on the path.

The other is to employ self cross-examination as a strategy for determining how best to apply the Buddha's teachings in actual practice. The questions the Buddha recommends in this area perform this task in two ways: by investigating how one is actually applying those teachings, and by providing standards for measuring the success of that application. Thus self cross-examination, when conducted skillfully, is the process by which a student of the Buddha's teaching can develop the level of alertness and discernment needed to become independent in the Dhamma.

It so happens that when we extract from the discourses the passages giving instruction in self cross-examination and arrange them in ascending order, from the most basic to those resulting immediately in release, we find that they begin and end with passages in which the Buddha, when asked a question, puts the question aside and then proceeds to lead his listeners in the process of self cross-examination [§149, §142]. In the first passage, the listeners end up taking refuge in the Triple Gem; in the second, many of the listeners reach full awakening. There is apparently no intended symmetry in these two passages—they are widely separated in the Canon—but this formal parallel does draw attention to the point that questions to be put aside are put aside for just this reason: They get in the way of the self-examination that is most effective for progress on the path.

In the first instance—AN 3:66 [§149], the famous discourse to the Kālāmas—the Kālāmas inform the Buddha that they have heard many teachers disparaging one another's teachings, and would like to know which of these teachers are lying and which are telling the truth. The Buddha puts the question aside and questions the Kālāmas about which activities they have observed to be skillful and unskillful. The way in which he conducts the questioning shows that these activities are to be

judged by the beneficial or harmful results they lead to, and whether those results are praised or blamed by the wise.

The implications of this line of cross-questioning are twofold. On the one hand, the Buddha is asserting the pragmatic principle that a teaching is to be judged by the results that come from putting it into practice. This is a principle he expands on in §129 and §130. On the other hand, he is also implying that a teacher is to be judged by his or her actions. After all, if the counsel of the wise is to be taken into consideration, one must have some criteria for judging who is wise and who isn't. Thus in MN 95 [§128] he provides some of these criteria, and here it's important to note that these criteria are expressed in the form of self cross-examination. One is responsible for observing a potential teacher's behavior, and so—instead of asking a teacher point-blank as to whether he or she can be trusted—is encouraged to quiz oneself as to what one has observed in the teacher's behavior in these terms: "Are there in this venerable one any such qualities based on greed... aversion... delusion that, with his mind overcome by these qualities, he might say, 'I know,' while not knowing, or say, 'I see,' while not seeing; or that he might urge another to act in a way that was for his/her long-term harm & pain?"

As the Buddha points out in AN 4:192 [§55], one can come to a reliable conclusion on these questions only when one is highly observant, and only after observing the other person in a wide variety of situations over a long period of time. Thus, in the act of choosing a teacher, one must be judicious rather than judgmental, taking the responsibility of being both observant and willing to invest a fair amount of time in assessing the teacher's behavior. Some later schools of Buddhism argued that a student would be in no position to judge a teacher, and that the act of judging others is unskillful in any event, but the Buddha himself did not adopt that attitude at all. The pursuit of truth requires a responsible attitude, which begins by taking responsibility for one's choice of a teacher. If the teacher's behavior is clearly unskillful, and one chooses that person for a teacher nevertheless, one is showing a highly irresponsible attitude toward the issue of skillful behavior in general. If one is willing to turn a blind eye to a teacher's unskillful behavior, one will probably also want to turn a blind eye to one's own.

With the questions of MN 95 we move from the area of defining skillful and unskillful in general terms, and into the area of judging the skillfulness of particular actions. MN 61 [§131] is probably the most important discourse on this level of self cross-examination, in that it not only frames the questions that one should ask when judging the skillfulness of one's actions, but also places these questions in a larger context to show how they can best be used to learn from one's mistakes and purify one's actions through practice and observation.

To begin with, one's actions—physical, verbal, and mental—are to be examined at three points in time: when intending to do them, while doing them, and after they are done. This sequence relates to two important points in understanding the nature of action. It follows (a) the principle that intention constitutes the action and (b) the principle of this/that conditionality [§19, note 1], that actions can show their results both in the immediate present and over time. As we noted in Chapter Four, the way in which the Buddha encourages judging one's actions both by the intention motivating them and by the results they yield parallels the way a craftsperson judges a work in progress, learning from mistakes in a way that yields ever-improving results and heightened skill.

Second, this examination is to be done not alone, but with the help of a teacher. When one finds that one's physical or verbal actions have been unskillful, one should consult a teacher or knowledgeable friend on the path. This consultation accomplishes two things. It encourages a truthful attitude toward admitting one's mistakes, and it opens the opportunity to gain helpful advice from the knowledgeable friend. In this way the practice of skillfulness, like the act of teaching and learning in general, becomes a cooperative effort. At the same time, this consultation saves time and energy in that one is not forced to reinvent the Dhamma wheel after every mistake.

Perhaps most important of all, the context outlined in MN 61 shows the proper attitudes to bring to bear in the self cross-examination of one's actions. The first is truthfulness. Right before outlining the questions to use in self cross-examination, the Buddha uses a series of vivid images to impress on his son, Rāhula, how important truthfulness is.

> Then the Blessed One, having left a little bit of the remaining water in the water dipper, said to Ven. Rāhula, "Rāhula, do you see this

little bit of remaining water left in the water dipper?"
"Yes sir."
"That's how little of a contemplative there is in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie."
Having tossed away the little bit of remaining water, the Blessed One said to Ven. Rāhula, "Rāhula, do you see how this little bit of remaining water is tossed away?"
"Yes, sir."
"Rāhula, whatever there is of a contemplative in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie is tossed away just like that."
Having turned the water dipper upside down, the Blessed One said to Ven. Rāhula, "Rāhula, do you see how this water dipper is turned upside down?"
"Yes, sir."
"Rāhula, whatever there is of a contemplative in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie is turned upside down just like that."
Having turned the water dipper right-side up, the Blessed One said to Ven. Rāhula, "Rāhula, do you see how empty & hollow this water dipper is?"
"Yes, sir."
"Rāhula, whatever there is of a contemplative in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie is empty & hollow just like that.
"Rāhula, it's like a royal elephant: immense, pedigreed, accustomed to battles, its tusks like chariot poles. Having gone into battle, it uses its forefeet & hindfeet, its forequarters & hindquarters, its head & ears & tusks & tail, but will just hold back its trunk. The elephant trainer notices that and thinks, 'This royal elephant has not given up its life to the king.' But when the royal elephant... having gone into battle, uses its forefeet & hindfeet, its forequarters & hindquarters, its head & ears & tusks & tail & his trunk, the trainer notices that and thinks, 'This royal elephant has given up its life to the king. There is nothing it will not do.'
"In the same way, Rāhula, when anyone feels no shame in telling a deliberate lie, there is no evil, I tell you, he will not do. Thus, Rāhula, you should train yourself, 'I will not tell a deliberate lie even in jest.'" — *MN 61*

Just as with other forms of cross-questioning, self cross-examination needs to be based on the intellectual/ethical virtue of truthfulness if it is to succeed in getting at the truth of one's unskillful habits and replacing them with skillful ones.

Another quality basic to self cross-examination is conviction in four things: in the power of one's actions to yield results, in one's ability to evaluate those results, in the importance of making these judgments, and in one's ability to learn and benefit from them. We noted above that conviction on its own cannot overcome doubt about the Dhamma. Nevertheless, the process of investigation cannot get off the ground without the conviction that it is a worthwhile—or even feasible—activity. This is why the Buddha took such pains to refute those who taught doctrines, such as determinism, that deny the efficacy of action, for in a universe devoid of choice or immune to the effects of action, there is no possibility of learning from one's mistakes. This is also why he stated in AN 2:19 [§26] that if it weren't possible or beneficial to abandon unskillful behavior and develop skillful behavior, he wouldn't have advocated these courses of action.

The discourses as a whole, as in SN 48:10 and AN 10:92, define conviction as conviction in the Buddha's awakening. This does not mean conviction simply in the fact of his awakening, but also in the path that took him there. As we noted in Chapter Two, this path was a path of self cross-examination. Thus an important component of conviction in the Buddha's awakening is that self cross-examination of one's actions is not only possible, but also the only way to true happiness.

Other attitudes implicit in the strategy of self cross-examination advocated in MN 61 include compassion, in the desire not to harm oneself or others; integrity, in the ability to take responsibility for one's mistakes; and a healthy sense of shame—i.e., the shame toward unworthy actions that grows from high self-esteem.

Above all, however, this process of self cross-examination is motivated by an attitude of heedfulness: a sense of the importance of one's actions, of the dangers of unskillful action, of the rewards of developing skillful actions, and of the care needed to develop what is skillful and to abandon what is not. Without this heedfulness, the examination of one's actions would not necessarily lead to any improvement in one's behavior. One

would simply note the presence or absence of skillful qualities and leave it at that.

This is why the Buddha said that heedfulness is the root of all skillfulness [§132]. Goodness comes, not from any innate goodness in the mind, but from a keen sense of the dangers of the unskillful habits already there, and the benefits of the skillful habits that one can develop in their place. Thus many of the questions recommended on this level of self cross-examination [§§133-135] build on MN 61 by inducing an urgent sense of heedfulness in uncovering unskillful mental actions and abandoning them as quickly and effectively as possible. And it's important to note that the role of mindfulness in this self cross-examination [§133, §135] is not simply to note the presence or absence of particular mental states. Just as its role in MN 117 [§39] is to keep in mind the need to abandon the factors of the wrong path and develop the factors of the right, here its role is to stay focused relentlessly on the need to abandon any unskillful states that appear.

An important feature of the self cross-examination outlined in MN 61 is that it treats mental actions under the same framework as physical and verbal actions. In other words, events in the mind are to be regarded as a form of kamma: deriving from intentions, either skillful or not, and leading to results, either desirable or not. As with physical and verbal actions, these causal relationships can be observed and used as lessons in the pursuit of ever-higher levels of skillful mental action.

AN 10:51 [§135] shows how this can be done in a general way, highlighting with a list of cross-questions features of mental activity that are important to keep in mind for this purpose. SN 47:8 [§136] and SN 47:10 [§137] show how a similar process can be applied specifically to the practice of meditation, demonstrating how to read the mind to see which meditative approaches are working and which are not, so as to use that knowledge in developing the practice of mindfulness to ever more refined levels of concentration. Even though these passages don't list explicit questions, implicit questions obviously lie behind the points the meditator should look for in reading his or her own mind: Is the mind settling down? Are the hindrances being abandoned? If not, what alternative approaches might work in bringing the mind to stillness?

The habit of looking at meditative states in the context of kamma—intention and result—is an important habit to develop, for without it there is a tendency to view states of stillness, and especially the formless states, as embodying metaphysical principles. For example, an experience of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness can easily be misread as an experience of the oneness of the cosmos, or a ground of being. An experience of the dimension of nothingness can be misread as a confirmation that nothing really exists. But as MN 121 [§138] shows, these states are best viewed as a form of action, intentionally focused on a perception, which—because of the element of intention—inevitably involves stress or disturbance, however subtle. If, after learning how to settle into a meditative state, the meditator can focus on the questions implicit in this approach—"Where is the element of stress or disturbance here? How does it compare with the degree of disturbance in other modes of perception? What action is causing it?"—these questions can prevent any metaphysical misinterpretations of the states attained, and can instead focus on how to abandon actions that are causing subtle levels of stress. As MN 121 shows, this process can lead all the way to release. In other words, cross-questioning the results of meditation in this manner fulfills two functions: It carries the questions of MN 61 to the most subtle levels of mental action and it brings the duties of the four noble truths all the way to their completion in full awakening.

A striking feature of the Buddha's recommended course of self cross-examination in general is the frequency with which the questions are framed in terms of "I," "me," "my," and "self": "What, having been done by *me,* will be for *my* long-term benefit & happiness?" [§43] ... "This bodily action *I* want to perform—would it lead to *self*-affliction...?" [§131] ... "Are there any evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by *me* that would be an obstruction for *me* were *I* to die in the night?" [§133] ... "Can *I* fault myself with regard to *my* virtue?" ... "What am *I* becoming as the days & nights fly past?" [§134] Beginning with the first of these questions—which the Buddha identified as most basic for the development of discernment—the perception of self is used in its two primary modes: as the potential producer of happiness ("What, having been done *by me,")* and as the consumer or experiencer of happiness *("my* long-term benefit & happiness"). Anyone familiar with the Buddha's teachings on not-self

might find this way of framing questions strange, and yet it is not merely an artifact of grammatical conventions. These two modes of self-perception surround every desire: the sense that I—or those I cherish—will benefit from achieving the desired result (this is the "consumer"), and the sense that I (as the "producer") will need to possess powers to bring it about. Because the path factor of right effort involves generating desire to develop skillful qualities and abandon unskillful ones, it inevitably involves the production of these two modes of self in a skillful, capable form. And passages in the discourses explicitly recommend doing just that.

First, "I" as the consumer of happiness:

> "And what is the self as a governing principle? There is the case where a monk, having gone to a wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, reflects on this: 'It's not for the sake of robes that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; it's not for the sake of alms food, for the sake of lodgings, or for the sake of this or that state of [future] becoming that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness. Simply that I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress, [and I hope,] "Perhaps the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!" Now, if I were to seek the same sort of sensual pleasures that I abandoned in going forth from home into homelessness—or a worse sort—that would not be fitting for me.' So he reflects on this: 'My persistence will be aroused & not lax; my mindfulness established & not confused; my body calm & not aroused; my mind centered & unified.' Having made his self his governing principle, he abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is unblameworthy, and looks after himself in a pure way. This is called the self as a governing principle." — *AN 3:40*

And then "I" as the producer of happiness:

> [Ven. Ānanda:] "'This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it's by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case,

> sister, where a monk hears, 'The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the fermentations, has entered & remains in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.' The thought occurs to him, 'The monk named such-&-such, they say, through the ending of the fermentations, has entered & remains in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now. Then why not me?' Then, at a later time, he abandons conceit, having relied on conceit." — *AN 4:159*

As these examples show, perceptions of self—if used skillfully—are an important motivator for developing heedfulness and pursuing the process of self cross-examination that fosters skillfulness in one's thoughts, words, and deeds. In the terms of Ven. Khemaka's analogy [§81], a skillful sense of "I am" is like the salt earth or lye or cow-dung used to wash a dirty cloth. However, in this process of self cross-examination, the perception of self is not the prime focus of inquiry. Instead, the questions shift the focus from concern for self to concern for mastering the principle of cause and effect as it governs the results of actions.

At the same time, the questions help blur the line between concern for one's own happiness and concern for the happiness of others. MN 61 recommends avoiding not only actions that would lead to self-affliction, but also those that would lead to the affliction of others, or of both. The qualities encouraged by the inquiry in AN 10:51—being "uncovetous, without thoughts of ill will, free of sloth & drowsiness, not restless, gone beyond uncertainty, not angry, with unsoiled thoughts, with [one's] body unaroused, with persistence aroused, & concentrated"—benefit not only the person practicing but also all the people with whom he or she comes into contact. The same holds true for the practices of generosity and virtue, on which the practice of meditation is based. Thus happiness is not viewed as a zero-sum prospect. The more skillful one becomes, the wider the happiness spread by one's skill, and the more blurred the lines originally drawn by the categories of objectification between self and others.

Because the process of self cross-examination uses perceptions of self in this way to focus primary attention on actions, it inevitably leads the

meditator to start viewing the perceptions of self as a type of action: what the texts call "I-making" and "my-making." Because actions are judged by their skillfulness in producing desirable results, there inevitably comes the point where the question arises: "To what extent is the activity of I-making and my-making genuinely skillful?" In the course of the practice, one has been able to recognize many unskillful ways of creating a perception of "I" and "my," and—in the process of recognizing them—to drop them for more skillful ways of identifying oneself. But, as the practice progresses, does one reach a point where any activity of I-making and my-making, regardless of how skillful, becomes an obstacle to further progress? Obviously, it has been useful in getting the mind firmly concentrated, but as MN 113 notes, if skill in the practice of concentration becomes a cause of self-exaltation, it interferes with further advances on the path. And as MN 102 [§53] notes, any sense of "I am" related to even the subtlest levels of concentration hides a remnant of clinging that stands in the way of full release.

Thus the process of self cross-examination must now turn to examine the activities of I-making and my-making to take them apart. In the terms of Ven. Khemaka's analogy, now that the salt earth or lye or cow-dung has succeeded in washing the cloth, the cloth has to be put away in a perfumed hamper so that the lingering scent of the cleaning agents will fade away. As Ven. Khemaka says, this is done by focusing on the arising and passing away of the five clinging-aggregates—the raw material both for concentrated states of mind and for the construction of any sense of self—in a way that removes any clinging around them.

The questions of self cross-examination designed to accomplish this task thus shift their framework to three perceptions—inconstancy, stress, and not-self—which are applied either to the aggregates [§140, §142] or to the sense media [§141] as they are directly experienced. In the case of the aggregates, each aggregate is examined with questions in this order: "Is this constant or inconstant?" "Inconstant." "And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?" "Stressful." "And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?" "No." To see in terms of these perceptions ultimately leads to a total abandoning of clinging for any of the aggregates

—including the perception-aggregate that accomplished this task—and the mind is released.

In the case of the sense media, the same questionnaire is applied to each sense medium, and to the events dependent on it, in this order: the internal sense medium (e.g., the eye), the corresponding external sense medium (e.g., forms), consciousness at that medium, contact at that medium, and anything that arises dependent on that contact as a mode of feeling, perception, fabrication, or consciousness. Because the five physical senses are instances of the form aggregate, this version of the questionnaire—though focused on the sense media—manages to encompass all five aggregates as well.

Notice that although this level of cross-examination has dropped any reference to self, it has maintained the framework of skillful and unskillful action. The last question in the series does not demand the conclusion that there is no self. Instead, it asks simply whether it is fitting—skillful—to identify an inconstant, stressful event as one's self. In other words, the Buddha is not asking one to come to a metaphysical conclusion on the question, created by objectification, as to the existence or non-existence of the self. After all, as we saw in the discussion of SN 12:15 in Chapter Three, the mind on the verge of awakening doesn't see the world in terms of existence or non-existence in any event, so the question of the existence or non-existence of the self would be irrelevant. Thus, instead of pushing the questioning into the realm of objectification, the Buddha is simply pushing the line of inquiry about skillful action to its subtlest level—the act of self-identification—at the same time raising the pragmatic standard of what counts as skillful so as to abandon all acts of self-identification and attain total freedom.

This point is made dramatically in MN 109 [§142]—which we identified above as the concluding passage where the Buddha puts aside a question and proceeds to lead his listeners in the process of self cross-examination leading to release. In this passage, a monk—hearing that the five aggregates are not-self—asks himself the sort of question that is often heard in introductory academic courses on Buddhism: "If there is no self, then…" In this case, the monk's question is: "So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is

not-self?" In other words, the monk apparently sees in the not-self teaching an opening to deny that anyone will receive the results of kamma—a notion that can short-circuit any attempt to abandon unskillful kamma and to develop skillful kamma in its place. The Buddha, reading the monk's mind, denounces the question and, putting it aside, engages all the monks in the line of cross-questioning introduced in SN 22:59 [§140]. In doing so, he is demonstrating the proper way to use the perception of not-self: not to draw metaphysical conclusions, but to question the skillfulness of the actions of I-making and my-making, so that those actions can be dropped and liberation found. This is precisely what happens during this discourse. Sixty monks gain total release.

A similar process is recorded more systematically in AN 9:36 [§139]. There the Buddha recommends that when a meditator has mastered any of the meditative absorptions, he/she should look for the way in which that absorption is composed of the activities of the aggregates. Once these activities are detected, they should be viewed not only as inconstant, stressful, and not-self, but also as "a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness." In other words, one should learn to regard them in a way that induces a sense of disenchantment and dispassion for them, so that one will lose all interest in continuing to engage in the attempt to find happiness in anything at all that is intended or fabricated. (A similar point is made at the end of MN 121 [§138.]) Because all other avenues toward happiness have now been shut off, the mind inclines toward a happiness totally unfabricated. If it can maintain that stance, an opening to full awakening can occur.

Now, it is entirely possible that the mind pursuing this line of cross-questioning may not have the powers of concentration and discernment needed to abandon all clinging. As AN 9:36 points out, even if one can maintain a stance inclined toward the deathless, a remnant of passion and delight for that Dhamma might still prevent full awakening, leading instead to the penultimate attainment of non-return. And as MN 106 shows, there are cases where the perception of not-self doesn't even lead that far, arriving instead only at refined states of concentration. Thus the final set of questions in self cross-examination gives guidelines for evaluating one's attainment [§143, §144]. Although the criteria for coming to the conclusion that one is an arahant, as phrased in §144, are

not expressed as questions, there are questions implicit behind them. And although the evaluation employs the terms "I am," this is one case where this phrase is purely a grammatical convention, for the arahant has no further use for conceit at all.

In this way, the process of cross-questioning functions not only to yield progress on the path, but also to evaluate the goal after it is reached. In other words, there is no level of the practice where it is inappropriate to pose questions in a skillful way. Anything that cannot stand up to questioning can't be genuine Dhamma; if anything is genuine Dhamma, it is sure to pass the test.

As we saw in Chapter Two, the Buddha's quest for awakening was primarily a process of cross-questioning in various forms. The same is true for anyone following the Buddha's path. And as a number of discourses show, the various forms of cross-questioning are mutually supportive in this endeavor. A primary example is MN 109 [§142]: It begins with an anonymous monk cross-questioning the Buddha on the meaning of his teachings. The Buddha's openness to questioning, in turn, provides an atmosphere conducive for the monks to gain awakening as he cross-questions them on the activity of I-making and my-making occurring in their minds.

Three other discourses show how the Buddha's students were also able to combine various forms of cross-questioning to good effect. In MN 84 [§100], King Koravya cross-questions Ven. Raṭṭhapāla about the meaning of the Buddha's teachings that led the latter to ordain. The king is portrayed as an amiable but very unenlightened individual—something of a spiritual innocent. To make his points, Ven. Raṭṭhapāla is forced to draw simple examples from the king's own life and to cross-question him about them. And as often happens when innocent people ask questions on basic matters, the discussion reveals a fundamental point—in this case, the parallel between the facts of aging, illness, and death on the one hand, and the perceptions of inconstancy, stress, and not-self on the other. Nowhere else in the discourses is this parallel drawn so clearly.

In MN 146 [§77], Ven. Nandaka teaches a group of nuns with what he calls a "cross-questioning talk," inviting them to question him on any statement they don't understand. None of them take advantage of the invitation but, as they remark, they appreciate his openness. He then

employs two other types of cross-questioning: (1) asking them to examine the activity of I-making with regard to the six sense media; and (2) cross-questioning them on the analogies with which he illustrates his points. The discourse states that the first time he does this, the nuns do not achieve awakening. However, the Buddha asks him to repeat the talk two weeks later, and this time even the most backward of the nuns achieves stream-entry.

A similar atmosphere of openness prevails in SN 22:89 [§81], where a group of elder monks cross-question Ven. Khemaka about his level of attainment—apparently a common occurrence among the monks when one of them was seriously ill. As they ask him to explain what is essentially the non-returner's remnant of conceit, he illustrates his points with hypothetical analogies, on which he cross-questions them. The process proves so clarifying that monks on both sides of the exchange—sixty of the elders and Ven. Khemaka himself—achieve full awakening.

These examples illustrate three important points. The first is that the various modes of cross-questioning are mutually reinforcing, establishing an atmosphere of respect, trust, and openness in which the responsible exchange of ideas is conducive to clarity. The second is that, although self cross-examination is the primary mode leading directly to awakening, other modes of cross-questioning—such as questioning a speaker and exploring hypotheticals—can lead directly to awakening as well. However, it is likely that these modes of cross-questioning inspired the individuals involved to engage simultaneously in self cross-examination, reflecting on how the lessons they were learning applied directly to what they were experiencing in their minds.

Finally, these examples show that the Buddha was able to pass some of his skill in cross-questioning on to his students, as a distinctive rhetorical approach conducive to keeping the quest for awakening alive.

READINGS

§ 128. [Kāpadika Bhāradvāja:] "But to what extent is there an awakening to the truth? To what extent does one awaken to the truth? We ask Master Gotama about awakening to the truth."

"There is the case, Bhāradvāja, where a monk lives in dependence on a certain village or town. Then a householder or householder's son goes to him and observes him with regard to three qualities—qualities based on greed, qualities based on aversion, qualities based on delusion: 'Are there in this venerable one any such qualities based on greed that, with his mind overcome by these qualities, he might say, "I know," while not knowing, or say, "I see," while not seeing; or that he might urge another to act in a way that was for his/her long-term harm & suffering?' As he observes him, he comes to know, 'There are in this venerable one no such qualities based on greed.... His bodily behavior & verbal behavior are those of one not greedy. And the Dhamma he teaches is deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. This Dhamma can't easily be taught by a person who's greedy.'

"When, on observing that the monk is purified with regard to qualities based on greed, he next observes him with regard to qualities based on aversion: 'Are there in this venerable one any such qualities based on aversion that, with his mind overcome by these qualities, he might say, "I know," while not knowing, or say, "I see," while not seeing; or that he might urge another to act in a way that was for his/her long-term harm & suffering?' As he observes him, he comes to know, 'There are in this venerable one no such qualities based on aversion.... His bodily behavior & verbal behavior are those of one not aversive. And the Dhamma he teaches is deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. This Dhamma can't easily be taught by a person who's aversive.'

"When, on observing that the monk is purified with regard to qualities based on aversion, he next observes him with regard to qualities based on delusion: 'Are there in this venerable one any such qualities based on delusion that, with his mind overcome by these qualities, he might say, "I know," while not knowing, or say, "I see," while not seeing; or that he might urge another to act in a way that was for his/her long-term harm & suffering?' As he observes him, he comes to know, 'There are in this venerable one no such qualities based on delusion.... His bodily behavior & verbal behavior are those of one not deluded. And the Dhamma he teaches is deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the

scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. This Dhamma can't easily be taught by a person who's deluded.'

"When, on observing that the monk is purified with regard to qualities based on delusion, he places conviction in him. With the arising of conviction, he visits him & grows close to him. Growing close to him, he lends ear. Lending ear, he hears the Dhamma. Hearing the Dhamma, he remembers it. Remembering it, he penetrates the meaning of those dhammas. Penetrating the meaning, he comes to an agreement through pondering those dhammas. There being an agreement through pondering those dhammas, desire arises. With the arising of desire, he becomes willing. Willing, he contemplates [lit: "weighs," "compares"]. Contemplating, he makes an exertion. Exerting himself, he both realizes the ultimate meaning of the truth with his body and sees by penetrating it with discernment.

"To this extent, Bhāradvāja, there is an awakening to the truth. To this extent one awakens to the truth. I describe this as an awakening to the truth. But it is not yet the final attainment of the truth."

"Yes, Master Gotama, to this extent there is an awakening to the truth. To this extent one awakens to the truth. We regard this as an awakening to the truth. But to what extent is there the final attainment of the truth? To what extent does one finally attain the truth? We ask Master Gotama about the final attainment of the truth."

"The cultivation, development, & pursuit of those very same qualities: To this extent, Bhāradvāja, there is the final attainment of the truth. To this extent one finally attains the truth. I describe this as the final attainment of the truth."

"Yes, Master Gotama, to this extent there is the final attainment of the truth. To this extent one finally attains the truth. We regard this as the final attainment of the truth. But what quality is most helpful for the final attainment of the truth? We ask Master Gotama about the quality most helpful for the final attainment of the truth."

"Exertion is most helpful for the final attainment of the truth, Bhāradvāja. If one didn't make an exertion, one wouldn't finally attain the truth. Because one makes an exertion, one finally attains the truth. Therefore, exertion is most helpful for the final attainment of the truth."

“But what quality is most helpful for exertion? We ask Master Gotama about the quality most helpful for exertion.”

“Contemplating is most helpful for exertion, Bhāradvāja. If one didn’t contemplate, one wouldn’t make an exertion. Because one contemplates, one makes an exertion. Therefore, contemplating is most helpful for exertion.”

“But what quality is most helpful for contemplating?…”

“Being willing…. If one weren’t willing, one wouldn’t contemplate….”

“But what quality is most helpful for being willing?…”

“Desire…. If desire didn’t arise, one wouldn’t be willing….”

“But what quality is most helpful for desire?…”

“Coming to an agreement through pondering dhammas…. If one didn’t come to an agreement through pondering dhammas, desire wouldn’t arise….”

“But what quality is most helpful for coming to an agreement through pondering dhammas?…”

“Penetrating the meaning…. If one didn’t penetrate the meaning, one wouldn’t come to an agreement through pondering dhammas….”

“But what quality is most helpful for penetrating the meaning?…”

“Remembering the Dhamma…. If one didn’t remember the Dhamma, one wouldn’t penetrate the meaning….”

“But what quality is most helpful for remembering the Dhamma?… ”

“Hearing the Dhamma…. If one didn’t hear the Dhamma, one wouldn’t remember the Dhamma….”

“But what quality is most helpful for hearing the Dhamma?… ”

“Lending ear…. If one didn’t lend ear, one wouldn’t hear the Dhamma….”

“But what quality is most helpful for lending ear?… ”

“Growing close…. If one didn’t grow close, one wouldn’t lend ear….”

“But what quality is most helpful for growing close?… ”

“Visiting…. If one didn’t visit, one wouldn’t grow close….”

“But what quality is most helpful for visiting? We ask Master Gotama about the quality most helpful for visiting.”

"Conviction is most helpful for visiting, Bhāradvāja. If conviction [in a person] didn't arise, one wouldn't visit [that person]. Because conviction arises, one visits. Therefore, conviction is most helpful for visiting."

"We have asked Master Gotama about safeguarding the truth, and Master Gotama has answered about safeguarding the truth. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified. We have asked Master Gotama about awakening to the truth, and Master Gotama has answered about awakening to the truth. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified. We have asked Master Gotama about finally attaining the truth, and Master Gotama has answered about finally attaining the truth. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified. We have asked Master Gotama about the quality most helpful for finally attaining the truth, and Master Gotama has answered about the quality most helpful for finally attaining the truth. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified. Whatever we have asked Master Gotama, Master Gotama has answered it. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified.

"We used to think, 'Who are these bald-headed "contemplatives," these menial, dark offspring of [Brahmā,] the Kinsman's feet? Who are they to know the Dhamma?' But now Master Gotama has inspired within us a contemplative-love for contemplatives, a contemplative-confidence in contemplatives, a contemplative-respect for contemplatives. Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the community of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life." — *MN 95*

§ 129. "Gotamī, the qualities of which you may know, 'These qualities lead to passion, not to dispassion; to being fettered, not to being unfettered; to accumulating, not to shedding; to self-aggrandizement, not to modesty; to discontent, not to contentment; to entanglement, not to seclusion; to laziness, not to aroused persistence; to being burdensome, not to being unburdensome': You may hold categorically, 'This is not the Dhamma, this is not the Vinaya, this is not the Teacher's instruction.'

"As for the qualities of which you may know, 'These qualities lead to dispassion, not to passion; to being unfettered, not to being fettered; to shedding, not to accumulating; to modesty, not to self-aggrandizement; to contentment, not to discontent; to seclusion, not to entanglement; to aroused persistence, not to laziness; to being unburdensome, not to being burdensome': You may hold categorically, 'This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction.'" — *AN 8:53*

§ 130. "Upāli, the qualities of which you may know, 'These qualities do not lead to utter disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, nor to unbinding': You may hold categorically, 'This is not the Dhamma, this is not the Vinaya, this is not the Teacher's instruction.'

"As for the qualities of which you may know, 'These qualities lead to utter disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding': You may hold categorically, 'This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction.'" — *AN 7:80*

§ 131. "What do you think, Rāhula? What is a mirror for?"

"For reflection, sir."

"In the same way, Rāhula, bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions are to be done with repeated reflection.

"Whenever you want to perform a bodily action, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily action I want to perform—would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily action, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it would lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it would be an unskillful bodily action with painful consequences, painful results, then any bodily action of that sort is absolutely unfit for you to do. But if on reflection you know that it would not cause affliction... it would be a skillful bodily action with happy consequences, happy results, then any bodily action of that sort is fit for you to do.

"While you are performing a bodily action, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily action I am doing—is it leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily action, with

painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it is leading to self-affliction, to affliction of others, or both... you should give it up. But if on reflection you know that it is not... you may continue with it.

"Having performed a bodily action, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily action I did—did it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Was it an unskillful bodily action, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful bodily action with painful consequences, painful results, then you should confess it, reveal it, lay it open to the Teacher or to a knowledgeable companion in the holy life. Having confessed it... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful bodily action with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful qualities.

[Similarly with verbal actions.]

"Whenever you want to perform a mental action, you should reflect on it: 'This mental action I want to perform—would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful mental action, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it would lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it would be an unskillful mental action with painful consequences, painful results, then any mental action of that sort is absolutely unfit for you to do. But if on reflection you know that it would not cause affliction... it would be a skillful mental action with happy consequences, happy results, then any mental action of that sort is fit for you to do.

"While you are performing a mental action, you should reflect on it: 'This mental action I am doing—is it leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful mental action, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it is leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both... you should give it up. But if on reflection you know that it is not... you may continue with it.

"Having performed a mental action, you should reflect on it: 'This mental action I did—did it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Was it an unskillful mental action, with painful

consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful mental action with painful consequences, painful results, then you should feel distressed, ashamed, & disgusted with it. Feeling distressed... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful mental action with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful qualities.

"Rāhula, all those contemplatives & brahmans in the course of the past who purified their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions, did it through repeated reflection on their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions in just this way.

"All those contemplatives & brahmans in the course of the future who will purify their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions, will do it through repeated reflection on their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions in just this way.

"All those contemplatives & brahmans at present who purify their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions, do it through repeated reflection on their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions in just this way.

"Thus, Rāhula, you should train yourself: 'I will purify my bodily actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my verbal actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my mental actions through repeated reflection.' That's how you should train yourself." — *MN 61* *[See also §138]*

§ 132. "Just as the footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant's footprint is reckoned the foremost among them in terms of size; in the same way, all skillful qualities are rooted in heedfulness, converge in heedfulness, and heedfulness is reckoned the foremost among them." — *AN 10:15*

§ 133. "Monks, mindfulness of death—when developed & pursued—is of great fruit & great benefit. It gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end. And how is mindfulness of death developed & pursued so that it is of great fruit & great benefit, gains a footing in the deathless, and has the deathless as its final end?

"There is the case where a monk, as day departs and night returns, reflects: 'Many are the [possible] causes of my death. A snake might bite me, a scorpion might sting me, a centipede might bite me. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me. Stumbling, I might fall; my food, digested, might trouble me; my bile might be provoked, my phlegm... piercing wind forces [in the body] might be provoked. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me.' Then the monk should investigate: 'Are there any evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by me that would be an obstruction for me were I to die in the night?'

"If, on reflecting, he realizes that there are evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die in the night, then he should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head, in the same way the monk should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

"But if, on reflecting, he realizes that there are no evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die in the night, then for that very reason he should dwell in joy & rapture, training himself day & night in skillful qualities.

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk, as night departs and day returns, reflects: 'Many are the [possible] causes of my death. A snake might bite me, a scorpion might sting me, a centipede might bite me. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me. Stumbling, I might fall; my food, digested, might trouble me; my bile might be provoked, my phlegm... piercing wind forces [in the body] might be provoked. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me.' Then the monk should investigate: 'Are there any evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by me that would be an obstruction for me were I to die during the day?'

"If, on reflecting, he realizes that there are evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die

during the day, then he should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head, in the same way the monk should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

"But if, on reflecting, he realizes that there are no evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die during the day, then for that very reason he should dwell in joy & rapture, training himself day & night in skillful qualities.

"This, monks, is how mindfulness of death is developed & pursued so that it is of great fruit & great benefit, gains a footing in the deathless, and has the deathless as its final end." — *AN 6:20*

§ 134. "There are these ten things that a person gone-forth should reflect on often. Which ten?

"'I have become casteless': A person gone forth should often reflect on this.

"'My life is dependent on others'....

"'My behavior should be different [from that of householders]'....

"'Can I fault myself with regard to my virtue?'...

"'Can my knowledgeable fellows in the holy life, on close examination, fault me with regard to my virtue?'...

"'I will grow different, separate from all that is dear & appealing to me'....

"'I am the owner of actions *(kamma),* heir to actions, born of actions, related through actions, and have actions as my arbitrator. Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir'....

"'What am I becoming as the days & nights fly past?'...

"'Do I delight in an empty dwelling?'...

"'Have I attained a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, such that—when my fellows in the

holy life question me in the last days of my life—I won't feel abashed?': A person gone forth should often reflect on this.

"These are the ten things that a person gone-forth should reflect on often." — *AN 10:48*

§ 135. "Even if a monk is not skilled in the ways of the minds of others [not skilled in reading the minds of others], he should train himself: 'I will be skilled in reading my own mind.'

"And how is a monk skilled in reading his own mind? Imagine a young woman—or man—fond of adornment, examining the image of her own face in a bright, clean mirror or bowl of clear water: If she saw any dirt or blemish there, she would try to remove it. If she saw no dirt or blemish there, she would be pleased, her resolves fulfilled: 'How fortunate I am! How clean I am!' In the same way, a monk's self-examination is very productive in terms of skillful qualities [if he conducts it in this way]: 'Do I usually remain covetous or not? With thoughts of ill will or not? Overcome by sloth & drowsiness or not? Restless or not? Uncertain or gone beyond uncertainty? Angry or not? With soiled thoughts or unsoiled thoughts? With my body aroused or unaroused? Lazy or with persistence aroused? Unconcentrated or concentrated?'

"If, on examination, a monk knows, 'I usually remain covetous, with thoughts of ill will, overcome by sloth & drowsiness, restless, uncertain, angry, with soiled thoughts, with my body aroused, lazy, or unconcentrated,' then he should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head; in the same way, the monk should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

"But if, on examination, a monk knows, 'I usually remain uncovetous, without thoughts of ill will, free of sloth & drowsiness, not restless, gone beyond uncertainty, not angry, with unsoiled thoughts, with my body unaroused, with persistence aroused, & concentrated,' then his duty is to

make an effort in maintaining those very same skillful qualities further for the ending of fermentations." — *AN 10:51*

§ 136. "Suppose that a foolish, inexperienced, unskillful cook has presented a king or a king's minister with various kinds of curry: mainly sour, mainly bitter, mainly peppery, mainly sweet, alkaline or non-alkaline, salty or non-salty. He doesn't read [lit: "pick up the theme of"] his master, thinking, 'Today my master likes this curry, or he reaches out for that curry, or he takes a lot of this curry, or he praises that curry'.... As a result, he isn't rewarded with clothing or wages or gifts. Why is that? Because the foolish, inexperienced, unskillful cook doesn't read his own master.

"In the same way, there are cases where a foolish, inexperienced, unskillful monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on the body in & of itself, his mind doesn't become concentrated, his defilements [Comm: the five hindrances] aren't abandoned. He doesn't read that fact. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on qualities in & of themselves, his mind doesn't become concentrated, his defilements aren't abandoned. He doesn't read that fact. As a result, he isn't rewarded with a pleasant abiding here & now, nor with mindfulness & alertness. Why is that? Because the foolish, inexperienced, unskillful monk doesn't read his own mind.

"Now suppose that a wise, experienced, skillful cook has presented a king or a king's minister with various kinds of curry.... He reads his master, thinking, 'Today my master likes this curry, or he reaches out for that curry, or he takes a lot of this curry or he praises that curry'.... As a result, he is rewarded with clothing, wages, & gifts. Why is that? Because the wise, experienced, skillful cook reads his own master.

"In the same way, there are cases where a wise, experienced, skillful monk remains focused on the body in & of itself... feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on qualities in & of themselves, his

mind becomes concentrated, his defilements are abandoned. He reads that fact. As a result, he is rewarded with a pleasant abiding here & now, together with mindfulness & alertness. Why is that? Because the wise, experienced, skillful monk reads his own mind." — *SN 47:8*

§ 137. "Ānanda, if a monk or nun remains with mind well established in the four establishings of mindfulness, he/she may be expected to realize greater-than-ever distinction.

"There is the case of a monk who remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on the body in & of itself, a fever based on the body arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme [Comm: such as recollection of the Buddha]. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, delight arises within him. In one who feels delight, rapture arises. In one whose mind is enraptured, the body grows serene. His body serene, he feels pleasure. As he feels pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, 'I have attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw [my mind from the inspiring theme].' He withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns, 'I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.'

"Furthermore, he remains focused on feelings... mind... qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on qualities in & of themselves, a fever based on qualities arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, delight arises within him. In one who feels delight, rapture arises. In one whose mind is enraptured, the body grows serene. His body serene, he is sensitive to pleasure. As he feels pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, 'I have attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw.' He withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns, 'I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.'

"This, Ānanda, is development based on directing. And what is development based on not directing? A monk, when not directing his

mind to external things, discerns, 'My mind is not directed to external things. It is not attentive to what is in front or behind. It is released & undirected. And furthermore, I remain focused on the body in & of itself. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.'

"When not directing his mind to external things, he discerns, 'My mind is not directed to external things. It is not attentive to what is in front or behind. It is released & undirected. And furthermore, I remain focused on feelings... mind... qualities in & of themselves. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.'

"This, Ānanda, is development based on not directing.

"Now, Ānanda, I have taught you development based on directing and development based on not directing. What a teacher should do out of compassion for his disciples, seeking their benefit, that I have done for you. Over there are [places to sit at] the roots of trees. Over there are empty dwellings. Do jhāna, Ānanda. Don't be heedless. Don't be remorseful in the future. That is our instruction to you all." — *SN 47:10*

§ 138. "Ānanda, just as this palace of Migāra's mother [in the monastery constructed by Lady Visākhā near Sāvatthī] is empty of elephants, cattle, & mares, empty of gold & silver, empty of assemblies of women & men, and there is only this non-emptiness—the singleness based on the community of monks; even so, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception [mental label] of village, not attending to the perception of human being—attends to the singleness based on the perception of wilderness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its perception of wilderness.

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of village... that would exist based on the perception of human being, are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of village. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of human being. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, & pure.

"Furthermore, Ānanda, the monk—not attending to the perception of human being, not attending to the perception of wilderness—attends to the singleness based on the perception of earth. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its perception of earth. Just as a bull's hide is stretched free from wrinkles with a hundred stakes, even so—without attending to all the ridges & hollows, the river ravines, the tracts of stumps & thorns, the craggy irregularities of this earth—he attends to the singleness based on the perception of earth. His mind... settles & indulges in its perception of earth.

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of human being... that would exist based on the perception of wilderness, are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of earth.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of human being... empty of the perception of wilderness. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of earth.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, & pure.

"Furthermore, Ānanda, the monk—not attending to the perception of wilderness, not attending to the perception of earth—attends to the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space.... [and so on through the four formless attainments. Then:]

"Furthermore, Ānanda, the monk—not attending to the perception of the dimension of nothingness, not attending to the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—attends to the singleness based on the themeless concentration of awareness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its themeless concentration of awareness.

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of the dimension of nothingness... on the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, are not present. And there is only this modicum of disturbance: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty....[etc.]'

"Furthermore, Ānanda, the monk—not attending to the perception of the dimension of nothingness, not attending to the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—attends to the singleness based on the themeless concentration of awareness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its themeless concentration of awareness.

"He discerns that 'This themeless concentration of awareness is fabricated & mentally fashioned.' And he discerns that 'Whatever is fabricated & mentally fashioned is inconstant & subject to cessation.' For him—thus knowing, thus seeing—the mind is released from the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming, the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the fermentation of sensuality... the fermentation of becoming... the fermentation of ignorance, are not present. And there is only this modicum of disturbance: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the fermentation of sensuality... the fermentation of becoming... the fermentation of ignorance. And there is just this non-emptiness: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, pure—superior & unsurpassed."
— *MN 121*

§ 139. "Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-

self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of fermentations. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the first five fetters [self-identity views, grasping at habits & practices, uncertainty, sensual passion, and irritation]—he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world....

[Similarly with the second, third, and fourth jhāna.]

".... Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of fermentations. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this very Dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the first five fetters—he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world....

[Similarly with the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness and the dimension of nothingness.]" — *AN 9:36*

§ 140. "What do you think, monks? Is form constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"... Is feeling constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."...

"... Is perception constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."...

"... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."...

"What do you think, monks? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form is to be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Any feeling whatsoever....

"Any perception whatsoever....

"Any fabrications whatsoever....

"Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every consciousness is to be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.'

He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the group of five monks delighted in the Blessed One's words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of the group of five monks, through no clinging [not being sustained], were released from fermentations. — *SN 22:59*

§ 141. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Sāvatthī, in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then, as he was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in the Blessed One's awareness: "The qualities that ripen in release have ripened in Rāhula. What if I were to lead Rāhula further to the ending of fermentations?"

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, put on his robes and, carrying his bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvatthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvatthī, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he said to Ven. Rāhula, "Fetch your sitting cloth, Rāhula. We will go to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Rāhula, carrying his sitting cloth, followed behind the Blessed One. Now at that time, many thousands of devas were following behind the Blessed One, (thinking,) "Today the Blessed One will lead Ven. Rāhula further to the ending of fermentations."

Then the Blessed One, having plunged into the Grove of the Blind, sat down on a seat made ready at the foot of a tree. Ven. Rāhula, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side.

As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "What do you think, Rāhula? Is the eye constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"What do you think? Are forms constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Is eye-consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Is eye-contact constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: Is it constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the ear constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord” …

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the nose constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord” …

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the tongue constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord” …

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the body constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord” …

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the intellect constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Are ideas constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Is intellect-consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Is intellect-contact constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: Is it constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“Seeing thus, Rāhula, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with eye-consciousness, disenchanted with eye-contact. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: With that too he grows disenchanted.

“He grows disenchanted with the ear…

“He grows disenchanted with the nose…

“He grows disenchanted with the tongue…

“He grows disenchanted with the body…

“He grows disenchanted with the intellect, disenchanted with ideas, disenchanted with intellect-consciousness, disenchanted with intellect-contact. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: With that too he grows disenchanted. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Rāhula delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, Ven. Rāhula’s mind, through lack of clinging [not being sustained], was released from fermentations. And to those many thousands of devas there arose the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.” — *MN 147*

§ 142. [A certain monk] asked the Blessed One a further question: "Knowing in what way, seeing in what way, is there—with regard to this body endowed with consciousness, and with regard to all external signs—no longer any I-making, or my-making, or obsession with conceit?"

"Monk, one sees any form whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—every form, as it actually is with right discernment: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"One sees any feeling whatsoever... any perception whatsoever... any fabrications whatsoever...

"One sees any consciousness whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—every consciousness—as it actually is with right discernment: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Monk, knowing in this way, seeing in this way, there is—with regard to this body endowed with consciousness, and with regard to all external signs—no longer any I-making, or my-making, or obsession with conceit."

Now at that moment this line of thinking appeared in the awareness of a certain monk: "So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?"

Then the Blessed One, realizing with his awareness the line of thinking in that monk's awareness, addressed the monks: "It's possible that a senseless person—immersed in ignorance, overcome with craving—might think that he could outsmart the Teacher's message in this way: 'So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?' Now, monks, haven't I trained you in cross-questioning with regard to this & that topic here & there? What do you think? Is form constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"... Is feeling constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."....

"... Is perception constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."....

"... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."....

"What do you think, monks? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form is to be seen as it actually is with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Any feeling whatsoever....

"Any perception whatsoever....

"Any fabrications whatsoever....

"Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every consciousness is to be seen as it actually is with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.'

He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of sixty monks, through no clinging [not being sustained], were released from fermentations. — *MN 109*

§ 143. "There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, considers thus: 'Is there any internal enthrallment unabandoned in me that, enthralled with which, my enthralled mind would not know or see things as they have come to be?' If a monk is enthralled with sensual passion, then his mind is enthralled. If he is enthralled with ill will, then his mind is enthralled. If he is enthralled with sloth and torpor, then his mind is enthralled. If he is enthralled with restlessness and anxiety, then his mind is enthralled. If he is enthralled with uncertainty, then his mind is enthralled. If a monk is absorbed in speculation about this world, then his mind is enthralled. If a monk is absorbed in speculation about the other world, then his mind is enthralled. If a monk is given to arguing and quarreling and disputing, stabbing others with weapons of the mouth, then his mind is enthralled.

"He discerns that, 'There is no enthrallment unabandoned in me that, enthralled with which, my enthralled mind would not know and see things as they have come to be. My mind is well directed for awakening to the truths.' This is the first knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: 'When I cultivate, develop, and pursue this view, do I personally obtain serenity, do I personally obtain unbinding?'

"He discerns that, 'When I cultivate, develop, and pursue this view, I personally obtain serenity, I personally obtain unbinding.' This is the second knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: 'Is there, outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya], any other contemplative or brahman endowed with the sort of view with which I am endowed?'

"He discerns that, 'There is no other contemplative or brahman outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] endowed with the sort of view with which I am endowed.' This is the third knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: 'Am I endowed with the character of a person consummate in view?' What is the character of a person consummate in view? This is the character of a person consummate in view: Although he may commit some kind of offence for which a means of rehabilitation has been laid down, still he immediately confesses, reveals, and discloses it to the Teacher or to wise companions in the holy life; having done that, he undertakes restraint for the future. Just as a young, tender infant lying on his back, when he has hit a live ember with his hand or his foot, immediately draws back; in the same way, this is the character of a person consummate in view: Although he may commit some kind of offence for which a means of rehabilitation has been laid down, still he immediately confesses, reveals, and discloses it to the Teacher or to wise companions in the holy life; having done that, he undertakes restraint for the future.

"He discerns that, 'I am endowed with the character of a person consummate in view.' This is the fourth knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: 'Am I endowed with the character of a person consummate in view?' What is the character of a person consummate in view? This is the character of a person consummate in view: Although he may be active in the various affairs of his companions in the holy life, he still has a keen regard for training in heightened virtue, training in heightened mind, & training in heightened discernment. Just as a cow with a new calf watches after her calf all the while she is grazing on grass, in the same way, this is the character of a person consummate in view: Although he may be active in the various affairs of his companions in the holy life, he still has a keen regard for training in heightened virtue, training in heightened mind, & training in heightened discernment.

"He discerns that, 'I am endowed with the character of a person consummate in view.' This is the fifth knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: 'Am I endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view?' What is the strength of a person consummate in view? This is the strength of a person consummate in view: When the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata is being taught, he heeds it, gives it attention, engages it with all his mind, hears the Dhamma with eager ears.

"He discerns that, 'I am endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view.' This is the sixth knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: 'Am I endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view?' What is the strength of a person consummate in view? This is the strength of a person consummate in view: When the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata is being taught, he gains understanding in the meaning, gains understanding in the Dhamma, gains gladness connected with the Dhamma.

"He discerns that, 'I am endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view.' This is the seventh knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

"A disciple of the noble ones thus possessed of seven factors has well examined the character for the realization of the fruit of stream entry. A disciple of the noble ones thus possessed of seven factors is endowed with the fruit of stream entry." — *MN 48*

§ 144. "There is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner [i.e., a stream-winner, once-returner, or non-returner], can discern that 'I am a learner,' and whereby a monk who is an adept [i.e., an arahant], standing at the level of an adept, can discern that 'I am an adept.'

"And what is the manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that 'I am a learner'? There is the case where a monk is a learner. He discerns, as it has come to be, that *'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.'* This is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that 'I am a learner.'

"Furthermore, the monk who is a learner reflects, 'Is there outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] any contemplative or brahman who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One?' And he discerns, 'No, there is no contemplative or brahman outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One.' This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that 'I am a learner.'

"Furthermore, the monk who is a learner discerns the five faculties: the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment. Having penetrated them with discernment, he sees what their destiny, excellence, rewards, & consummation are, but he does not dwell touching them with his body. This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that 'I am a learner.'

"And what is the manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that 'I am an adept'? There is the case where a monk who is an adept discerns the five faculties: the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment. Having penetrated them with discernment, he sees what their destiny, excellence, rewards, & consummation are, and he dwells touching them with his body. This is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that 'I am an adept.'

"Furthermore, the monk who is an adept discerns the six sense faculties: the faculty of the eye... ear... nose... tongue... body... intellect. He discerns, 'These six sense faculties will cease entirely, everywhere, & in every way without remainder, and no other set of six sense faculties will arise anywhere or in any way.' This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that 'I am an adept.'" — *SN 48:53*

Chapter Seven

Questions Put Aside: I

Given that the Buddha's primary focus as a teacher was on distinguishing whether actions are skillful or unskillful in leading to awakening, and given that the activities of asking and answering a question count as actions, it is only natural that he would have to focus on the issue of which questions are skillful to answer and which are not. With some questions, he concluded that it would be unskillful to answer them in certain situations, but not in others, largely for reasons of etiquette. With other questions, he concluded that it would be unskillful to answer them in any situation because they were inherently unconducive to awakening.

The questions the Buddha put aside thus fall into two distinct categories. The first consists of questions that can have true and beneficial answers, but which the Buddha sometimes put aside out of considerations of time and place. The second category consists of questions for which there is no beneficial answer—in some cases, the issue is left open as to whether there even *is* a true or a false answer—so the Buddha put them aside regardless of time or place. We will discuss the first category in this chapter, and the second category in the next.

Only a few questions fall into this first category, and they cover two topics: the teachings and attainments of the teachers of other sects, and the results of unskillful forms of livelihood. These are sensitive matters, especially for a teacher who wants to avoid the harm that comes with disparaging others or exalting himself.

The correct categorical answers concerning these topics are actually quite clear. With regard to the first topic, we have already noted in Chapter Three the passage from SN 48:53 [§144] stating that one of the realizations following on the attainment of stream-entry, the first level of awakening, is this:

> "Furthermore, the monk who is a learner [one who has attained any of the first three levels of awakening] reflects, 'Is there outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] any contemplative or brahman who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One?' And he discerns, 'No, there is no contemplative or brahman outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One.'"

This point is seconded in MN 48 [§143]:

> "Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: 'Is there, outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya], any other contemplative or brahman endowed with the sort of view with which I am endowed?'
> "He discerns that, 'There is no other contemplative or brahman outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] endowed with the sort of view with which I am endowed.' This is the third knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people."

This fact is not always stated in a general, impersonal form. Occasionally the Buddha, when speaking to monks, would single out a particular sectarian teacher for harsh criticism. As might be expected—given that the basic principle of his teaching concerns action and result—he reserved his harshest criticism for a teacher, Makkhali Gosāla, who taught that action bears no result.

We know Makkhali's doctrine primarily as reported by King Ajātasattu. The account of the king's report seems somewhat tongue-in-cheek, both because of the bizarre nature of some of the details—the various kinds of dust-realms, jointed plants, precipices, and dreams—and because it is unlikely that the king would have actually remembered all of them. Nevertheless, it is the fullest account we have of Makkhali's teachings.

> [King Ajātasattu:] "Another time I approached Makkhali Gosāla and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there, I asked him, 'Venerable Gosāla, there are these common craftsmen.... [see §5] They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here and now.... Is it possible, venerable Gosāla, to

point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?'

"When this was said, Makkhali Gosāla said to me, 'Great king, there is no cause, no requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. Beings are defiled without cause, without requisite condition. There is no cause, no requisite condition, for the purification of beings. Beings are purified without cause, without requisite condition. There is nothing self-caused, nothing other-caused, nothing human-caused. There is no strength, no persistence, no human energy, no human endeavor. All living beings, all life, all beings, all souls are powerless, devoid of strength, devoid of persistence. Subject to the changes of fate, serendipity, & nature, they are sensitive to pleasure & pain in the six great classes of birth.

"'There are 1,406,600 principle modes of origin. There are 500 kinds of kamma, five kinds, & three kinds; full kamma and half kamma. There are 62 pathways, 62 sub-eons, six great classes of birth, eight classes of men, 4,900 modes of livelihood, 4,900 kinds of wanderers, 4,900 Nāga-abodes, 2,000 faculties, 3,000 hells, 36 dust-realms, seven spheres of percipient beings, seven spheres of non-percipient beings, seven kinds of jointed plants, seven kinds of deities, seven kinds of human beings, seven kinds of demons, seven great lakes, seven major knots, seven minor knots, 700 major precipices, 700 minor precipices, 700 major dreams, 700 minor dreams, 84,000 great eons. Having transmigrated & wandered on through these, the wise & the foolish alike will put an end to pain.

"'Though one might think, "Through this habit, this practice, this austerity, or this holy life I will ripen unripened kamma and eliminate ripened kamma whenever touched by it"—that is impossible. Pleasure & pain being measured out, the wandering-on being fixed in its limits, there is no shortening or lengthening, no accelerating or decelerating. Just as a ball of string, when thrown, comes to its end simply by unwinding, in the same way, having transmigrated & wandered on, the wise & the foolish alike will put an end to pain.'

"Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Makkhali Gosāla answered with purification through wandering-on. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were

to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango; in the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Makkhali Gosāla answered with purification through wandering-on." — *DN 2*

When speaking to his monks, the Buddha criticized Makkhali—and his teaching—in no uncertain terms.

"Monks, just as a hair blanket is judged to be the most miserable of woven cloths—a hair blanket cold in the cold, hot in the heat, bad-looking, bad-smelling, bad to the touch—in the same way, the teaching of Makkhali is judged to be the most miserable of the teachings of run-of-the-mill contemplatives. The worthless man Makkhali has this teaching, this view: 'There is no action. There is no activity. There is no persistence.'
"Those in the past who were worthy ones, rightly self-awakened: Those Blessed Ones were teachers of action, teachers of activity, teachers of persistence. But the worthless man Makkhali contradicts even them, (saying,) 'There is no action. There is no activity. There is no persistence.'
"Those in the future who will be worthy ones, rightly self-awakened: Those Blessed Ones will be teachers of action, teachers of activity, teachers of persistence. But the worthless man Makkhali contradicts even them, (saying,) 'There is no action. There is no activity. There is no persistence.'
"I in the present who am a worthy one, rightly self-awakened, am a teacher of action, a teacher of activity, a teacher of persistence. But the worthless man Makkhali contradicts even me, (saying,) 'There is no action. There is no activity. There is no persistence.'
"Just as a trap would be strung up at the mouth of a river for the harm, pain, misfortune, & destruction of many fish; in the same way, the worthless man Makkhali has arisen in the world as a trap, as it were, for human beings, for the harm, pain, misfortune, & destruction of many beings." — *AN 3:138*

Thus it is clear that, from the Buddha's point of view, there are no awakened teachers outside of his dispensation, and many of the other

teachers outside of his dispensation teach doctrines that are clearly harmful.

As for the topic of unskillful livelihood, the general principle is also clear: Any occupation that entails killing others or exciting greed, aversion, and delusion in oneself or others leads to unfortunate results, including undesirable destinations after death [§145, §146]. Even if the occupation doesn't inherently involve unskillful activity, if one pursues it in a dishonest way, it can lead to the same undesirable results [§111]. Similarly, if an ascetic practice entails developing unskillful habits or views it leads to a bad destination [§147]; even if it doesn't, but one pursues it in a dishonest way, the result can be the same [§148].

But even though the general principles underlying both topics are clear, the questions based on them can quickly become personal, leading some listeners to resent frank answers. If a teacher, when addressing people who are not committed to his teaching, speaks disparagingly of the attainments of other teachers, his motives are suspect. If he criticizes those who follow a particular occupation, he risks setting himself up as a judge, condemning other people who did not ask for his opinion. In this way, he can alienate large numbers of potential listeners even before they have had a chance to listen to the Dhamma.

Thus the Buddha's policy in cases like this was to answer these questions only in contexts where his answers were likely to be well received. In other instances, he would put them aside. The discourses show two situations in which a teacher might be confident of the listener's receptivity. In §§145-147, this receptivity is shown by the fact that the listener repeats his question three times—a sign of sincerity in India at the Buddha's time. In §111, it's gauged by the fact that Ven. Sāriputta is already on familiar terms with Dhanañjāni, the person he's teaching. Even though Dhanañjāni doesn't ask for Ven. Sāriputta's advice on how he makes his livelihood, Ven. Sāriputta assumes—rightly—that Dhanañjāni will regard his advice as an act of kindness and respond to it well.

Of the two topics covered by the questions listed in this chapter, the Buddha's treatment of the topic of livelihood is the simpler and easier to describe—even though right livelihood, of all the factors of the noble eightfold path, is defined in the vaguest terms.

> "And what, monks, is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his/her life going with right livelihood: This, monks, is called right livelihood." — *SN 45:8*

MN 117 expands on this definition slightly by defining wrong livelihood for monks.

> "And what is wrong livelihood? Scheming, persuading, hinting, belittling, & pursuing gain with gain."

DN 2 expands further on this passage with a long list of occupations that monks should avoid. Yet, given the even wider range of occupations followed by laypeople, it's surprising that the Canon gives only one brief list of undesirable lay occupations, and even that is not phrased as a universal condemnation. It simply states that a Buddhist lay follower should avoid these forms of business.

> "Monks, a lay follower should not engage in five types of business. Which five? Business in weapons, business in living beings [this would include selling slaves], business in meat, business in intoxicants, & business in poison." — *AN 5:177*

One of the reasons for the Buddha's general reticence on this topic is suggested by passages §§145-147: People can react unfavorably when told that their occupation or practice is inherently unskillful and conducive to a bad rebirth. The Buddha's approach in these cases was simple. He would not condemn a person's occupation to the person's face unless that person had shown his/her sincerity in asking for the Buddha's opinion on the matter by repeating the question up to three times. Even then the Buddha would not simply condemn the occupation—soldiering and acting are the examples given in the discourses—but would also explain why it was inherently unskillful. He followed the same approach when asked about ascetic practices.

The skill of the Buddha's approach here is shown by the fact that, with one exception, all of his interlocutors in these cases take refuge in the Triple Gem. The one exception is Seniya, the dog-practice ascetic, who goes even further: He abandons his dog-practice, ordains, and becomes an arahant.

As for occasions when people who were not committed followers of the Buddha would question him on the teachings and attainments of the teachers of other sects, the examples collected in this chapter show the variety of ways in which, having set the question aside, the Buddha might address his listeners' underlying question in other ways.

One of his primary approaches was to put aside a question framed in personal terms, and then pose his own question touching on the same topic but framed in more general principles. This strategy is similar to giving an analytical answer to the original question, in that it replaces one mode of analysis with another, but the fact that the Buddha puts the original question aside shows that he is doing more than simply answering the question from a different angle; he is teaching his listeners general principles whose range of application goes far beyond the original question. For example, in AN 3:66 [§149], when the Kālāmas—depicted as a group of skeptics—ask him about other teachers who have taught them in the past, the Buddha puts the question aside and then, by cross-questioning them, teaches them how to apply the principle of kamma to the issue of judging a teaching: The verdict is reached pragmatically by gauging the results that come when putting the teaching into action. This principle—the same principle the Buddha used in his own quest for awakening—can then be applied to other areas of life where the Kālāmas need to gain assurance. The Kālāmas all respond to this teaching by taking refuge in the Triple Gem.

In AN 9:38 [§156], two brahman cosmologists come to the Buddha with a quandary: Two sectarian teachers, Pūraṇa Kassapa and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, both claim to have omniscient knowledge of the cosmos, but the first claims that the cosmos is finite, whereas the second claims that it's infinite. Which of the two is telling the truth? The Buddha puts the question aside and then gives a twofold response. First he notes that it isn't physically possible to reach the end of the material cosmos, but then he goes on to redefine *cosmos* as the five strings of sensuality, saying that a more meaningful quest would be to reach the end of the cosmos in this sense through the attainment of the nine meditative attainments. The discourse does not record how the two brahmans respond to this teaching.

In MN 30 [§150], the brahman Piṅgalakoccha names some of the leading teachers of the day, asking the Buddha whether all of them are awakened, only some of them, or none of them at all. The Buddha's response, after setting the question aside, is to describe step-by-step how a person would attain awakening by practicing the Dhamma. The discourse gives no indication of Piṅgalakoccha's motive for asking his question, but he responds to the Buddha's reply by taking refuge in the Triple Gem.

In DN 16 [§151], the Buddha on his deathbed is asked the same question by Subhadda the wanderer. Again the Buddha puts the question framed in personal terms aside and answers it with a general principle: Awakened people are to be found only in a teaching containing the noble eightfold path. Then, however, having established this general principle, the Buddha answers Subhadda's original question, saying that there are no awakened people outside of the Dhamma and Vinaya—his term for his teaching. Perhaps the Buddha sensed that Subhadda's motivation was different from that of the Kālāmas—he was seeking a teacher under whom to study—and that the Buddha's first answer was so inspiring that Subhadda was ready to hear the straight answer to his question. Or the Buddha may have seen that—after identifying the path to awakening in impersonal rather than personal terms—he was in a position to point out the obvious: that no other teaching contains the necessary path. In any event, this strategy was so successful that Subhadda asked for ordination and, soon after their conversation, became an arahant.

Perhaps the most inspiring aspect of these responses is that, even though the questions would appear to give the Buddha an opening to lambast his opponents or people of a particular occupation, he does not take advantage of the opening. Instead, he uses the questions as an opportunity to teach the Dhamma in terms of general principles. In so doing he works for the true benefit of his listeners—another example of the responsible and compassionate nature of his teaching approach.

READINGS

LIVELIHOOD

§ 145. As he was sitting there, Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe, said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of actors that 'When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas.' What does the Blessed One have to say about that?"

"Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that."

A second time... A third time Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe, said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of actors that 'When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas.' What does the Blessed One have to say with regard to that?"

"Apparently, headman, I don't get leave from you [to avoid the matter by saying], 'Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.' So I will simply answer you. Any beings who are not devoid of passion to begin with, who are bound by the bond of passion, focus with even more passion on things inspiring passion presented by an actor on stage in the midst of a festival. Any beings who are not devoid of aversion to begin with, who are bound by the bond of aversion, focus with even more aversion on things inspiring aversion presented by an actor on stage in the midst of a festival. Any beings who are not devoid of delusion to begin with, who are bound by the bond of delusion, focus with even more delusion on things inspiring delusion presented by an actor on stage in the midst of a festival. Thus the actor—himself intoxicated & heedless, having made others intoxicated & heedless—with the breakup of the body, after death, is reborn in what is called the hell of laughter. But if he holds such a view as this: 'When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas,' that is his wrong view. Now, there are

two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb."

When this was said, Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe, sobbed & burst into tears. [The Blessed One said,] "That was what I didn't get leave from you [to avoid the matter by saying], 'Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.'"

"I'm not crying, venerable sir, because of what the Blessed One said to me, but simply because I have been deceived, cheated, & fooled for a long time by that ancient teaching lineage of actors who said, 'When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas.'"
— *SN 42:2*

§ 146. As he was sitting there, Yodhājīva [Professional Warrior] the headman said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors that 'When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.' What does the Blessed One have to say with regard to that?"

"Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that."

A second time... A third time Yodhājīva the headman said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors that 'When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.' What does the Blessed One have to say about that?"

"Apparently, headman, I don't get leave from you [to avoid the matter by saying], 'Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.' So I will simply answer you. When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, his mind is already seized, debased, & misdirected by the thought, 'May these beings be struck down or slaughtered or annihilated or destroyed. May they not exist.' If others then strike him down & slay

him while he is thus striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the hell called the realm of those slain in battle. But if he holds such a view as this: 'When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle,' that is his wrong view. Now, there are two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb."

When this was said, Yodhājīva the headman sobbed & burst into tears. [The Blessed One said,] "That was what I didn't get leave from you [to avoid the matter by saying], 'Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.'"

"I'm not crying, venerable sir, because of what the Blessed One said to me, but simply because I have been deceived, cheated, & fooled for a long time by that ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors who said, 'When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.'" — *SN 42:3 [Similarly in SN 42:4 & SN 42:5, although the warriors there are an elephant warrior and a cavalry warrior]*

§ 147. Then Puṇṇa Koliyaputta, an ox-practice ascetic, and Seniya, a naked dog-practice ascetic, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, Puṇṇa Koliyaputta the ox-practice ascetic bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side, whereas Seniya, the naked dog-practice ascetic, exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat down to one side, hunched up like a dog.

As they were sitting there, Puṇṇa Koliyaputta the ox-practice ascetic said to the Blessed One, "This Seniya, a naked dog-practice ascetic, does what is hard to do. He eats food thrown on the ground. He has for a long time undertaken and perfectly conformed to that dog-practice. What is his destination? What his future course?"

"Enough, Puṇṇa. Put that aside. Don't ask me that."

A second time... A third time Puṇṇa Koliyaputta the ox-practice ascetic said to the Blessed One, "This Seniya, a naked dog-practice ascetic, does what is hard to do. He eats food thrown on the ground. He has undertaken and perfectly conformed to that dog-practice. What is his destination? What his future course?"

"Apparently, Puṇṇa, I don't get leave from you [to avoid the matter by saying], 'Enough, Puṇṇa. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.' So I will simply answer you. There is the case where a certain person develops the dog-practice fully and without lapse, develops the dog-habit fully and without lapse, develops the dog-mind fully and without lapse, develops dog-behavior fully and without lapse. Having developed the dog-practice fully and without lapse, the dog-habit fully and without lapse, the dog-mind fully and without lapse, dog-behavior fully and without lapse, he—with the breakup of the body, after death—reappears in the company of dogs. But if he is of a view such as this: 'By this habit or practice or asceticism or holy life I will become one deva or another,' that is his wrong view. For a person of wrong view, Puṇṇa, there is one of two destinations, I tell you: hell or the animal womb. Thus when succeeding, Puṇṇa, the dog-practice leads to the animal womb; when failing, to hell."

When this was said, Seniya, the naked dog-practice ascetic, sobbed & burst into tears. So the Blessed One said to Puṇṇa Koliyaputta, the ox-practice ascetic, "That was what I didn't get leave from you, Puṇṇa [to avoid the matter by saying], 'Enough, Puṇṇa. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.'"

"I'm not crying, venerable sir, because of what the Blessed One said to me, but simply because I have for a long time undertaken and perfectly conformed to this dog-practice." — *MN 57*

§ 148.

An ochre robe tied 'round their necks,
many with evil qualities
—unrestrained, evil—
rearise, because of their evil acts,
in hell.

Better to eat an iron ball
—glowing, aflame—

than that, unprincipled &
unrestrained,
you should eat the alms of the country. — *Dhp 307-308*

OTHER TEACHERS

§ 149. The Kālāmas of Kesaputta said to the Blessed One, "Lord, there are some contemplatives & brahmans who come to Kesaputta. They expound & glorify their own doctrines, but as for the doctrines of others, they deprecate them, disparage them, show contempt for them, & pull them to pieces. And then other contemplatives & brahmans come to Kesaputta. They expound & glorify their own doctrines, but as for the doctrines of others, they deprecate them, disparage them, show contempt for them, & pull them to pieces. They leave us absolutely uncertain & in doubt: Which of these venerable contemplatives & brahmans are speaking the truth, and which ones are lying?"

"Of course you are uncertain, Kālāmas. Of course you are in doubt. When there are reasons for doubt, uncertainty is born. So in this case, Kālāmas, don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, 'This contemplative is our teacher.' When you know for yourselves that, 'These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering'—then you should abandon them.

"What do you think, Kālāmas? When greed arises in a person, does it arise for benefit or for harm?"

"For harm, lord."

"And this greedy person, overcome by greed, his mind possessed by greed, kills living beings, takes what is not given, goes after another person's wife, tells lies, and induces others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term harm & suffering."

"Yes, lord."

"Now, what do you think, Kālāmas? When aversion arises in a person, does it arise for benefit or for harm?"

“For harm, lord.”

“And this aversive person, overcome by aversion, his mind possessed by aversion, kills living beings, takes what is not given, goes after another person’s wife, tells lies, and induces others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term harm & suffering.”

“Yes, lord.”

“Now, what do you think, Kālāmas? When delusion arises in a person, does it arise for benefit or for harm?”

“For harm, lord.”

“And this deluded person, overcome by delusion, his mind possessed by delusion, kills living beings, takes what is not given, goes after another person’s wife, tells lies, and induces others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term harm & suffering.”

“Yes, lord.”

“So what do you think, Kālāmas? Are these qualities skillful or unskillful?”

“Unskillful, lord.”

“Blameworthy or blameless?”

“Blameworthy, lord.”

“Criticized by the wise or praised by the wise?”

“Criticized by the wise, lord.”

“When adopted & carried out, do they lead to harm & to suffering, or not?”

“When adopted & carried out, they lead to harm & to suffering. That is how it appears to us.”

“So, as I said, Kālāmas: ‘Don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, “This contemplative is our teacher.” When you know for yourselves that, “These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering”—then you should abandon them.’ Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

“Now, Kālāmas, don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher.’ When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to benefit & to happiness’—then you should enter & remain in them.

“What do you think, Kālāmas? When lack of greed arises in a person, does it arise for benefit or for harm?”

“For benefit, lord.”

“And this ungreedy person, not overcome by greed, his mind not possessed by greed, doesn’t kill living beings, take what is not given, go after another person’s wife, tell lies, or induce others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term benefit & happiness.”

“Yes, lord.”

“What do you think, Kālāmas? When lack of aversion arises in a person, does it arise for benefit or for harm?”

“For benefit, lord.”

“And this unaversive person, not overcome by aversion, his mind not possessed by aversion, doesn’t kill living beings, take what is not given, go after another person’s wife, tell lies, or induce others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term benefit & happiness.”

“Yes, lord.”

“What do you think, Kālāmas? When lack of delusion arises in a person, does it arise for benefit or for harm?”

“For benefit, lord.”

“And this undeluded person, not overcome by delusion, his mind not possessed by delusion, doesn’t kill living beings, take what is not given, go after another person’s wife, tell lies, or induce others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term benefit & happiness.”

“Yes, lord.”

“So what do you think, Kālāmas? Are these qualities skillful or unskillful?”

“Skillful, lord.”

"Blameworthy or blameless?"

"Blameless, lord."

"Criticized by the wise or praised by the wise?"

"Praised by the wise, lord."

"When adopted & carried out, do they lead to benefit & to happiness, or not?"

"When adopted & carried out, they lead to benefit & to happiness. That is how it appears to us."

"So, as I said, Kālāmas: 'Don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, "This contemplative is our teacher." When you know for yourselves that, "These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to benefit & to happiness"—then you should enter & remain in them.' Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

"Now, Kālāmas, one who is a disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of greed, devoid of ill will, undeluded, alert, & resolute—keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with good will. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with good will: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.

"He keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with compassion... empathetic joy... equanimity. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with equanimity: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.

"Now, Kālāmas, one who is a disciple of the noble ones—his mind thus free from hostility, free from ill will, undefiled, & pure—acquires four assurances in the here & now:

"'If there is a world after death, if there is the fruit of actions rightly & wrongly done, then this is the basis by which, with the breakup of the

body, after death, I will reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world.' This is the first assurance he acquires.

"'But if there is no world after death, if there is no fruit of actions rightly & wrongly done, then here in the present life I look after myself with ease—free from hostility, free from ill will, free from trouble.' This is the second assurance he acquires.

"'If evil is done through acting, still I have willed no evil for anyone. Having done no evil action, from where will suffering touch me?' This is the third assurance he acquires.

"'But if no evil is done through acting, then I can assume myself pure in both respects.' This is the fourth assurance he acquires.

"One who is a disciple of the noble ones—his mind thus free from hostility, free from ill will, undefiled, & pure—acquires these four assurances in the here & now."

"So it is, Blessed One. So it is, O One Well-gone. One who is a disciple of the noble ones—his mind thus free from hostility, free from ill will, undefiled, & pure—acquires [these] four assurances in the here & now...

"Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. We go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Community of monks. May the Blessed One remember us as lay followers who have gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life." — *AN 3:66*

§ 150. As he was seated to one side, the brahman Piṅgalakoccha said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, these contemplatives & brahmans, each with his group, each with his community, each the teacher of his group, an honored leader, well-regarded by people at large—i.e., Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta, & the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta: Do they all have direct knowledge as they themselves claim, or do they all not have direct knowledge, or do some of them have direct knowledge and some of them not?"

"Enough, brahman. Put this question aside. I will teach you the Dhamma. Listen and pay close attention. I will speak."

"Yes, sir," the brahman Piṅgalakoccha responded to the Blessed One, and the Blessed One said, [here the Buddha gives the similes of the men seeking heartwood who come to a tree possessing heartwood. One of them goes home taking the branches & leaves, another the outer bark, another the inner bark, another the sapwood, and only one of them takes the heartwood. The Buddha then compares these people respectively, with those who, in search of the end of suffering, content themselves with gain, offerings, & fame; with consummation of virtue; with consummation of concentration; with consummation of knowledge & vision; and the person who rests content with none of those, but strives for qualities that are higher & more sublime.]

"And which, brahman, are the qualities that are higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision?

"There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is a quality higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

"Furthermore, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. This too is a quality higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

"Furthermore, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' This too is a quality higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

"Furthermore, with the abandoning of pleasure & stress—as with the earlier disappearance of joys & distresses—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. This too is a quality higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

“Furthermore, with the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite space,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. This too is a quality higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

“Furthermore, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite consciousness,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. This too is a quality higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

“Furthermore, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) ‘There is nothing,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. This too is a quality higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

“Furthermore, with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, he enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This too is a quality higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

“Furthermore, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. And, having seen [that] with discernment, his fermentations are completely ended. This too is a quality higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

“These are the qualities higher & more sublime than knowledge & vision.

“I tell you, brahman, that this person is like the man who, in need of heartwood, seeking heartwood, goes in search of heartwood and comes to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, cuts away just the heartwood and returns taking it with him, knowing that it is heartwood. Whatever purpose he had for heartwood, that purpose will be served.

“Brahman, this holy life doesn’t have as its reward gain, offerings, & fame, doesn’t have as its reward consummation of virtue, doesn’t have as its reward consummation of concentration, doesn’t have as its reward knowledge & vision, but the unprovoked awareness-release: That is the purpose of this holy life, that is its heartwood, that its final end.”
— *MN 30*

§ 151. Subhadda the wanderer went to Upavattana, the Mallans' sal-grove, and on arrival said to Ven. Ānanda, "I have heard the elder wanderers, teachers of teachers, saying that only once in a long, long time do Tathāgatas—arahants, rightly self-awakened—appear in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will occur. Now there is a doubt that has arisen in me, but I have faith that he could teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might abandon that doubt. It would be good, Ven. Ānanda, if you would let me see him."

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to him, "Enough, friend Subhadda. Don't bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired."

For a second time... For a third time, Subhadda the wanderer said to Ven. Ānanda, "...It would be good, Ven. Ānanda, if you would let me see him."

For a third time, Ven. Ānanda said to him, "Enough, friend Subhadda. Don't bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired."

Now, the Blessed One heard the exchange between Ven. Ānanda & Subhadda the wanderer, and so he said to Ven. Ānanda, "Enough, Ānanda. Don't stand in his way. Let him see the Tathāgata. Whatever he asks me will all be for the sake of knowledge, and not to be bothersome. And whatever I answer when asked, he will quickly understand."

So Ven. Ānanda said to Subhadda the wanderer, "Go ahead, friend Subhadda. The Blessed One gives you his leave."

Then Subhadda went to the Blessed One and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, these contemplatives & brahmans, each with his group, each with his community, each the teacher of his group, an honored leader, well-regarded by people at large—i.e., Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta, & the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta: Do they all have direct knowledge as they themselves claim, or do they all not have direct knowledge, or do some of them have direct knowledge and some of them not?"

"Enough, Subhadda. Put this question aside. I will teach you the Dhamma. Listen and pay close attention. I will speak."

"Yes, lord," Subhadda responded to the Blessed One, and the Blessed One said, "In any Dhamma & Vinaya where the noble eightfold path is not found, no contemplative of the first… second… third… fourth order [stream-winner, once-returner, non-returner, or arahant] is found. But in any Dhamma & Vinaya where the noble eightfold path *is* found, contemplatives of the first… second… third… fourth order *are* found. The noble eightfold path is found in this Dhamma & Vinaya, and right here there are contemplatives of the first… second… third… fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of arahants." — *DN 16*

Chapter Eight

Questions Put Aside: II

When a person consistently puts a question aside as a matter of principle, it may arouse suspicion that he is ignorant of or embarrassed by the answer. To maintain the questioner's respect and trust, he has to provide a convincing case that the lack of answer is not a failing on his part. If he is asked for information or an opinion, he has to show why the question is not worth answering. If he is presenting a system of thought based on first principles, he has to show why his refusal to answer the question is not simply an attempt to mask a gap or inconsistency in the system.

As we have seen, the Buddha was not attempting to build a system of thought, so he was not caught in the latter dilemma. The consistency in his teaching was teleological, in that all the issues he discussed were aimed at a single end. As he repeatedly stated, all he taught was stress and the end of stress [§192]. Thus he was free to put questions aside on the grounds that they did not lead to that end. And, as we shall see, this was his primary reason for putting a wide variety of questions aside.

However, there were still instances in which he was accused of betraying his ignorance by refusing to answer a question. To this accusation he and his disciples responded strongly that he was actually acting from knowledge and vision. *Precisely because* he knew and saw, he knew that the question was best not answered. But this knowledge too was teleological, framed primarily in terms of cause and effect. It focused either on the kammic effects, present or future, of answering the question; or—in what amounts to the same thing—on the fact that the mental states giving rise to the question blocked the path to the end of stress.

For someone who had asked a question concerning action and its results, an answer framed in these terms might be immediately satisfying. But for a person who had asked a question about the existence or nature of

such entities as the cosmos or the self, the Buddha's claim to knowledge might still seem like a strategy of avoidance. This, however, is to miss the point. The Buddha wanted to focus attention on the kammic process of creating a perception of *self* or *cosmos,* for to view these processes as actions was to enter the path to the end of stress through the framework of the four noble truths. This, for him, was the most important knowledge one could have on these topics.

As we noted in the preceding chapter, when the Buddha put a question aside for reasons of etiquette he would often take the opportunity to teach the Dhamma in different, more beneficial terms. Here the same strategy is almost always at work. When he explains the drawbacks of asking and answering these questions in terms of the unskillful kamma involved, he is giving an important lesson in how to view experience in a framework conducive to right effort on the path.

This point is underlined by the two passages where the Buddha simply remained silent and did *not* immediately explain his reasons for refusing to answer a question. In SN 44:10 [§162], when he remained silent after Vacchagotta asked him whether there is or is not a self, Vacchagotta got up and left, apparently dissatisfied. Fortunately, Vacchagotta later returned to the Buddha to ask further questions, and subsequently—as the result of a later conversation—took refuge in the Triple Gem [§190]. Ultimately (MN 73), he ordained and became an arahant. Perhaps the Buddha foresaw this sequence of events, which was why he allowed Vacchagotta to depart dissatisfied in SN 44:10; or perhaps he wanted to explain his silence, but Vacchagotta—in leaving so quickly—didn't give him the chance. In either event, it's noteworthy that Vacchagotta's act of taking refuge occurred after he had asked the Buddha another set of questions that the Buddha refused to answer, but on that occasion Vacchagotta *did* ask the Buddha's reasons for refusing to answer the questions, and the Buddha explained why [§190]. The explanation is what led Vacchagotta to take refuge. This fact demonstrates two points: the collaborative nature of the act of teaching—Vacchagotta benefited more when he asked the Buddha to explain himself—and the fact that explained silence can have a more precise and telling effect on the mind than unexplained.

As for those of us in later generations reading SN 44:10, we are fortunate that, after Vacchagotta's departure, Ven. Ānanda approached the Buddha, asking for the reasons behind his silence. The Buddha responded with three categorical answers and a cross-question, stating that his refusal to answer Vacchagotta's questions was based primarily on impersonal standards: To say that there is no self would involve siding with the extreme wrong view of annihilationism; to say that there is a self would side with the extreme wrong view of eternalism and would get in the way of giving rise to the knowledge that all phenomena are not-self. (See Appendix Three.) Only partly was his silence based on Vacchagotta's personal inability to understand one of the possible responses: Vacchagotta would have been bewildered if told that there is no self. And because Vacchagotta's questions derived ultimately from four questions that MN 2 [§25] lists as unworthy of attention—"Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I?"—we can conclude that questions about the existence or non-existence of the self should be put aside across the board.

The other case of the Buddha's remaining silent is in AN 10:95 [§163], where he responded with silence when Uttiya the wanderer asked him what portion of the cosmos would gain release. In this instance, Ven. Ānanda—fearing Uttiya would react negatively to the Buddha's silence—took matters into his own hands. After using the analogy of the fortress gatekeeper to explain the nature of the Buddha's knowledge of the way to awakening, Ven. Ānanda pointed out that Uttiya's question was assuming an answer to a question the Buddha had previously put aside. In other words, to ask what portion of the cosmos will gain release is to ask, in different terms, what portion of the cosmos will come to an end. This question, in turn, is a different way of asking whether the cosmos is eternal, not-eternal, or partially eternal and partially not. As we will see, this question is one that the Buddha refused to answer across the board.

In addition to these two passages, there is another important passage in which the Buddha put a question aside without stating any reasons for why he was doing so. This is MN 109 [§142], which we discussed in Chapter Six—the case where a monk in the Buddha's presence asked himself: "So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?" The Buddha announced

to the assembled monks that "It's possible that a senseless person—immersed in ignorance, overcome with craving—might think that he could outsmart the Teacher's message in this way," and then quoted the question to them without explaining why it was senseless. However, in this case he did not simply remain silent and leave the issue hanging. Instead, he immediately plunged into the line of cross-questioning introduced in SN 22:59 [§140], with the result that sixty monks gained total release. Thus, even though the Buddha didn't *state* his reasons for putting the question aside, his successful use of cross-questioning *showed* why he put it aside: There is a better way to use the perception of not-self. Instead of drawing metaphysical conclusions from that perception, one would do better to use it to question the skillfulness of the act of I-making and my-making, so that those actions can be dropped and liberation attained.

Thus the simple act of putting a question aside is not, in and of itself, a sufficient teaching strategy. As this chapter will show, the Buddha's most fruitful approach when putting a question aside was, when given the opportunity, to teach the Dhamma in other terms, offering another way of viewing experience: in the framework of skillful and unskillful action.

We have already seen, in Chapter One, that this framework underlies his categorical answers; and in Chapter Six, that it underlies the process of self cross-examination. Here, in the lessons the Buddha teaches when putting a question aside, he is offering further insights into this framework. In some cases, by explaining his reasons for putting a question aside, he is illustrating the teaching of kamma by showing that the question just asked is an example of unskillful kamma. In this way, he brings the teaching into the immediate present, pointing to the kamma the person asking the question is engaging in here and now. In other cases, he demonstrates the difference between skillful and unskillful kamma—again in the here and now—by posing a different, more skillful, question, and proceeding to answer it. Or he may propose an alternative way of looking at experience in general.

In particular—as we will see in this chapter—the Buddha often uses the context of putting a question aside to introduce a further refinement in the teaching on skillful and unskillful action, expressed in terms of dependent co-arising. In fact, this is one of his prime contexts for showing

how these terms can be most effectively applied to problems in the immediate present. When analyzing the drawbacks of an unskillful question, or showing how best to avoid the traps of unskillful questions, he utilizes the terms of dependent co-arising in a way that demonstrates how pragmatic knowledge and mastery of these terms is one of the most skillful means to release. And in doing so, he drives home the point that the knowledge through which he sees that the question does not deserve answering is much more beneficial than any knowledge that could have come from answering it.

The Buddha's emphasis on knowledge in this context shows that, in general, when he was putting a question aside he was not making a case for agnosticism. Particularly with regard to the categorical issue of which actions are skillful and not, he was an advocate of clear and detailed knowledge [§20, §§26-29], for knowledge of this topic is central to any program for putting an end to stress. Without this knowledge, clinging and attachment cannot be overcome. Although some people might imagine agnosticism to be a way of avoiding attachment to views, the Buddha saw clearly that it's a fabrication born of craving and ignorance [§153]. It too can be an object of attachment—and it's an attachment that leads nowhere. When applied to issues of skillful and unskillful action, agnosticism undercuts any desire to develop the skillful strategies that actually lead to release [§152]. For these reasons, such agnosticism has to be abandoned through knowledge if one wants to make progress on the path.

Still, the Buddha left open the question of what sorts of things he knew above and beyond the express purpose of his teachings. In a famous simile (SN 56:31, Chapter One), he stated that the knowledge he had gained in his awakening was like the leaves in the forest; what he had taught—the four noble truths in all their various permutations—was like a mere handful of leaves. He hadn't taught the leaves in the forest because they didn't lead to unbinding. He had taught the leaves in his hand because they did. Thus, by implication, any question about the full range of a Buddha's knowledge should be put aside.

In fact, he said as much in AN 4:77 [§154], where he listed four inconceivables—topics that lay beyond the range of an ordinary person even to speculate about in a healthy way. In the words of the passage,

these topics "would bring madness & vexation to anyone who conjectured about them." They are:

> the Buddha-range of the Buddhas
> the jhāna-range of a person in jhāna
> the results of kamma
> conjecture about the cosmos.

The inclusion of the first two items in the list serves notice that the Buddha was not putting himself in the position of an ordinary person speculating about these matters. There was much that he knew through direct knowledge—through mastering jhāna and becoming a Buddha—that he did not have to speculate about. Thus, although the entire list lies beyond the range of healthy speculation, it tells us that we cannot know the range of the Buddha's own knowledge of these things.

The inclusion of the third item in the list, the results of kamma, may come as a surprise, given the care with which the Buddha explained the results of kamma in many discourses. However, its inclusion here points to the fact, discussed in MN 136 [§66], that the workings of kamma are complex—more complex, in fact, than is indicated in that discourse. Their complexities would have posed a challenge for the Buddha if he had wanted to construct an explanation of stress and its end based on first principles, for a theory of kamma would have been a logical place to start. Thus he would have been required to give a full explanation of how and why kamma is complex. But because his teaching was teleological, aimed at actually putting an end to stress, he needed to explain only what was necessary toward that end: the ways in which past and present kamma shape experience. Although past kamma can influence the conditions on one's sensory experience, the actual stress or lack of stress experienced by the mind is the direct result of present kamma—the act of following or abandoning clinging and craving. For the purpose of putting an end to stress, all that needs to be known is how to create skillful kamma and then—once that skill is mastered—how to create the kamma that puts an end to kamma [§31]. Thus there is no need to account for all the complex interactions of kammic results. A knowledge of general principles is enough.

And the general principles of kamma are simple. There is the potential for choice in every action. An action based on right views and skillful intentions leads to pleasant results; an action based on wrong views and unskillful intentions, to unpleasant results. But even though these principles are simple, the interactions of a person's many actions in the course of a day, to say nothing of a lifetime, combined with the state of mind at the time when those results bear fruit, mean that the precise lines connecting actions to their results are too complex for an ordinary person to trace.

The irony here is that, although the Buddha discouraged any further speculation on the topic of kammic results, this sort of speculation has fired a great deal of scholastic Buddhist philosophy over the centuries. Many of the major concepts of that philosophy—the storehouse consciousness, the reality realm of the Buddhas, the Tathāgata-embryo, the reversal of the basis—grew from speculations about such issues as the mechanism by which the impulse of an action gets carried through time until it yields its results, or the way in which awakening can be achieved despite the kammic residue of one's past ignorant actions. Had Buddhist thinkers followed the Buddha's advice, the course of Buddhist thought would have been very different.

As for conjecture about the cosmos (or world, *loka),* the Buddha simply noted that no beginning point in time could be discerned [§155], and that the cosmos was so large that its limits could never be reached [§156, §157]. He was unwilling to encourage conjecture about what lay beyond ordinary human powers to measure in space and time. Instead, he encouraged people to view the cosmos simply as the basic sensory information from which the concept or perception of *world* or *cosmos* is derived. Focusing here, they could see how the process of becoming, leading to stress, was created through the creation of those concepts, thus framing their attention appropriately in terms of the four noble truths. But as for the limits of the cosmos "out there," the Buddha advised that the issue be put aside.

Thus the four inconceivables are areas in which the Buddha *did* encourage an attitude of agnosticism among his followers, so as to focus their attention on the question of which actions are skillful and which are not—questions where knowledge is beneficial for purposes of release.

By and large, the same purpose underlies the many instances in which he put specific questions aside. A survey of these specific questions, however, yields many other insights into the Buddha's reasons for not answering them.

For the sake of analysis, these questions can be classified by topic or context. In terms of topic, there are—in broad terms—three: questions about the metaphysics of the cosmos, questions about the nature and existence (or non-existence) of the self, and questions about whether an awakened person exists or doesn't exist after death (see Appendix Four). This last category, however, is actually an extension of the second, for questions on this topic usually boil down to a concern for what will ultimately happen to the self if the Buddha's path is pursued.

When grouped by topic, the questions put aside in the discourses are these (the meaning of the asterisks will become clear in the following discussion):

The cosmos/world:

"'Your question should not be phrased in this way: 'Where do these four great elements—the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property—cease without remainder?' Instead, it should be phrased like this: 'Where do water, earth, fire, & wind have no footing? Where are long & short, coarse & fine, fair & foul, name & form brought to a stop without trace?'" — *DN 11*

"And, Master Gotama, when having directly known it, you teach the Dhamma to your disciples for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding, will all the cosmos be led to release, or a half of it, or a third?" — *AN 10:95*

"Now, then, Master Gotama, does everything exist?" "Then, Master Gotama, does everything not exist?" "Then is everything a Oneness?" "Then is everything a plurality?" — *SN 12:48* *

"Master Gotama, is it the case that 'The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"**

"Very well then, Master Gotama, is it the case that: 'The cosmos is not eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"**

“Very well then, Master Gotama, is it the case that ‘The cosmos is finite: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless’?”**
“Very well then, Master Gotama, is it the case that ‘The cosmos is infinite: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless’?”**
— *AN 10:95*

An existent being/self:

“Now then, Venerable Gotama, is there a self?” “Then is there no self?” — *SN 44:10*
“By whom was this being created? Where is the being’s maker? Where has the being originated? Where does the being cease?” — *SN 5:10*
“So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?” — *MN 109*
“Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past?” “Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?” “Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?” — *SN 12:20* ***
“Now, then, Master Gotama, is pain self-made?” “Then is pain other-made?” “Then is pain self-made & other-made?” — *SN 12:17* *
“Now, then, Master Gotama, are pleasure & pain self-made?” “Then are pleasure & pain other-made?” “Then are pleasure & pain self-made & other-made?” — *SN 12:18* *
“Now, then, Master Gotama: Is the one who acts the same one who experiences [the results of the act]?” “Then, Master Gotama, is the one who acts someone other than the one who experiences?” — *SN 12:46* *
“Now tell me, Sāriputta my friend: Is aging-&-death self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made?” [etc., with regard to factors of dependent co-arising] — *SN 12:67* *
“Lord, who feeds on the consciousness-nutriment?“ “Lord, who makes contact?” [etc., with regard to factors of dependent co-

arising] — *SN 12:12* *
"Which is the aging-&-death, lord, and whose is the aging-&-death?" [etc., with regard to the factors of dependent co-arising] — *SN 12:35* *
"Master Gotama, is it the case that 'The soul is the same thing as the body: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"**
"Very well then, Master Gotama, is it the case that: 'The soul is one thing and the body another: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"** — *AN 10:95*

Existence after awakening:

"But, Master Gotama, the monk whose mind is thus released: Where does he reappear?" "Very well then, Master Gotama, does he not reappear?" "... does he both reappear & not reappear?" "... does he neither reappear nor not reappear?" — *MN 72*
"With the remainderless cessation & fading of the six contact-media [vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, & intellection], is it the case that there is anything else?" "With the remainderless cessation & fading of the six contact-media, is it the case that there is not anything else?" "... is it the case that there both is & is not anything else?" "... is it the case that there neither is nor is not anything else?" — *AN 4:173*
"He who has reached the end: Does he not exist, or is he for eternity free from dis-ease? Please, sage, declare this to me as this phenomenon has been known by you." — *Sn 5:6*
"Master Gotama, is it the case that 'After death a Tathāgata exists: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"**
"Very well then, Master Gotama, is it the case that: 'After death a Tathāgata does not exist: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"**
"Very well then, Master Gotama, is it the case that 'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"**
"Very well then, Master Gotama, is it the case that 'After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"** — *AN 10:95*

From this list of topics, two points immediately stand out. The first is that all the questions deal in the terms most basic to the process of becoming: one's sense of self in a particular world or cosmos of experience. Because becoming is intimately tied up with the first noble truth of suffering and stress, the appropriate duty for dealing with its underlying concepts is to comprehend them to the point of dispassion, so as to gain release from them. But these questions provoke passion for these concepts by giving substance and reality to them. Thus they run counter to the duties of the path.

Directly related to this first point is the second one: All these questions are products of *papañca,* or objectification. As we noted in Chapter Three, this sort of thinking derives its classifications from the basic thought, "I am the thinker." Having objectified the "I am," one has created an agent of actions, and an experiencer of pleasure and pain. At the same time, one has created a nucleus of categories around which many questions can coalesce: self/not-self, existence/non-existence, thinker/thought, agent/object. For example, once the conceit "I am" becomes a meaningful statement, the question "Am I not?" becomes meaningful as well. Given the many roles played by a thinker—constantly changing, arising only to disappear—one has implicitly raised questions about whether these identities do or do not really exist. One has also created questions of *how* they exist, for as a being, the thinker needs to keep consuming physical and mental nourishment. This leads to questions about the existence of the world or cosmos from which one expects to draw that nourishment: To what extent can it be controlled? Does it offer a finite or infinite amount of food? Will it supply food forever, or will it come to an end? Will total awakening put an end to the thinker, or will it supply the thinker with an unending source of food?

The primary danger of this sort of questioning is that it treats mental processes—the *perception* of self, the *perception* of cosmos—as objects rather than processes. Thus it interferes with the radical self cross-examination discussed in Chapter Six, by which these processes are viewed as forms of unskillful action and thus abandoned so as to lead to the deathless.

But objectification presents other drawbacks as well, which can be seen most clearly if we group the questions the Buddha put aside, not

according to topic, but according to the general contexts in which they are found in the discourses. This way of grouping the questions also has the advantage of highlighting the Buddha's specific strategy for dismantling questions framed in terms of objectification by using those framed in the terms of appropriate attention.

Aside from a few miscellaneous situations scattered randomly in the texts, there are four major contexts in which the Buddha puts questions aside, with the fourth context a subset of the first. The contexts are these: the ten undeclared issues; the questions of inappropriate attention; questions applied to dependent co-arising; and the last four of the undeclared issues—the tetralemma, or set of four unacceptable alternatives, on the Tathāgata after death—discussed as a separate set. The way in which the Buddha treats the questions in these contexts reveals a great deal about where the line between objectification and appropriate attention lies, and how appropriate attention can be used to deconstruct objectification and its attendant problems.

1) The ten undeclared issues are the questions marked with a double asterisk in the above list of questions put aside. These were apparently a standard questionnaire used by philosophical debaters in the Buddha's time to map where they and their opponents stood on the vital issues of the day. And, of course, these questions—and the views derived to answer them—were not peculiar to India or to the time of the Buddha. Plato, for one, offered answers to all of them, and his answers to the questions about the nature of the soul and its fate after death were central to his thought. In the *Timaeus* he postulated a cosmos partly eternal, partly not, partly finite and partly not. In the *Symposium, Phaedo,* and *Republic* he insisted that the soul is distinct from the body and that, after death, the philosopher's soul will exist for eternity in rapturous contemplation of the eternal forms. This, as he saw it, is the aim of all philosophy. Later Western philosophers and theologians argued over Plato's answers to these questions, but the vast majority of them agreed that the questions were worthy of answer. In fact, a long and interesting study could be made of the variety of answers that Western thought has provided for these questions, all of which the Buddha labeled as deserving to be put aside.

The ten undeclared issues are discussed as a set in a large number of discourses, among them §§176-183. A few of the views that the Buddha's

contemporaries offered as answers to these questions are presented in DN 1 [§184]. The discourses discussing these ten questions focus initially on explaining why the Buddha puts them aside, after which they often propose various ways of replacing these questions with the framework of appropriate attention.

In the various explanations for why the Buddha put these questions aside, the term *objectification* appears in only one discourse [§178], but objectification is clearly the underlying issue in all the explanations, for the drawbacks they attribute to the questions put aside are identical to the drawbacks of objectification. It's because the Buddha knows and sees these drawbacks that he can assert that, in refusing to answer these questions, he is acting not from ignorance, but from knowledge.

What does he know? In general terms, he sees the extent of view-standpoints, the cause of views, and the uprooting of views [§178]. In more particular terms, he sees the origins of these questions and views, their immediate kammic effect, their long-term kammic effect, and the advantages of letting them go.

Thus his reasons for putting them aside are primarily *pragmatic*. Instead of stating whether the questions can or cannot be answered, he puts them aside because he sees that the act of asking and answering them can lead to short-term and long-term harm.

This point is vividly illustrated by the famous simile of the arrow, in MN 63 [§176]:

> "It's just as if a man were wounded with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. His friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives would provide him with a surgeon, and the man would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble warrior, a brahman, a merchant, or a worker.' He would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know the given name & clan name of the man who wounded me... until I know whether he was tall, medium, or short... until I know whether he was dark, ruddy-brown, or golden-colored... until I know his home village, town, or city... until I know whether the bow with which I was wounded was a long bow or a crossbow... until I know whether the bowstring with which I was wounded was fiber, bamboo threads, sinew, hemp, or bark... until I know whether the shaft with

> which I was wounded was wild or cultivated... until I know whether the feathers of the shaft with which I was wounded were those of a vulture, a stork, a hawk, a peacock, or another bird... until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was bound with the sinew of an ox, a water buffalo, a langur, or a monkey.' He would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was that of a common arrow, a curved arrow, a barbed, a calf-toothed, or an oleander arrow.' The man would die and those things would still remain unknown to him."

Because the information requested by the wounded man is theoretically knowable, it's possible to read this simile as suggesting that there could be answers to the ten questions, but that the Buddha wanted to avoid giving them because they were a waste of valuable time. After all, as we have noted, knowledge of the limits of the physical cosmos might possibly have been in the Buddha's range. But, in terms of his general standards for what he would teach—that it had to be true *and* beneficial *and* timely—the simple pragmatic fact that these questions were unbeneficial was reason enough not to answer them.

The Buddha's various lists of pragmatic reasons for not answering the ten questions fall into two main sorts:

a) In what might be called his *basic list* of pragmatic reasons—the one most commonly cited in the discourses—he simply notes that the questions are irrelevant to the goal of his teaching:

> "[This] does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation; to calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding." — *MN 63*

MN 63 further states that, "It's not the case that when there is the view, 'the cosmos is eternal' that there is the living of the holy life *(Sassato lokoti... diṭṭhiyā sati brahma-cariya-vāso abhavissāti: evaṁ no)."* This discourse then applies the same verdict to the nine other views. In other words, these views do not constitute the practice, and they distract attention from the practice, but there is nothing in MN 63 to indicate that they are antithetical to the practice.

b) However, in what might be called the *strong lists* of pragmatic reasons, the Buddha notes that these questions derive from unskillful states of mind that actually foster the causes of suffering rather than

trying to abandon them. To try to answer these questions is thus not simply to stray aimlessly from the duties of the path; it's to go against those duties in the opposite direction. This point is highlighted by SN 12:35 [§167], which goes considerably further than MN 63 in stating that:

> "When there is the view that the soul is the same as the body, there is no leading the holy life. And when there is the view that the soul is one thing and the body another, there is no leading the holy life. *(Taṁ jīvaṁ taṁ sarīraṁ vā... diṭṭhiyā sati brahma-cariya-vāso na hoti; aññaṁ jīvaṁ aññaṁ sarīraṁ vā... diṭṭhiyā sati brahma-cariya-vāso na hoti)*." — *SN 12:35*

In other words, instead of simply being an irrelevant waste of time, the act of holding to any of these views makes the practice of the holy life impossible.

This point is illustrated by the ways the Buddha, in connection with the strong list of pragmatic reasons, discusses his knowledge of the *origin* of these ten questions. For example, he sees that they derive from a misunderstanding of and attachment to the aggregates and sense media [§178, §181]. As Ven. Isidatta adds in §179, these questions are also the result of self-identity views related to the aggregates. In other words, they arise because one holds to a sense of self both as object of some of the views and as thinker/holder of views: the "I am" in "I am the thinker." In DN 1 [§184], the Buddha notes that attempts to answer these questions are based on logical deductions either from first principles or from limited meditative experiences, both of which are inadequate grounds for proof, in that each can be used to reach contradictory conclusions.

With regard to the *immediate consequences* of holding to any views derived from these questions, the Buddha sees that they are entangling —"a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views... accompanied by suffering, distress, despair, & fever" [§183]—and an expression of anguish [§178]. In holding to them, one is holding on to agitation and vacillation [§184], to suffering and stress [§182]. This anguish and agitation can involve the mental unrest that comes from getting entangled in arguments over such views, the internal agitation that comes from holding on to uncertain

knowledge, as well as the basic suffering that comes from holding fast to the basic terms of becoming: one's sense of self and of the world. As long as one objectifies the issues of world and self, one cannot engage in the self cross-examination that treats the perceptions of world and self as a form of kamma. And again, one is fostering the causes for suffering rather than abandoning them.

The *long-term consequences* of all this, as stated in the strong lists, is that some of these views lead to bad states of rebirth; and that, in pursuing these questions, one does not reach unbinding.

Taken together, the Buddha's two ways of stating the pragmatic drawbacks of answering these ten questions—in the basic list and the strong lists—highlight two important points. The first is that the motivation behind these questions is not always innocent ignorance. When based on attachment, these questions can be a strategy for avoiding the hard work of abandoning unskillful actions and developing skillful ones in their place. This point is dramatized in MN 63, where the monk Māluṅkyaputta refuses to practice until the Buddha has answered these ten questions to his satisfaction. Thus if, in the course of the practice, the mind finds itself attached to these questions, it needs to see what important issues it is avoiding and why.

The second important point related to the Buddha's pragmatic reasons for leaving the undeclared issues undeclared is that his analysis of the present impact of holding to these views—immersing one in a "thicket," a "writhing," a "contortion"—parallels his discussion of the conflicts arising from objectification. We have already noted, in Chapter Three, five ways in which the categories of objectification give rise to various forms of conflict: (1) They deal in abstract uncertainties, rather than the certainties of action and result; (2) one's identity as a being, once created by these categories, gets drawn into the issues created by those categories; (3) such an act of self-definition is an act of self-limitation; (4) one gets inevitably drawn into conflict with the categories and issues created by other people as they define themselves and others—and try to impose these definitions on others—each doing this on his or her own terms; and (5), in defining oneself, one becomes a being with a need to feed off the world, with the attendant uncertainties that come from an insecure food

source, as well as the dangers posed by others who might want to take that food source—or oneself—as food for themselves.

Thus the conflict caused by objectification is both internal and external: internal in the limitations and agitation that come from unskillful desire; external in the quarrels, disputes, rivalry, and hostility that can occur when one's views and desires come into conflict with those of others. In refusing to declare an answer to any of the ten undeclared issues, the Buddha was avoiding both the internal suffering of conflictive thoughts and the external suffering of needless quarrels and debates.

It's important to emphasize the word *needless* here, for—as we have seen—the Buddha didn't try to avoid conflict by simply putting all questions aside. When questions of skillful and unskillful action were at stake, he was prepared strongly to argue his case. In this way, he showed the attitude of a skillful warrior. Unlike the sectarians of AN 10:93 [§182], he knew which battles were worth fighting and which best left aside. Unlike the agnostics of DN 1 [§152], who were afraid to advance any ideas about skillful and unskillful action for fear of being bested in argument, he knew how to win the important battles.

In fact, once the Buddha had explained his reasons for putting the ten undeclared issues aside—which, as we have already noted, is an implicit way of shifting attention to the important battles of skillful and unskillful action—he would often shift attention to these battles in an explicit way, stating that the framework of objectification should be replaced with that of appropriate attention. His primary explicit tactic in this approach was to show how objectification is caused by unskillful actions. In other words, he placed objectification *as an action* in maps showing chains of unskillful actions, making the point that the frameworks supplied by objectification are actually subsumed under the framework of appropriate attention.

Here he was repeating in a more extended way one of the tactics he used in a cursory way when explaining why the ten undeclared issues should be put aside—briefly citing their origins in unskillful mental states—but the explicit maps have the advantage of explaining further why the framework of appropriate attention is such an important replacement for objectification—in other words, why the battles of appropriate attention are the important ones to win. At the same time, they show why these

battles are ultimately won within the mind, and why these inner battles have to take a few strategic turns.

A useful set of maps to begin with are those detailing the causal chain of actions by which the categories of objectification arise and lead to needless conflict. These maps are found in MN 18 [§50], DN 21 [§4], and Sn 4:11. Because the Buddhist analysis of causality is generally non-linear, with plenty of room for feedback loops, the maps vary in the order of some of their factors.

In MN 18, as we have already seen in Chapter Three, the map is this:

> contact → feeling → perception → thinking → being assailed by the perceptions & categories of objectification

In DN 21, the map reads like this:

> the perceptions & categories of objectification → thinking → desire → dear-&-not-dear → envy & stinginess → rivalry & hostility

In Sn 4:11, the map falls into two parts, which can be diagrammed like this:

> perception → the categories of objectification

> perception → name & form → contact → appealing & unappealing → desire → dear-&-not-dear → stinginess/divisiveness/quarrels/disputes

These maps teach several important lessons about the conditions determining the Buddha's strategy in replacing objectification with the framework of appropriate attention. The first lesson lies in their common feature: They all cite perception—the act of labeling thoughts, feelings, and sensations—as the primary culprit. This means that any attempt to dismantle objectification will require dismantling perception. However, the fact that perception is listed on two levels—as perception in general and as the particular perceptions of objectification—reflects the two tiers in the Buddha's strategy for overcoming attachment to perceptions: using the perceptions of appropriate attention to dismantle the perceptions of objectification, and then turning the perceptions of appropriate attention

on themselves—as actions—to dismantle attachment to themselves as well, leaving no attachment to any perceptions at all.

The two tiers in this strategy are reflected in one of the main differences among these maps, a difference we have already noted in Chapter One: In DN 21, *thinking* results from the perceptions and categories of objectification, whereas in MN 18 it precedes them. The apparent explanation for this difference is that in MN 18 the term *objectification* covers only thought dealing in the categories of becoming and inappropriate attention. This meaning of the term is useful in the first tier of the strategy—corresponding to the standard definition of right view [§33]—where the perceptions of appropriate attention are used to undercut the perceptions of inappropriate attention. In DN 21, however, *objectification* includes the categories framing the questions of appropriate attention as well. This is the meaning of the term useful in the level of the strategy—corresponding to the more advanced definition of right view in SN 12:15 [§172]—where even the categories of appropriate attention are dismantled and dropped.

The maps also indicate how the framework of skillful and unskillful action underlies both tiers of this strategy. In fact, the maps themselves are an expression of this framework. All three portray perceptions not in terms of their content or relationship to underlying entities, but in terms of their function as actions: the roles they play in a causal chain of activities. This portrayal helps not only to depersonalize the process of perception-fabrication—setting aside the issue of any possible self involved in the process—but also to set aside the issue of whether these perceptions provide true information about the world "out there" or "in here." The act of setting these issues aside is crucial to the Buddha's strategy, for as long as the mind still sees perception as a means for attaining truth, it can stir up the passion needed to keep fabricating perceptions for that purpose [§38]. But when perception can be viewed simply as an unskillful action leading to unnecessary stress, a sense of disenchantment for the process of perception-fabrication develops, undermining the passion fueling that process. This allows the process simply to stop. In terms of kamma, this strategy is the kamma that puts an end to kamma [§31], leading through disenchantment, dispassion, and cessation to release.

The detailed steps in this strategy are portrayed in the discourses where the Buddha goes beyond simply describing the drawbacks of the ten undeclared issues and discusses the viewpoint from which any view based on them can be transcended. To begin with, there is the analysis offered at the end of DN 1 [§184], in which he states that the vacillation and agitation inherent in asserting any of the possible views concerning the eternity and infinity of the cosmos is a product of craving. Craving, in turn, is based on contact at the six sense media.

This analysis places the act of holding these views into the map of dependent co-arising [§19, §41], a teaching that itemizes in the most extended form the details of the first three noble truths, tracing the origination of suffering and stress to ignorance of the four noble truths. When—through the ending of ignorance—one discerns the origination, ending, allure, drawbacks of, and emancipation from the six sense media, one discerns the release that is higher than any of these conditioned things.

The advantage of this strategy, as we will see below, is that dependent co-arising is a mode of perception that avoids the dichotomies of existence/non-existence, self/not-self underlying the categories of objectification. More than that: This mode of analysis not only avoids these dichotomies; it also deconstructs them. In focusing attention on levels of feeling and perception prior to objectification, it fosters an ability to view objectification not as a source of true or false information about realities but simply as a process of mental events and actions leading to stress. This causes any passion fueling the process to fade away.

AN 10:93 [§182] extends this strategy from the cosmological issues mentioned in DN 1 to include all ten of the undeclared issues. To take the first view as an example:

> "As for the venerable one who says, 'The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have,' his view arises from his own inappropriate attention or in dependence on the words of another. Now this view has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen. Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is

> stress. This venerable one thus adheres to that very stress, submits himself to that very stress."

In response to the retort that the act of holding to this analysis too would entail adhering to and submitting to stress, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder replies,

> "Venerable sirs, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stressful. Whatever is stressful is not me, is not what I am, is not my self. Having seen this well with right discernment as it has come to be, I also discern the higher escape from it as it has come to be."

In other words, this form of analysis is superior to other views in that it contains a perspective that can be used to effect not only their transcendence, but also its own. Having reduced every other view to an instance of clinging, it has placed those views into the context of dependent co-arising, which gives guidance as to how that clinging can be abandoned. Then, in the second tier of the strategy, the terms of this analysis can be turned on themselves, viewing them too as processes. This undercuts any clinging to them and leads to the higher escape: total release.

This point is reflected in the fact that, in the cessation mode of dependent co-arising, *all* perceptions (as a sub-factor of fabrications and name-&-form) cease, and not just unskillful ones. In fact, all experience of the six senses ceases as well [§50]. This, however, does not mean that awakening is the end of all sensory experience. Ud 3:10 (Chapter One) indicates that after experiencing the bliss of release, one can emerge from that state and perceive the world of the six senses once more. But, as the image of the flayed cow in MN 146 [§77] indicates, one's relationship to the senses has now changed. One experiences the senses as if disjoined from them—a point seconded by §201. As for perceptions and classifications, now that one has fully understood them, one can continue using them without being subject to them [§196]. In the words of MN 18 [§50], one is no longer assailed by them. Freed from their limitations, one's awareness has no restrictions at all [§201].

2) The questions of inappropriate attention, marked with a triple asterisk in the above list, appear in three different discourses. The broad outlines of their treatment in the Canon parallel that of the ten undeclared issues. In other words, the discourses listing them discuss the drawbacks of holding any view based on these questions, the pragmatic reasons for putting them aside, and the strategy for overcoming any interest in these questions by viewing them in terms of dependent co-arising and the four noble truths. However, a few of the details in the treatment differ in this case, the most important being that the questions of inappropriate attention go deeper than the ten undeclared issues, for they deal directly with the terms and perceptions that underlie all possible positions taken on the ten undeclared issues.

MN 2—which we discussed in Chapter Three—first states the pragmatic reasons for putting these questions aside, using a phrase commonly applied to the ten undeclared issues: Any answers to these questions form "a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views." It then adds, "Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is not freed, I tell you, from stress." The discussion then offers a practical alternative to these questions by directing the meditator to attend instead to identifying stress, its origination, its cessation, and the path to its cessation as they are directly experienced. In other words, a first step in the practice is to put aside the questions of inappropriate attention and to replace them with an alternative set of perceptions based on the framework of the four noble truths.

The other two references to these questions, SN 12:20 [§164] and MN 38 [§165], point to a later stage in the practice: Once the meditator has seen dependent co-arising, he/she will no longer be tempted to chase after these questions. In other words, it's not the case that these questions are put aside as irrelevancies simply for the duration of the practice, after which one may return to them as one likes. The experience of the practice removes any and all interest in pursuing them ever again.

This point is supported by a passage in MN 140, in which the Buddha described various "conceivings" stilled in a sage at peace: "I am" … "I am this" … "I shall be" … "I shall not be" … "I shall be possessed of form" … "I

shall not be possessed of form" ... "I shall be percipient" ... "I shall not be percipient" ... "I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient." These are obviously answers to some of the questions of inappropriate attention: "Am I?" "Am I not?" "What am I?" "Shall I be?" "What shall I be?" Once these questions are put aside for good, the corresponding currents of conceiving no longer flow.

Thus these four passages, taken together, describe three stages in the practice: consciously abandoning the questions of inappropriate attention so as to focus on the four noble truths; contemplating the four noble truths until one sees events in terms of dependent co-arising; and finally, as a result, no longer being tempted to pursue the questions of inappropriate attention. These passages, however, don't go into any detail about how the application of dependent co-arising connects the second to the third stage in this progression. For that, we need to look at how the Buddha treats the questions in the next category.

3) Questions applied to dependent co-arising. The passages in this category —all marked with a single asterisk in the above list—fall into two sub-categories.

a) Those in the primary sub-category [§§166-173] present dependent co-arising as an alternative mode of perception that avoids many of the questions springing from the either/or dichotomies posited by the perceptions and categories of becoming, such as existence/non-existence, self/other, or agent/object: Does everything exist? Does everything not exist? Are pleasure and pain self-made? Other-made? Both? Neither? Is the one who acts the same as the one who experiences the act? Is the one who acts different from the one who experiences the act? Is the one who experiences feeling the same as the feeling, or something different? In every case where the Buddha is presented with these questions, he puts them aside and advises his listeners to look at experience in terms of dependent co-arising as a way of avoiding the entanglements of trying to answer these questions.

Among the either/or questions avoided by dependent co-arising, perhaps the most interesting dichotomy is given in SN 12:48 [§171]—Is everything a Oneness? Is everything a plurality?—for the Buddha has frequently and erroneously been depicted as saying Yes to both questions. On the one hand, in medieval India, Mahāyāna scholastic philosophers

criticized what they saw as the pluralistic world-view of the Buddha's "Hīnayāna" teachings, whereas they themselves adhered to the belief that, on what they called the ultimate level of truth, everything is a Oneness. On the other hand, at present, many people assume that the Buddha taught dependent co-arising as an expression of universal interconnectedness, which they further interpret as a teaching on universal Oneness. Although the Buddha did recognize that there are states of meditation yielding an experience of non-duality—with the highest such experience the non-duality of consciousness (AN 10:29)—he noted that even these experiences are conditioned and subject to change. He did not interpret them as conveying or constituting metaphysical truths. Instead, he taught dependent co-arising as a way to avoid taking a position on the objectifying question of whether everything is a Oneness or a plurality, focusing instead directly on the processes of how stress is brought into being and how it can be brought to an end.

For this is precisely how dependent co-arising avoids all of these objectifying dichotomies and modes of thinking: It regards experience simply in terms of processes—events arising and passing away in dependence on other events. No reference is made to the existence or non-existence of any agents creating these events, observers experiencing them, thinkers thinking about them, or an outside world or cosmos underlying them. Thus, instead of viewing events in light of the perceptions and categories of becoming—self-identity and world-views—dependent co-arising perceives them in the Buddha's categorical mode, simply as actions and results in a complex causal sequence.

The pragmatic reasons for adopting this mode of perception are explicit in the formula of dependent co-arising itself: Ignorance—lack of skill in applying the teaching of dependent co-arising—leads to suffering and stress in all their aspects; knowledge—skill in applying this teaching—brings all aspects of suffering and stress to an end.

b) The difficulty of developing and maintaining this mode of perception without slipping back into the perceptions of becoming is indicated by the passages in the second sub-category [§170, §§174-175], where the Buddha declares invalid all questions that attempt to confirm or deny the existence of an agent, owner, or underlying substance framing the factors of dependent co-arising. In each of these cases, he is fending

off attempts to place dependent co-arising within the framework of becoming; and in each case he reiterates that the only framework worth focusing on concerns the relationships among the factors of dependent co-arising in and of themselves.

This is why the Buddha so often stresses the need to develop the perception of not-self, for it counteracts any habitual tendency that—by assuming an agent causing the events, or a subject experiencing them—would interfere with the act of viewing experience in terms of dependent co-arising. At the same time—and this is where the effectiveness of dependent co-arising as a strategy is most explicitly explained—he reduces questions of "self" to the *perception* of "self," thus placing it *within* the sequence of dependent co-arising, rather than *framing* that sequence. As a perception, "self" functions as a sub-factor under fabrication and name-&-form. As a topic of inappropriate questions, it also functions as the sub-factor of attention under name-&-form. When expanded into a theory about the existence or non-existence of a self, the perception of self functions as an object or mode of clinging. Because all of these factors lead to suffering, the Buddha's strategy of placing "self" in this context and applying the perception of "not-self" to every object of clinging induces a sense of dispassion toward all forms of self-identification.

To counteract questions about a "world" or "cosmos" lying behind dependent co-arising, the Buddha employs a similar strategy, even though he does not advocate the use of a parallel "non-world" perception. He first reduces the world/cosmos to a set of psychological factors, the six sense media, which function both as a factor of dependent co-arising and as old kamma [§32, §159; also SN 35:115]. Thus the world, instead of lying *behind* or *around* the sequence of dependent co-arising, is reduced to a factor *within* the sequence. Then the Buddha shows how the world, thus perceived, ends with the ending of craving. By reducing the world to the means by which the perception of "world" is formed, and showing how such a world—instead of being substantial—is synonymous with suffering, he induces a perception of distaste for being reborn in any world at all.

> "And what is the perception of distaste for every world? There is the case where a monk abandoning any attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions with regard to any

world, refrains from them and does not get involved. This is called the perception of distaste for every world." — *AN 10:60*

SN 12:15 [§172] gives a more detailed picture of how this perception of distaste is developed. There the meditator is encouraged to observe the origination and cessation of the world—the six sense media—as it actually occurs. To do this, one needs to have put aside notions of agent and experiencer in order to see these events in and of themselves, and not as a potential world of food for the self. As the mind remains in this mode of perception, watching the repeated origination of the world, the concept of "non-existence" with regard to the world simply does not occur. As it watches the repeated cessation of the world, the concept of "existence" with regard to the world also doesn't occur. In other words, the mind has not mounted a full rejection of these concepts with regard to the world. It has simply entered a mode of perception where they are irrelevant and so do not arise. The only perception retaining any relevancy is that of stress arising, stress passing away. This perception then leads through disenchantment—distaste for any desire to continue feeding on this stress—to dispassion, and through dispassion to release.

When release is gained, it tends to be expressed in terms of the factors of dependent co-arising as the end of becoming and birth.

"Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming." — *SN 56:11*

"Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this-ness [an idiomatic expression meaning, 'this world']." — *SN 22:59*

Although this passage from SN 56:11 still contains the term "my," and although arahants frequently use the terms "I" and "mine" in everyday discourse, there is no longer the conceit, "I am." This is an important distinction. While "I" and "my" are useful designations for functioning in the realm of the six senses, when awakening is reached there is no longer any desire to turn them into an "I am" framing that realm. This is because one of the prominent descriptions for release is that it is free from hunger *(nicchāta)* of every sort. With no hunger, there is no need to assume an agent to find food or a subject needing to be fed. Thus the questions of inappropriate attention—particularly "Am I? Am I not? What am I?"—no

longer address a felt need. This is why an awakened person no longer runs after them.

The question remains, though—at least for those contemplating whether awakening is a desirable goal to pursue—as to how to describe such a person. We have already seen, under the ten undeclared issues, some of the pragmatic reasons for why the Buddha refuses to answer questions about the existence of an awakened person after death, reasons that these questions hold in common with the other undeclared issues. But it turns out that there are additional reasons, peculiar to these questions, for putting them aside. This is why the discourses occasionally give them separate treatment.

4) The tetralemma on the Tathāgata after death. Several passages in the Canon treat this list of four questions separately from their more frequent context in the list of ten undeclared issues. Two such passages—DN 29 [§185] and SN 16:12—give the basic list of pragmatic reasons for putting these four questions aside. But a few passages [§§186-189] hint at other reasons for not answering these questions, stating simply, with little further explanation, that these questions would not occur to one who has gained awakening. This is because such a person knows the aggregates and their cessation as they have come to be—i.e., as they appear to experience without being objectified into states of becoming—and so has abandoned any passion or fondness for the aggregates, becoming, clinging, and craving.

It's possible to view this list of reasons as an extension of the stronger list of pragmatic reasons for putting these questions aside. In other words, these questions wouldn't occur to a person who has abandoned unskillful mental states, because such a person has seen that these questions—and the terms in which they are framed—serve no skillful purpose. But it's also possible to read these reasons as indicating that such questions don't occur to a person who has actually become a Tathāgata because the four alternatives don't do justice to that attainment. In fact, DN 15 [§195] affirms that this too is the case, and states explicitly why this is so: In gaining release, the arahant has gained a sense of exactly how far expression, designation, and description—i.e., language—can go. Having gained this knowledge, the arahant is released from those limitations. This point is further supported by passages [§197, §198] stating that the

experience of this attainment lies beyond even the range of the word, "all"; and still further supported by passages [§190, §191] stating that the Tathāgata is freed from anything by which one might describe him—or, what amounts to the same thing—that the means by which a Tathāgata might be described have been abandoned and totally cease [§§190-194, §202].

These points are related to the way in which the Canon defines and classifies a "being."

> Then Ven. Rādha went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "'A being,' lord. 'A being,' it's said. To what extent is one said to be 'a being'?"
> "Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Rādha: When one is caught up *[satta]* there, tied up *[visatta]* there, one is said to be 'a being *[satta].'*
> "Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, Rādha: When one is caught up there, tied up there, one is said to be 'a being.'" — *SN 23:2*

> "If one stays obsessed with form, that's what one is measured/limited by. Whatever one is measured by, that's how one is classified.
> "If one stays obsessed with feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, that's what one is measured/limited by. Whatever one is measured by, that's how one is classified.
> "If one doesn't stay obsessed with form, monk, that's not what one is measured/limited by. Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified.
> "If one doesn't stay obsessed with feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, that's not what one is measured/limited by. Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified." — *SN 22:36*

Thus an arahant, in abandoning passion, craving, and obsession for the aggregates, can no longer be classified as a being. Free from this classification, he/she cannot be defined, and so cannot be described in any of the four ways proposed by the tetralemma.

This is where the questions of the tetralemma differ radically from the other six undeclared issues. Questions about beings and the cosmos, whether pragmatic or not, are still meaningful and potentially answerable because their terms can be defined [§159; §199]. But because the Tathāgata cannot be defined, the four questions of the tetralemma are *meaningless* and so cannot be answered at all.

This point is so important that the Buddha and his disciples expand on it through cross-questioning. In SN 22:85 [§193], where Ven. Yamaka has insisted that the Tathāgata after death does not exist, Ven. Sāriputta takes him to task and subjects him to a questionnaire, asking how he would identify the Tathāgata in the present life. After running through a long list of the various ways one might identify the Tathāgata with regard to the aggregates, and getting Yamaka to admit that none of them apply to the Tathāgata, Ven. Sāriputta then gets him to admit that if he can't pin down—define—what the Tathāgata is in the present life, there is no way he can legitimately say that the Tathāgata doesn't exist after death. This aggressive cross-questioning, however, does more than convince Yamaka that his previous answer was wrong. It actually leads him to break through to the Dhamma, i.e., to gain stream-entry. Ven. Sāriputta thus asks him,

> "Then, friend Yamaka, how would you answer if you are asked, 'A monk, an arahant, with no more fermentations: What is he with the breakup of the body, after death?'"
> "Thus asked, my friend, I would answer, 'Form is inconstant... Feeling... Perception... Fabrications... Consciousness is inconstant. That which is inconstant is stressful. That which is stressful has ceased and gone to its end."

This answer gains Ven. Sāriputta's approval, in that it limits itself to what can be defined and described.

SN 44:2 [§192] contains the same questionnaire, given by the Buddha to Ven. Anurādha, who had insisted that the Tathāgata after death could be described in a way outside of the four alternatives of the tetralemma. The conclusion here, however, is somewhat different. After getting Anurādha to admit that he could not describe the Tathāgata in the present life, much less after death, the Buddha ends simply by saying that

all he teaches is stress and the end of stress. This, in effect, returns to one of his reasons for not answering any of the ten undeclared issues: They are irrelevant to his program as a teacher in showing people how to gain release.

SN 44:1 and MN 72 [§190, §191] employ another type of cross-questioning—the exploration of an analogy—to give a sense of why the Tathāgata after death cannot be described. In SN 44:1, the bhikkhunī Khemā gets King Pasenadi, who presumably employed many expert accountants and mathematicians to keep track of his palace inventories, to admit that even he had no mathematician capable of calculating the number of sand grains in the river Ganges or the number of buckets of water in the ocean. In the same way, she then tells him, the Tathāgata—freed from the classifications of the aggregates—is "deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean."

The same phrase is mentioned in MN 72, but the analogy explored through cross-questioning is a different one: When a fire has gone out, in which direction has it gone? East? West? North? Or south? Just as these questions cannot be answered because none of the possible directions applies to an extinguished fire, the Buddha says, one cannot say that the arahant after death reappears, doesn't reappear, both, or neither, because none of these alternatives apply. Although the image of the extinguished fire, to a modern mind, might give a very different impression from that of the ocean—the nothingness of the extinguished fire *vs.* the vastness of the ocean—in the Buddha's time the two images were more congruent. The Buddha's questioner in this passage, Vacchagotta, was a brahman. The brahmans in his time held a view that fire, when extinguished, is not annihilated. Instead, it goes into a diffuse state, latent and omnipresent throughout all the elements of the cosmos—even in water. The Buddha himself did not adopt all the particulars of this view, but when talking to Vacchagotta he used some of its implications to suggest to Vacchagotta's mind that the arahant after death is so boundless that he/she cannot be confined to the range of what can be described.

This covers the four main contexts in which the Canon lists the questions the Buddha put aside. As for the few questions falling outside of these contexts, it's easy to see in each case that they can be equated with or related to questions falling within them.

When we survey the main contexts in which the Buddha discusses questions to be put aside, we gain further insight into the way in which questions deserving appropriate attention differ from those derived from the categories and perceptions of blatant objectification (i.e., objectification on the level described in MN 18, rather than the subtler and more inclusive level described in DN 21). We have noted above that these two classes of questions differ in the perceptions they employ. Even more importantly, they differ in the framework they provide for those perceptions, a point illustrated by §170, §174 and §175. In blatant objectification, perceptions of self/other, self/world, agent/object, existence/non-existence, taken as realities, form the framework in which meaning is assigned to the processes of the six senses. Thus the meaning of these processes is determined by measuring them against the framework of realities assumed to underlie them.

In the questions of appropriate attention, however, the roles are reversed. The processes of dependent co-arising—events arising and passing away in dependence on other events—form the framework for such perceptions as self and cosmos. In this framework, these perceptions are measured, not so much for their truth-value in representing assumed realities, as for their role as mental events in either engendering stress or putting it to an end. When questioned from this perspective, issues of agent/object, existence/non-existence can be comprehended as elements of becoming, and thus as inherently perpetuating stress. When dismantled and viewed simply as instances of stress arising and passing away, their terms become totally irrelevant—even antithetical—to the project of putting an end to stress.

As we noted above, all the various maps showing how objectification leads to conflict assign a central role to perception. Thus, by rendering irrelevant the reality usually assigned to the perceptions of blatant objectification, the perceptions of dependent co-arising effectively dismantle the power of that level of objectification over the mind. In this way, these perceptions are not simply an *alternative* to the perceptions of blatant objectification. They act as the *cure* for blatant objectification. And because they can then be turned on any attachment even to appropriate attention, they cure objectification on both levels of subtlety to which the term applies. This helps to explain why, in §19, the Buddha's

breakthrough to the deathless came from cross-questioning himself using the terms of dependent co-arising, for he wasn't simply replacing one set of perceptions with another. He was using these perceptions to free himself from attachment to perception of every sort.

Thus the distinction between the framework of inappropriate attention, expressed in terms of blatant objectification, and the framework of appropriate attention, expressed in terms of dependent co-arising, is that questions framed in terms of the former generally tend to keep one trapped in the framework, leading to continued conflict and stress, whereas questions framed in terms of the latter ultimately lead to a knowing *(aññā)* free not only from stress, but also from mental frameworks of every sort. This knowing is so liberating that even after one emerges from it and returns to the world of the six senses, one is able to use mental frameworks without ever being bound by them. Because the pragmatic effects of appropriate attention and inappropriate attention differ so radically, it should come as no surprise that the distinction between these two frameworks is apparently the primary consideration at work when the Buddha decides whether to put a question aside. However, our analysis has shown that at least two other considerations might also be at work. The first derives from the fact we noted in Chapter Three, that some questions appropriate for one level of right view have to be put aside when developing a higher level of right view. The second consideration derives from the general limitations of linguistic description when trying to discuss a person who has no desire or obsessions by which he/she could be defined. Thus—when issues of etiquette are not at stake—these three considerations seem to be the primary factors at play when the Buddha is deciding whether to answer a question or put it aside:

- the distinction between blatant objectification and appropriate attention;
- the level of right view appropriate for the listener;
- the limitations of language.

This summary can be supported by examining pairs of questions that, on the surface, seem quite similar, but to which the Buddha responded in different ways: answering in one case, and putting aside in another. In some instances, the questions are explicitly stated; in others, they lie

implicit behind declarative statements. For us, the important point lies in trying to discern the patterns in the Buddha's choice of a response, to see why one question was considered skillful and its similar pairing was not. And the three considerations summarized above provide a convenient framework for discerning these patterns and the reasons behind them.

• First, some instances in which the distinction between questions that are not answered and those that are, is based on the difference between blatant objectification and appropriate attention:

In DN 11 [§161], the Buddha chides a monk for asking, "Where do these four great elements—the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property—cease without remainder?" and then tells him that the question should be phrased like this: "Where do water, earth, fire, & wind have no footing? Where are long & short, coarse & fine, fair & foul, name & form brought to a stop without trace?" The four properties listed here are equivalent to the physical cosmos as a whole. Thus the first question is concerned with the physical extent of the cosmos "out there." The second question, however, treats the properties as an instance of name and form, a factor conditioned by consciousness directly experienced "right here" in the context of dependent co-arising. The answer then tells of a type of consciousness that provides no footing for the experience of name and form: consciousness without surface, without end, luminous all around. Aside from a passage in MN 49 [§205], which states that this consciousness is not experienced through the six sense media (the cosmos as defined in [§159]), the Buddha offers no further explanation of it, a fact to which we will return below. But his treatment of this point in DN 11 helps to illustrate a point made in §§156-158, that the physical end of the cosmos is not to be reached by traveling, but the end of the experience of the cosmos is to be found within this body—i.e., by viewing the cosmos as an instance of name and form in the context of dependent co-arising.

In SN 5:10 [§203], Sister Vajirā puts aside four questions posed by Māra: "By whom was this being created? Where is the being's maker? Where has the being originated? Where does the being cease?" Her reasoning is that it is wrong to assume a "being." However, as we have noted above, when the Buddha is asked by Ven. Rādha in SN 23:2 [§199], "To what extent is one said to be 'a being'?" the Buddha answers, "Any

desire, passion, delight, or craving for form [or any of the remaining aggregates], Rādha: When one is caught up *[satta]* there, tied up *[visatta]* there, one is said to be 'a being *[satta].'"* The distinction here is that Māra treats the concept of "a being" from the perspective of blatant objectification, whereas the Buddha's answer shows that it can be more usefully defined—and its origination understood—in terms that would fit into dependent co-arising.

In fact, Sister Vajirā, after rejecting Māra's questions, makes the same point in discussing how the assumption of a being arises—through the presence of the aggregates—and how it is found to be empty when the aggregates are taken apart—i.e., when all craving and clinging for them is removed [§199].

In MN 72 [§190], the Buddha refuses to tell Vacchagotta whether, after death, the arahant reappears, doesn't reappear, both, or neither. However—as we saw above, in SN 56:11 and SN 22:59—he describes part of the realization of full awakening as, "this is the last birth... birth is ended... there is now no further becoming." [See also §18, §68, §79, §112, §138, §139, §141, §142, §195 and §200.] In the first case, Vacchagotta's question is phrased in terms of blatant objectification—looking for the existence, non-existence, etc., of the arahant, conceived to be a being—whereas the realizations of awakening are phrased in terms borrowed from dependent co-arising.

• As for an example of a question answered on one level of right view, only to be put aside on another:

The topic of kamma is treated differently on the preliminary and transcendent levels of right view. The standard description of the Buddha's second knowledge on the night of his awakening, phrased in terms of the preliminary level, indicates that beings experience pleasure and pain in dependence on their own actions.

> "I saw—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with actions: 'These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the

influence of wrong views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.'" — *MN 19*

This point is seconded in the analytical answer the Buddha gives in MN 136 [§66]:

"Having intentionally done—with body, with speech, or with mind—an action that is to be experienced as pleasure, one experiences pleasure. Having intentionally done—with body, with speech, or with mind—an action that is to be experienced as pain, one experiences pain. Having intentionally done—with body, with speech, or with mind—an action that is to be experienced as neither-pleasure-nor-pain, one experiences neither-pleasure-nor-pain."

In fact, the principle that beings experience the results of their actions is so important that the Buddha recommends that all people contemplate it on a daily basis:

"It's not the case only for me that I am the owner of actions, heir to actions, born of actions, related through actions, and have actions as my arbitrator; that—whatever I do, for good or for evil—to that will I fall heir. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—all beings are the owners of actions, heir to actions, born of actions, related through actions, and have actions as their arbitrator. Whatever they do, for good or for evil, to that will they fall heir." — *AN 5:57*

As we noted in our discussion of MN 136 in Chapter Three, the assumption that one will receive the results of one's own actions is essential for developing skillful mental states and abandoning unskillful ones. This assumption underlies the preliminary level of right view.

However, in SN 12:17 [§166], the Buddha declares that knowledge of dependent co-arising helps to avoid the eternalistic leanings of the view that pain is self-made, and the annihilationistic leanings of the view that pain is other-made. (See Appendix Three.) In SN 12:18 [§167] he makes a similar statement about views concerning the self-made or other-made origins of both pleasure and pain. It's important to note, though, that he explains the meaning of *self-made* and *other-made* differently in the two discourses. In SN 12:17, *self-made* means that the agent is the same person as the experiencer: "With the one who acts being the same as the one who experiences, existing from the beginning, pleasure & pain are self-made." *Other-made* in this discourse means that the agent is something or someone else aside from the one who experiences: "With the one who acts being one thing, and the one who experiences being another, existing as the one struck by the feeling." In SN 12:18, however, *self-made* refers to an identity, not between the agent and the experiencer, but between the feeling and the experiencer of the feeling, whereas *other-made* means that feeling is one thing, and the experiencer something else.

In addition to refusing to say that pleasure and pain are self-made or other-made, the Buddha in SN 12:17 and 12:18 also refuses to say that they are both. Had these questions followed the pattern of the tetralemma, he would have then gone on to refuse to say, without qualification, that pleasure and pain are neither self-made nor other-made. However, he qualifies this alternative, denying that they are neither self-made nor other-made in the sense of being spontaneously arisen—i.e., arising without a cause—but affirming that they *can* be described as neither self-made nor other-made in the sense that they are dependently co-arisen. Thus the alternative of being spontaneously arisen does not count as a question put aside, for that alternative is decisively rejected in favor of explaining pleasure and pain in other terms.

The question of pleasure and pain's being self-made, other-made, or both, however, is definitely put aside. And regardless of how the terms are defined, the important point is that the ideas underlying the terms *self-made* and *other-made* parallel the two issues in the ten undeclared issues that refer to the identity or difference between the soul and the body. Thus they are a form of blatant objectification, which is put aside through

right view as defined in terms of the four noble truths and dependent co-arising.

This means that the difference between these passages and those above is that they deal in the different assumptions required to develop different levels of skill on the path. MN 19, MN 136, and AN 5:57 deal with the mental framework of truths beneficial and timely as one embarks on the path of skillful action; SN 12:17 and 12:18, with the mental framework of truths beneficial and timely as one works to avoid objectification. Note that this does not mean that SN 12:17 and 12:18 deal in absolute or ultimate truths, whereas MN 19, MN 136, and AN 5:57 deal only in conventional truths. It's just that the two levels of right view are appropriate for different levels of skill, both of which—although their underlying assumptions may be different—lead ultimately to the same goal, upon which both are dropped.

• And as for some examples of the ambiguities that arise due to the limitations of language:

As we noted above, the Buddha in MN 72 [§190] refuses to tell Vacchagotta whether, after death, the arahant reappears, doesn't reappear, both, or neither. In MN 140, however, he states:

> "Furthermore, a sage at peace doesn't take birth, doesn't age, doesn't die, is unagitated, and is free from longing. He has nothing whereby he would take birth. Not taking birth, will he age? Not aging, will he die? Not dying, will he be agitated? Not being agitated, for what will he long?"

And in SN 44:9 [§204], he states:

> "Just as a fire burns with clinging/sustenance and not without clinging/sustenance, even so I designate the rebirth of one who has clinging/sustenance and not of one without clinging/sustenance."

Unlike the passages from SN 22:59 and SN 56:11, these passages do not deal purely in the framework of dependent co-arising. Thus the difference between blatant objectification and dependent co-arising cannot account for the difference between the Buddha's response-strategy in MN 72 on the one hand, and in MN 140 and SN 44:9 on the other, for all the questions involved treat the arahant as a person, a being.

A similar ambiguity marks some of the discussions of whether anything is left in the experience of total unbinding. AN 4:173 [§208], for example, declares that the act of asking whether, with the cessation of the six sense media, there is anything left, nothing left, both, or neither, is a form of objectification. This is apparently due to the fact that the questions of inappropriate attention—a form of objectification—deal not only in terms of self/other, and existence/non-existence, but also in terms of past, present, and future [§25]. The cessation of the six sense media, however, lies outside of time, so to deal in terms of anything or nothing else leftover afterward would be to impose a sense of time on what lies outside of time. This is why AN 4:173—seconding the discussion in MN 18 [§50]—states that the *possibility* of objectification as an action ceases with the cessation of the six sense media; and goes further to say that the range of *what can be talked about* in terms of objectification ceases with the cessation of the six sense media as well.

Nevertheless, other passages seem to imply either something or nothing existing in the experience of unbinding. For example, as we have noted above, DN 11 [§161] and MN 49 [§205] refer to a type of consciousness—"without surface, without end, luminous all around"—that, to the unawakened mind, sounds like a something. Ud 8:1 [§206] also refers to what seems to be a something—the existence of a dimension that constitutes the end of stress, a dimension that SN 35:117 [§198] says should be experienced—whereas Ud 8:2 [§207] suggests more of a nothing: "It's hard to see the unaffected, for the truth is not easily seen. Craving is pierced in one who knows; for one who sees, there is nothing." Even DN 11's discussion of consciousness without surface deals in ambiguous terms: "Here water, earth, fire, & wind have no footing. Here long & short... name & form are all brought to an end. With the cessation of consciousness, each is here brought to an end." The repeated *here* in this passage would seem to refer to consciousness without surface, but the phrase "the cessation of consciousness" creates an ambiguity. Is this phrase referring to the cessation of consciousness without surface as well, or solely to the cessation of the consciousness-aggregate? Was the Buddha being sloppy in his phrasing here, or deliberately ambiguous?

If we reflect on the fact, mentioned several times in this book, that his teaching is meant not only to be true but also beneficial and timely, that

its coherence lies not in the consistent application of first principles but in the consistent focus of its teleology; if we also reflect on the Buddha's occasional use of blatant objectification in explaining his teachings; and if we reflect on his general attitude toward language—that it cannot encompass the goal, but can be used strategically as part of the practice leading to the goal—then the Buddha's ambiguities in his descriptions of the arahant after death and his descriptions of unbinding would appear to be deliberate. In these various dialogues, he is dealing with people who come to him with different levels of understanding. He teaches them not a general picture of reality—which would be a useless form of objectification—but tools of understanding, forms of right view, that will help them generate the desire to develop right effort leading to the goal of total release. As their questions touch on the goal, they are bound to find different aspects of it intriguing or puzzling—not that unbinding is multifaceted; simply that a mind of multifarious cravings, clingings, and sufferings can become curious about it in multiple ways.

So when the Buddha refuses to say whether the arahant reappears or not, he is emphasizing the fact that, in taking on no identity, the awakened person is boundless. When he says that the arahant is not reborn, he is emphasizing the fact that, when there is freedom from birth, there is freedom from suffering and stress. When he treats unbinding as a something—a dimension, a consciousness without surface—he is making the point that unbinding is not a form of annihilation; when he treats it as a nothing, he is making the point that consciousness without surface, unlike even the infinitude of consciousness experienced in jhāna, has no object at all. When he leaves unexplained this paradox of something and nothing, or the question of how consciousness without surface relates to the cessation of consciousness, his apparent intent is not to get his listeners to abandon all effort at thought. Instead, it's to pique their curiosity, to stir within them a desire to develop right view and to use that right view as part of the complete path leading to a direct, personal experience of the goal. That's where they'll untangle the paradoxes for themselves.

This point is supported by a fact already noted: that the Buddha's most effective use of the strategy of putting a question aside is not when he simply remains silent, but when he follows up with an alternative way of

viewing experience, an alternative mode of perception, that is more beneficial in leading to release.

After all, there are dangers in simply trying to force the mind not to think, for that approach can easily lead to the dead-end state without perception mentioned in DN 1 [§184]. And there are no instances in the discourses where a listener gains release simply on learning that awakening or an awakened one cannot properly be described. The closest examples are those of Ven. Yamaka [§193] and Upasīva [§202], but even in their cases they learn more specifically what has to be abandoned before reaching the point where language—including even the subtle objectification of right view—breaks down.

As we have noted with regard to SN 12:15 [§172], language is transcended not simply by trying to block it out, but by focusing on the issue of stress arising and passing away to the point where even such basic terms as existence and non-existence simply don't come to mind.

This is why the Buddha said that he taught only stress and the ending of stress, for if his listeners focus full attention on these questions, that takes care of everything else.

READINGS

AGNOSTICISM

§ 152. "Monks, there are some contemplatives & brahmans who, being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-like wriggling, on four grounds.... There is the case of a certain contemplative or brahman who does not discern as it actually is that 'This is skillful,' or that 'This is unskillful.' The thought occurs to him, 'I don't discern as it actually is that "This is skillful," or that "This is unskillful." If I... were to declare that "This is skillful," or that "This is unskillful," desire, passion, aversion, or irritation would occur to me; that would be a falsehood for me. Whatever would be a falsehood for me would be a distress for me. Whatever would be a distress for me would be an obstacle for me.' So, out of fear of falsehood, a loathing for falsehood, he does not declare that 'This is skillful,' or that 'This is unskillful.' Being asked questions regarding this or that, he resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-

like wriggling: 'I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not.'

[The second case is virtually identical with the first, substituting 'clinging' for 'falsehood.']

[The third case:] "There is the case of a certain contemplative or brahman who does not discern as it actually is that 'This is skillful,' or that 'This is unskillful'.... 'If I, not discerning as it actually is that "This is skillful," or that "This is unskillful," were to declare that "This is skillful," or that "This is unskillful"—There are contemplatives & brahmans who are pundits, subtle, skilled in debate, who prowl about like hair-splitting marksmen, as it were, shooting (philosophical) view-standpoints to pieces with their dialectic. They might cross-question me, press me for reasons, rebuke me. I might not be able to stand my ground; that would be a distress for me... an obstacle for me.' So, out of a fear for questioning, a loathing for questioning... he resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-like wriggling....

[The fourth case:] "There is the case of a certain contemplative or brahman who is dull & exceedingly stupid. Out of dullness & exceeding stupidity, he—being asked questions regarding this or that—resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-like wriggling: 'If you ask me if there exists another world [after death], if I thought that there exists another world, would I declare that to you? I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not. If you asked me if there isn't another world... both is & isn't... neither is nor isn't... if there are beings who transmigrate... if there aren't... both are & aren't... neither are nor aren't... if the Tathāgata exists after death... doesn't... both... neither... I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not.'" — *DN 1*

§ 153. "Well then—knowing in what way, seeing in what way, does one without delay put an end to fermentations? There is the case where an ordinary uninstructed person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self. That assumption is a fabrication. Now, what is the cause, what is the origination, what is the birth, what is the coming-into-

existence of that fabrication? To an ordinary uninstructed person, touched by that which is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving.... That feeling.... That contact... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It's by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to fermentations.

[The same analysis is then applied to a wide range of views about the existence & non-existence of the self, down to:]

"He doesn't assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form, or feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling, or perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception, or fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications, or consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness, nor does he have the [eternalist] view, 'This self is the same as the cosmos. This I will be after death, constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change,' nor does he have the [annihilationist] view, 'I would not be, neither would there be what is mine. I will not be, neither will there be what is mine,' *but he is doubtful & uncertain, having come to no conclusion with regard to the true Dhamma. That doubt, uncertainty, & coming-to-no-conclusion is a fabrication*. [Italics added.]

"What is the cause, what is the origination, what is the birth, what is the coming-into-existence of that fabrication? To an ordinary uninstructed person, touched by that which is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving.... That feeling.... That contact.... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It's by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to fermentations." — *SN 22:81*

§ 154. “There are these four inconceivables that are not to be conjectured about, that would bring madness & vexation to anyone who conjectured about them. Which four?

“The Buddha-range of the Buddhas [i.e., the range of powers a Buddha develops as a result of becoming a Buddha] is an inconceivable that is not to be conjectured about, that would bring madness & vexation to anyone who conjectured about it.

“The jhāna-range of a person in jhāna [i.e., the range of powers that one may obtain while absorbed in jhāna]....

“The [precise working out of the] results of kamma....

“Conjecture about [the origin, extent, etc., of] the cosmos is an inconceivable that is not to be conjectured about, that would bring madness & vexation to anyone who conjectured about it.

“These are the four inconceivables that are not to be conjectured about, that would bring madness & vexation to anyone who conjectured about them.” — *AN 4:77*

§ 155. “From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. What do you think, monks? Which is greater, the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—or the water in the four great oceans?”

“As we understand the Dhamma taught to us by the Blessed One, this is the greater: the tears we have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.”

“Excellent, monks. Excellent. It is excellent that you thus understand the Dhamma taught by me.

“This is the greater: the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined

with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.

"Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a mother. The tears you have shed over the death of a mother while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

"Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a father... the death of a brother... the death of a sister... the death of a son... the death of a daughter... loss with regard to relatives... loss with regard to wealth... loss with regard to disease. The tears you have shed over loss with regard to disease while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

"Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released."
— *SN 15:3*

§ 156. Then two brahman cosmologists went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, Pūraṇa Kassapa—all-knowing, all-seeing—claims exhaustive knowledge & vision: 'Whether I am standing or walking, awake or asleep, continual, unflagging knowledge & vision is established within me.' He says, 'I dwell with infinite knowledge, knowing & seeing the finite cosmos.' Yet Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta—all-knowing, all-seeing—also claims exhaustive knowledge & vision: 'Whether I am standing or walking, awake or asleep, continual, unflagging knowledge & vision is established within me.' He says, 'I dwell with infinite knowledge, knowing & seeing the infinite cosmos.' Of these two speakers of knowledge, these two who contradict each other, which is telling the truth, and which is lying?"

"Enough, brahmans. Put this question aside. I will teach you the Dhamma. Listen and pay close attention. I will speak."

"Yes, sir," the brahmans responded to the Blessed One, and the Blessed One said, "Suppose that there were four men standing at the four directions, endowed with supreme speed & stride. Like that of a strong archer—well-trained, a practiced hand, a practiced sharp-shooter—shooting a light arrow across the shadow of a palm tree: Such would be the speed with which they were endowed. As far as the east sea is from the west: Such would be the stride with which they were endowed. Then the man standing at the eastern direction would say, 'I, by walking, will reach the end of the cosmos.' He—with a one-hundred year life, a one-hundred year span—would spend one hundred years traveling—apart from the time spent on eating, drinking, chewing & tasting, urinating & defecating, and sleeping to fight off weariness—but without reaching the end of the cosmos he would die along the way. [Similarly with the men standing at the western, southern, & northern directions.] Why is that? I tell you, it isn't through that sort of traveling that the end of the cosmos is known, seen, or reached. But at the same time, I tell you that there is no making an end of suffering & stress without reaching the end of the cosmos.

"These five strings of sensuality are, in the Vinaya of the noble ones, called the cosmos. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing; sounds cognizable via the ear... aromas cognizable via the nose... flavors cognizable via the tongue... tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. These are the five strings of sensuality that, in the Vinaya of the noble ones, are called the cosmos.

"There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is called a monk who, coming to the end of the cosmos, remains at the end of the cosmos. Others say of him, 'He is encompassed in the cosmos; he has not escaped from the cosmos.' And I too say of him, 'He is encompassed in the cosmos; he has not escaped from the cosmos.'

[Similarly with the second, third, & fourth jhānas, and with the attainment of the dimensions of the infinitude of space, the infinitude of consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception [§150].]

"Furthermore, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. And, having seen [that] with discernment, his fermentations are completely ended. This is called a monk who, coming to the end of the cosmos, remains at the end of the cosmos, having crossed over attachment in the cosmos." — *AN 9:38 [See also §79]*

§ 157. On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī, in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then Rohitassa, the son of a deva, in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he stood to one side. As he was standing there he said to the Blessed One: "Is it possible, lord, by traveling, to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away or reappear?"

"I tell you, friend, that it isn't possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear."

"How amazing, lord! How astounding!—how well that has been said by the Blessed One: 'I tell you, friend, that it isn't possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear.' Once I was a seer named Rohitassa, a student of Bhoja, a powerful sky-walker. My speed was as fast as that of a strong archer—well-trained, a practiced hand, a practiced sharp-shooter—shooting a light arrow across the shadow of a palm tree. My stride stretched as far as the east sea is from the west. To me, endowed with such speed, such a stride, there came the desire: 'I will go traveling to the end of the cosmos.' I—with a one-hundred year life, a one-hundred year span—spent one hundred years traveling—apart from the time spent on eating, drinking, chewing & tasting, urinating & defecating, and sleeping to fight off weariness—but without reaching the end of the cosmos I died along

the way. So it's amazing, lord; it's astounding—how well that has been said by the Blessed One: 'I tell you, friend, that it isn't possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear.'"

[When this was said, the Blessed One responded:] "I tell you, friend, that it isn't possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear. But at the same time, I tell you that there is no making an end of suffering & stress without reaching the end of the cosmos. Yet it is just within this fathom-long body, with its perception & intellect, that I declare that there is the cosmos, the origination of the cosmos, the cessation of the cosmos, and the path of practice leading to the cessation of the cosmos."
— *AN 4:45*

§ 158. [Ven. Ānanda:] "Concerning the brief statement made by the Blessed One, after which he entered his dwelling without expounding the detailed meaning—i.e., 'I don't say that the end of the cosmos is to be known, seen, & reached by traveling. But neither do I say that there is a making an end of stress without having reached the end of the cosmos'—I understand the detailed meaning of this statement to be this:

"That by means of which one has a perception of cosmos, a concept of cosmos with regard to the cosmos: That, in the Vinaya of a noble one, is called the 'cosmos.' Now, by means of what does one have a perception of cosmos, a concept of cosmos with regard to the cosmos? By means of the eye... the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect one has a perception of cosmos, a concept of cosmos with regard to the cosmos."
— *SN 35:116*

§ 159. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "'The cosmos, the cosmos *[loka],'* it is said. In what respect does the word 'cosmos' apply?

"Insofar as it disintegrates *[lujjati],* monk, it is called the 'cosmos.' Now, what disintegrates? The eye disintegrates. Forms disintegrate. Consciousness at the eye disintegrates. Contact at the eye disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye—

experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

"The ear disintegrates. Sounds disintegrate....

"The nose disintegrates. Aromas disintegrate....

"The tongue disintegrates. Tastes disintegrate....

"The body disintegrates. Tactile sensations disintegrate....

"The intellect disintegrates. Ideas disintegrate. Consciousness at the intellect consciousness disintegrates. Contact at the intellect disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

"Insofar as it disintegrates, it is called the 'cosmos.'" — *SN 35:82*

§ 160. At Sāvatthī. There the Blessed One addressed the monks: "I will teach you the origination of the cosmos & the ending of the cosmos. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, "And what is the origination of the cosmos? Dependent on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. This is the origination of the cosmos.

"Dependent on the ear & sounds there arises ear-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the nose & aromas there arises nose-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the tongue & flavors there arises tongue-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the body & tactile sensations there arises body-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the intellect & qualities there arises intellect-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes

clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. This is the origination of the cosmos.

"And what is the ending of the cosmos? Dependent on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. Now, from the remainderless cessation & fading away of that very craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering. This is the ending of the cosmos.

"Dependent on the ear & sounds there arises ear-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the nose & aromas there arises nose-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the tongue & flavors there arises tongue-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the body & tactile sensations there arises body-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the intellect & qualities there arises intellect-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. Now, from the remainderless cessation & fading away of that very craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering. This is the ending of the cosmos." — *SN 12:44*

§ 161. "Then the monk attained to such a state of concentration that the way leading to the gods of Brahmā's retinue appeared in his centered mind. So he approached the gods of Brahmā's retinue and, on arrival, asked them, 'Friends, where do these four great elements—the earth

property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property—cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, the gods of Brahmā's retinue said to the monk, 'We also don't know where the four great elements—the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property—cease without remainder. But there is Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror Unconquered, the All-Seeing, Wielder of Power, Sovereign Lord, Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. He is higher and more sublime than we. He should know where the four great elements... cease without remainder.'

"'But where, friends, is the Great Brahmā now?'

"'Monk, we also don't know where Brahmā is or in what way Brahmā is. But when signs appear, light shines forth, and a radiance appears, Brahmā will appear. For these are the portents of Brahmā's appearance: light shines forth and a radiance appears.'

"Then it was not long before the Great Brahmā appeared.

"So the monk approached the Great Brahmā and, on arrival, said, 'Friend, where do these four great elements—the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property—cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, the Great Brahmā said to the monk, 'I, monk, am Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror Unconquered, the All-Seeing, Wielder of Power, Sovereign Lord, Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be.'

"A second time, the monk said to the Great Brahmā, 'Friend, I didn't ask you if you were Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror Unconquered, the All-Seeing, Wielder of Power, Sovereign Lord, Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. I asked you where these four great elements... cease without remainder.'

"A second time, the Great Brahmā said to the monk, 'I, monk, am Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror Unconquered, the All-Seeing, Wielder of Power, Sovereign Lord, Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be.'

“A third time, the monk said to the Great Brahmā, ‘Friend, I didn’t ask you if you were Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror Unconquered, the All-Seeing, Wielder of Power, Sovereign Lord, Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. I asked you where these four great elements… cease without remainder.’

“Then the Great Brahmā, taking the monk by the arm and leading him off to one side, said to him, ‘These gods of Brahmā’s retinue believe, “There is nothing that the Great Brahmā does not know. There is nothing that the Great Brahmā does not see. There is nothing of which the Great Brahmā is unaware. There is nothing that the Great Brahmā has not realized.” That is why I did not say in their presence that I too don’t know where the four great elements… cease without remainder. So you have acted wrongly, acted incorrectly, in bypassing the Blessed One in search of an answer to this question elsewhere. Go right back to the Blessed One and, on arrival, ask him this question. However he answers it, you should take it to heart.’

“Then—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—the monk disappeared from the Brahmā world and immediately appeared in front of me. Having bowed down to me, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to me, ‘Venerable sir, where do these four great elements—the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property—cease without remainder?’

“When this was said, I said to him, ‘Once, monk, some sea-faring merchants took a shore-sighting bird and set sail in their ship. When they could not see the shore, they released the shore-sighting bird. It flew to the east, south, west, north, straight up, and to all the intermediate points of the compass. If it saw the shore in any direction, it flew there. If it did not see the shore in any direction, it returned right back to the ship. In the same way, monk, having gone as far as the Brahmā world in search of an answer to your question, you have come right back to my presence.

“‘Your question should not be phrased in this way: ‘Where do these four great elements—the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property—cease without remainder?’ Instead, it should be phrased like this:

“‘Where do water, earth, fire, & wind
have no footing?

Where are long & short,
coarse & fine,
fair & foul,
name & form
brought to a stop without trace?

"'And the answer to that is:

"'Consciousness without surface,[1]
without end,
luminous all around:
Here water, earth, fire, & wind
have no footing.
Here long & short,
coarse & fine,
fair & foul,
here name & form
are all brought to a stop without trace.
With the cessation of (the aggregate of) consciousness
each is here brought to a stop.'" — *DN 11*

NOTE: 1. For a discussion of this term, see §205, note 4.

THE BUDDHA'S SILENCE

§ 162. Then Vacchagotta the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, he asked the Blessed One: "Now then, Venerable Gotama, is there a self?"

When this was said, the Blessed One was silent.

"Then is there no self?"

A second time, the Blessed One was silent.

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer got up from his seat and left.

Then, not long after Vacchagotta the wanderer had left, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, "Why, lord, did the Blessed One not answer when

asked a question by Vacchagotta the wanderer?"

"Ānanda, if I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is a self—were to answer that there is a self, that would be in company with those contemplatives & brahmans who are exponents of eternalism [see Appendix Two]. If I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is no self—were to answer that there is no self, that would be in company with those contemplatives & brahmans who are exponents of annihilationism. If I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is a self—were to answer that there is a self, would that be in keeping with the arising of knowledge that all phenomena are not-self?"

"No, lord."

"And if I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is no self—were to answer that there is no self, the bewildered Vacchagotta would become even more bewildered: 'Does the self I used to have now not exist?'" — *SN 44:10*

§ 163. Then Uttiya the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One,

"Master Gotama, is it the case that *'The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"Uttiya, I haven't declared that *'The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.'"*

"Very well then, Master Gotama, is it the case that: *'The cosmos is not eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"Uttiya, I haven't declared that *'The cosmos is not eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.'"*

"Very well then, Master Gotama, is it the case that *'The cosmos is finite... ' ... 'The cosmos is infinite... ' ... 'The soul is the same thing as the body... ' ... 'The soul is one thing and the body another... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata exists... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata does not exist... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"Uttiya, I haven't declared that *'After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.'"*

"But, Master Gotama, on being asked, *'Is it the case that "The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless"?'* you inform me, 'Uttiya, I haven't declared that *"The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."'* On being asked, *'Is it the case that "The cosmos is not eternal... " ... "The cosmos is finite... " ... "The cosmos is infinite... " ... "The soul is the same thing as the body... " ... "The soul is one thing and the body another... " ... "After death a Tathāgata exists... " ... "After death a Tathāgata does not exist... " ... "After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist... " ... "After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless"?'* you inform me, 'Uttiya, I haven't declared that *"After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."'* Now is there anything you have declared?"

"Uttiya, having directly known it, I teach the Dhamma to my disciples for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding."

"And, Master Gotama, when having directly known it, you teach the Dhamma to your disciples for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding, will all the cosmos be led (to release), or a half of it, or a third?"

When this was said, the Blessed One was silent.

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda: "Don't let Uttiya the wanderer acquire the evil view-standpoint that, 'When I asked him an all-encompassing question, Gotama the contemplative faltered and didn't reply. Perhaps he was unable to.' That would be for his long-term harm & suffering." So he said to Uttiya, "Very well then, my friend, I will give you an analogy, for there are cases where it is through the use of analogy that observant people can understand the meaning of what is being said.

"Suppose that there were a royal frontier city with strong ramparts, strong walls & arches, and a single gate. In it would be a wise, competent,

& knowledgeable gatekeeper to keep out those he didn't know and to let in those he did. Walking along the path encircling the city, he wouldn't see a crack or an opening in the walls big enough for even a cat to slip through. Although he wouldn't know that 'So-and-so many creatures enter or leave the city,' he would know this: 'Whatever large creatures enter or leave the city all enter or leave it through this gate.'

"In the same way, the Tathāgata isn't concerned with whether all the cosmos or half of it or a third of it will be led (to release) by means of that (Dhamma). But he does know this: 'All those who have been led, are being led, or will be led (to release) from the cosmos have done so, are doing so, or will do so after having abandoned the five hindrances—those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment—having well-established their minds in the four establishings of mindfulness, and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for awakening. When you asked the Blessed One this question, you had already asked it in another way. That's why he didn't respond."
— *AN 10:95*

QUESTIONS OF INAPPROPRIATE ATTENTION

§ 164. "Monks, I will teach you dependent co-arising & dependently co-arisen phenomena. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak....

"Now, what is dependent co-arising? From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death. Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property stands—this regularity of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma, this this/that conditionality. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain, & says, 'Look.' From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death.

[Similarly down through the causal stream to:]

"From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property stands—this regularity of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma, this this/that conditionality. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it,

teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain, & says, 'Look.' From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. What's there in this way is a reality, not an unreality, not other than what it seems, conditioned by this/that. This is called dependent co-arising.

"And what are dependently co-arisen phenomena? Aging-&-death is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon: inconstant, compounded, dependently co-arisen, subject to ending, subject to passing away, subject to fading, subject to cessation.

[Similarly down through the causal stream to:]

"Ignorance is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon: inconstant, compounded, dependently co-arisen, subject to ending, subject to passing away, subject to fading, subject to cessation. These are called dependently co-arisen phenomena.

"When a disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they have come to be, it is not possible that he would run after the past, thinking, *'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past?'* or that he would run after the future, thinking, *'Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?'* or that he would be inwardly perplexed about the immediate present, thinking, *'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?'*

"Such a thing is not possible. Why is that? Because the disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they have come to be." — *SN 12:20*

§ 165. "Good, monks. Just as you say that, so do I: When this isn't, that isn't. From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that. In other words, from the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation

of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now, knowing thus and seeing thus, would you run after the past, thinking, *'Were we in the past? Were we not in the past? What were we in the past? How were we in the past? Having been what, what were we in the past'?"*

"No, lord."

"Knowing thus and seeing thus, would you run after the future, thinking, *'Shall we be in the future? Shall we not be in the future? What shall we be in the future? How shall we be in the future? Having been what, what shall we be in the future'?"*

"No, lord."

"Knowing thus and seeing thus, would you be inwardly perplexed about the immediate present, thinking, *'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound'?"*

"No, lord."

"Knowing thus and seeing thus, would you say, 'The Teacher is our respected mentor. We speak thus out of respect for the Teacher'?"

"No, lord."

"Knowing thus and seeing thus, would you say, 'The Contemplative says this. We speak thus in line with the Contemplative's words'?"

"No, lord."

"Knowing thus and seeing thus, would you dedicate yourselves to another teacher?"

"No, lord."

"Knowing thus and seeing thus, would you return to the observances, grand ceremonies, & auspicious rites of common contemplatives & brahmans as having any essence?"

"No, lord."

"Is it the case that you speak simply in line with what you have known, seen, & understood for yourselves?"

"Yes, lord."

"Good, monks. You have been guided by me in this Dhamma which is to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be realized by the observant for themselves. For it has been said, 'This Dhamma is to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be by the observant for themselves,' and it was in reference to this that it was said." — *MN 38*

DEPENDENT CO-ARISING: EXTREMES AVOIDED

§ 166. [Kassapa the cloth-less ascetic:] "Now, then, Master Gotama, is pain self-made?"

"Don't say that, Kassapa," the Blessed One said.

"Then is pain other-made?"

"Don't say that, Kassapa," the Blessed One said.

"Then is pain self-made & other-made?"

"Don't say that, Kassapa," the Blessed One said.

"Then is pain, without self-making or other-making, spontaneously arisen?"

"Don't say that, Kassapa," the Blessed One said.

"Then is there no pain?"

"It's not the case that there is no pain, Kassapa. There is pain."

"Then in that case, Master Gotama doesn't know, doesn't see pain."

"It's not the case that I don't know, don't see pain, Kassapa. I do know pain. I do see pain."...

"Then tell me about pain, Master Gotama. Teach me about pain."

"Kassapa, the statement, 'With the one who acts being the same as the one who experiences, existing from the beginning, pleasure & pain are self-made': This circles around eternalism [see Appendix Two]. And the statement, 'With the one who acts being one thing, and the one who experiences being another, existing as the one struck by the feeling': This

circles around annihilationism. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.... From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.... From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering." — *SN 12:17*

§ 167. As he was sitting there, Timbarukkha the wanderer said to the Blessed One, "Now, then, Master Gotama, are pleasure & pain self-made?"

"Don't say that, Timbarukkha," the Blessed One said.

"Then are pleasure & pain other-made?"

"Don't say that, Timbarukkha," the Blessed One said.

"Then are pleasure & pain self-made & other-made?"

"Don't say that, Timbarukkha," the Blessed One said.

"Then are pleasure & pain, without self-making or other-making, spontaneously arisen?"

"Don't say that, Timbarukkha," the Blessed One said.

"Then is there no pleasure & pain?"

"It's not the case that there is no pleasure & pain, Timbarukkha. There is pleasure & pain."

"Then in that case, Master Gotama doesn't know, doesn't see, pleasure & pain."

"It's not the case that I don't know, don't see, pleasure & pain, Timbarukkha. I do know pleasure & pain. I do see pleasure & pain."...

"Then tell me about pleasure & pain, Master Gotama. Teach me about pleasure & pain."

"Timbarukkha, I don't say that—with the feeling being the same as the one who feels, existing from the beginning—pleasure & pain are self-made. And I don't say that—with feeling being one thing and the one who feels another, existing as the one struck by the feeling—pleasure & pain are other-made. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches

the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.... From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.... From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering." — *SN 12:18*

§ 168. "Whatever contemplatives & brahmans—teachers of kamma who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made: Even that is dependent on contact. Whatever contemplatives & brahmans—teachers of kamma who declare that pleasure & pain are other-made... self-made & other-made... without self-making or other-making, spontaneously arisen: Even that is from contact as a requisite condition.

"That any contemplatives & brahmans—teachers of kamma who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made—would be sensitive to pleasure & pain other than through contact: That isn't possible. That any contemplatives & brahmans—teachers of kamma who declare that pleasure & pain are other-made... self-made & other-made... without self-making or other-making, spontaneously arisen—would be sensitive to pleasure & pain other than through contact: That isn't possible. [Compare the final analysis in DN 1, §184]

"When there is a body, pleasure & pain arise internally with bodily intention as the cause; or when there is speech, pleasure & pain arise internally with verbal intention as the cause; or when there is intellect, pleasure & pain arise internally with intellectual intention as the cause.

"From ignorance as a requisite condition, then either of one's own accord one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally, or because of others one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally. Either alert one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally, or unalert one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally. [Similarly with verbal & intellectual fabrications.]

"Now, ignorance is bound up in these things. From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, there no longer exists (the sense of) the body on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise. There no longer exists the speech... the intellect on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise. There no longer exists the field, the site, the dimension, or the issue on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise." — *SN 12:25*

§ 169. A certain brahman said to the Blessed One: "Now, then, Master Gotama: Is the one who acts the same one who experiences [the results of the act]?"

"[To say,] brahman, 'The one who acts is the same one who experiences,' is one extreme."

"Then, Master Gotama, is the one who acts someone other than the one who experiences?"

"[To say,] brahman, 'The one who acts is someone other than the one who experiences,' is the second extreme. Avoiding both of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.... From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.... From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering." — *SN 12:46*

§ 170. [Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "Now tell me, Sāriputta my friend: Is aging-&-death self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making—spontaneously arisen?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "It's not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that aging-&-death is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it's spontaneously arisen. However, from birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death."

"Now tell me, friend Sāriputta: Is birth.... Is becoming.... Is clinging/sustenance... Is craving.... Is feeling.... Is contact.... Are the six sense media self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or —without self-making or other-making—spontaneously arisen?"

"It's not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that the six sense media are self-made, that they are other-made, that they are both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—they're spontaneously arisen. However, from name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media."

"Now tell me, friend Sāriputta: Is name-&-form self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making— spontaneously arisen?"

"It's not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that name-&-form is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it's spontaneously arisen. However, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form."

"Now tell me, friend Sāriputta: Is consciousness self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making—spontaneously arisen?"

"It's not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that consciousness is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it's spontaneously arisen. However, from name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness."

"Just now, friend Sāriputta, I understood your statement as, 'It's not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that name-&-form is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it's spontaneously arisen. However, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.' But then I understood your statement as, 'It's not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that consciousness is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it's spontaneously arisen. However, from name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.' Now how is the meaning of these statements to be understood?"

Ven. Sāriputta: “Very well then, Koṭṭhita my friend, I will give you an analogy; for there are cases where it is through the use of an analogy that observant people can understand the meaning of what is being said. It is as if two sheaves of reeds were to stand leaning against one another. In the same way, from name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form. From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media. From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

“If one were to pull away one of those sheaves of reeds, the other would fall; if one were to pull away the other, the first one would fall. In the same way, from the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness, from the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.” — *SN 12:67*

§ 171. Then a brahman cosmologist went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Now, then, Master Gotama, does everything exist?”

“‘Everything exists’ is the senior form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then, Master Gotama, does everything not exist?”

"'Everything does not exist' is the second form of cosmology, brahman."

"Then is everything a Oneness?"

"'Everything is a Oneness' is the third form of cosmology, brahman."

"Then is everything a plurality?"

"'Everything is a plurality is the fourth form of cosmology, brahman. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.... From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.... From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering." — *SN 12:48*

§ 172. Then Ven. Kaccāyana Gotta approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "Lord, 'Right view, right view,' it is said. To what extent is there right view?"

"By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is supported by [takes as its object] a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world [cosmos] as it has come to be with right discernment, 'non-existence' with reference to the world doesn't occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it has come to be with right discernment, 'existence' with reference to the world doesn't occur to one.

"By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings [sustenances], & biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on 'my self.' He has no doubt or uncertainty that mere stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. It's to this extent, Kaccāyana, that there is right view.

"'Everything exists': That is one extreme. 'Everything doesn't exist': That is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata

teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications....” — *SN 12:15*

§ 173. Then Bāhiya, hurriedly leaving Jeta’s Grove and entering Sāvatthī, saw the Blessed One going for alms in Sāvatthī—serene & inspiring serene confidence, calming, his senses at peace, his mind at peace, having attained the utmost tranquility & poise, tamed, guarded, his senses restrained, a Great One *[nāga].* Seeing him, he approached the Blessed One and, on reaching him, threw himself down, with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, and said, “Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term benefit & happiness.”

When this was said, the Blessed One said to him, “This is not the time, Bāhiya. We have entered the town for alms.”

A second time, Bāhiya said to the Blessed One: “But it is hard to know for sure what dangers there may be for the Blessed One’s life, or what dangers there may be for mine. Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term benefit & happiness.”

A second time, the Blessed One said to him, “This is not the time, Bāhiya. We have entered the town for alms.”

A third time, Bāhiya said to the Blessed One: “But it is hard to know for sure what dangers there may be for the Blessed One’s life, or what dangers there may be for mine. Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term benefit & happiness.”

“Then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bāhiya, there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress.”

Through hearing this brief explanation of the Dhamma from the Blessed One, the mind of Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth right then and there was released from fermentations through lack of clinging/sustenance. Having exhorted Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth with this brief explanation of the Dhamma, the Blessed One left. — *Ud 1:10*

DEPENDENT CO-ARISING: INVALID QUESTIONS

§ 174. "Monks, there are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second; intellectual intention the third; and consciousness the fourth. These are the four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born."

When this was said, Ven. Moḷiya Phagguna said to the Blessed One, "Lord, who feeds on the consciousness-nutriment?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said. "I don't say 'feeds.' If I were to say 'feeds,' then 'Who feeds on the consciousness-nutriment?' would be a valid question. But I don't say that. When I don't say that, the valid question is, 'Consciousness-nutriment for what?' And the valid answer is, 'Consciousness-nutriment for the production of future coming-into-being. When that has come into being and exists, then the six sense media. From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.'"

"Lord, who makes contact?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said. "I don't say 'makes contact.' If I were to say 'makes contact,' then 'Who makes contact?' would be a valid question. But I don't say that. When I don't say that, the valid question is, 'From what as a requisite condition comes contact?' And the valid answer is, 'From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.'"

"Lord, who feels?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said. "I don't say 'feels.' If I were to say 'feels,' then 'Who feels?' would be a valid question. But I don't say that. When I don't say that, the valid question is, 'From what as a

requisite condition comes feeling?' And the valid answer is, 'From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.'"

"Lord, who craves?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said. "I don't say 'craves.' If I were to say 'craves,' then 'Who craves?' would be a valid question. But I don't say that. When I don't say that, the valid question is, 'From what as a requisite condition comes craving?' And the valid answer is, 'From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.'"

"Lord, who clings?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said. "I don't say 'clings.' If I were to say 'clings,' then 'Who clings?' would be a valid question. But I don't say that. When I don't say that, the valid question is, 'From what as a requisite condition comes clinging?' And the valid answer is, 'From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging. From clinging as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.[1]

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of the six sense media2 comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering." — *SN 12:12*

NOTE: 1. An alternative translation for this exchange—and one that, in light of the topic of nutriment, might actually be more apt—is:

"Lord, who takes sustenance?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said. "I don't say 'takes sustenance.' If I were to say 'takes sustenance,' then 'Who takes sustenance?' would be a valid question. But I don't say that. When I don't say that, the valid question is, 'From

what as a requisite condition comes sustenance?' And the valid answer is, 'From craving as a requisite condition comes sustenance. From sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering."

2. This refers to the moment of awakening, when the six sense media are transcended. See §198 and §208, and the discussion of "consciousness without surface" in *The Mind Like Fire Unbound,* chapter 1.

§ 175. The Blessed One said, "From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.... From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering."

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One: "Which is the aging-&-death, lord, and whose is the aging-&-death?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said. "If one were to ask, 'Which is the aging-&-death, and whose is the aging-&-death?' and if one were to say, 'Aging-&-death is one thing, and the aging-&-death is something/someone else's,' both of them would have the same meaning, even though their words would differ. When there is the view that the soul is the same as the body, there is no leading the holy life. And when there is the view that the soul is one thing and the body another, there is no leading the holy life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death."

"Which is the birth, lord, and whose is the birth?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.... "From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth."

"Which is the becoming, lord, and whose is the becoming?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.... "From clinging as a requisite condition comes becoming."

"Which is the clinging, lord, and whose is the clinging?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.... "From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging."

"Which is the craving, lord, and whose is the craving?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.... "From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving."

"Which is the feeling, lord, and whose is the feeling?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.... "From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling."

"Which is the contact, lord, and whose is the contact?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.... "From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact."

"Which are the six sense media, lord, and whose are the six sense media?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.... "From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media."

"Which is the name-&-form, lord, and whose is the name-&-form?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.... "From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form."

"Which is the consciousness, lord, and whose is the consciousness?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.... "From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness."

"Which are the fabrications, lord, and whose are the fabrications?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said. "If one were to ask, 'Which are the fabrications, and whose are the fabrications?' and if one were to say, 'Fabrications are one thing, and these fabrications are something/someone else's,' both of them would have the same meaning, even though their words would differ. When there is the view that the soul is the same as the body, there is no leading the holy life. And when there is the view that the soul is one thing and the body another, there is no leading the holy life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, every one of these writhings & wrigglings & wigglings —'Which aging-&-death, and whose aging-&-death?' or 'Aging-&-death is one thing, and this aging-&-death is something/someone else's' or 'The soul is the same as the body,' or 'The soul is one thing and the body another'—are abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra

stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

"From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, every one of these writhings & wrigglings & wigglings—'Which is the birth.... Which is the becoming.... Which is the clinging.... Which is the craving.... Which is the feeling.... Which is the contact.... Which are the six sense media.... Which is the name-&-form.... Which is the consciousness.... Which are the fabrications, and whose are the fabrications?' or 'Fabrications are one thing, and these fabrications are something/someone else's' or 'The soul is the same as the body,' or 'The soul is one thing and the body another'—are abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising." — *SN 12:35*

THE TEN UNDECLARED ISSUES

§ 176. Then, when it was evening, Ven. Māluṅkyaputta arose from seclusion and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, just now, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: 'These view-standpoints that are undeclared, set aside, discarded by the Blessed One... I don't approve, I don't accept that the Blessed One has not declared them to me. I'll go ask the Blessed One about this matter. If he declares to me that *"The cosmos is eternal,"* or *"The cosmos is not eternal,"* or *"The cosmos is finite,"* or *"The cosmos is infinite,"* or *"The soul is the same thing as the body,"* or *"The soul is one thing and the body another,"* or *"After death a Tathāgata exists,"* or *"After death a Tathāgata does not exist,"* or *"After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,"* or that *"After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,"* then I will live the holy life under him. If he doesn't declare to me that *"The cosmos is eternal,"*... or that *"After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,"* then I will renounce the training and return to the lower life.'

"Lord, if the Blessed One knows that *'The cosmos is eternal,'* then may he declare to me that *'The cosmos is eternal.'* If he knows that *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* then may he declare to me that *'The cosmos is not eternal.'* But if he doesn't know or see whether the cosmos is eternal or not eternal,

then, in one who is unknowing & unseeing, the straightforward thing is to admit, 'I don't know. I don't see.' .... If he doesn't know or see whether *'After death a Tathāgata exists... does not exist... both exists & does not exist... neither exists nor does not exist,'* then, in one who is unknowing & unseeing, the straightforward thing is to admit, 'I don't know. I don't see.'"

"Māluṅkyaputta, did I ever say to you, 'Come, Māluṅkyaputta, live the holy life under me, and I will declare to you that *'The cosmos is eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is finite,'* or *'The cosmos is infinite,'* or *'The soul is the same thing as the body,'* or *'The soul is one thing and the body another,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist'?"*

"No, lord."

"And did you ever say to me, 'Lord, I will live the holy life under the Blessed One and [in return] he will declare to me that *'The cosmos is eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is finite,'* or *'The cosmos is infinite,'* or *'The soul is the same thing as the body,'* or *'The soul is one thing and the body another,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist'?"*

"No, lord."

"Then that being the case, foolish man, who are you to be claiming grievances?

"Māluṅkyaputta, if anyone were to say, 'I won't live the holy life under the Blessed One as long as he does not declare to me that *"The cosmos is eternal,"*... or that *"After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,"'* the man would die and those things would still remain undeclared by the Tathāgata.

"It's just as if a man were wounded with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. His friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives would provide him with a surgeon, and the man would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble warrior, a brahman, a merchant, or a worker.' He would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know the given name & clan name of the man

who wounded me… until I know whether he was tall, medium, or short… until I know whether he was dark, ruddy-brown, or golden-colored… until I know his home village, town, or city… until I know whether the bow with which I was wounded was a long bow or a crossbow… until I know whether the bowstring with which I was wounded was fiber, bamboo threads, sinew, hemp, or bark… until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was wild or cultivated… until I know whether the feathers of the shaft with which I was wounded were those of a vulture, a stork, a hawk, a peacock, or another bird… until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was bound with the sinew of an ox, a water buffalo, a langur, or a monkey.' He would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was that of a common arrow, a curved arrow, a barbed, a calf-toothed, or an oleander arrow.' The man would die and those things would still remain unknown to him.

"In the same way, if anyone were to say, 'I won't live the holy life under the Blessed One as long as he does not declare to me that *"The cosmos is eternal,"*… or that *"After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,"*' the man would die and those things would still remain undeclared by the Tathāgata.

"Māluṅkyaputta, it's not the case that when there is the view, *'The cosmos is eternal,'* there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* there is the living of the holy life. When there is the view, *'The cosmos is eternal,'* and when there is the view, *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* there is still the birth, there is the aging, there is the death, there is the sorrow, lamentation, pain, despair, & distress whose destruction I make known right in the here & now.

"It's not the case that when there is the view, *'The cosmos is finite,'* there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, *'The cosmos is infinite,'* there is the living of the holy life. When there is the view, *'The cosmos is finite,'* and when there is the view, *'The cosmos is infinite,'* there is still the birth, there is the aging, there is the death, there is the sorrow, lamentation, pain, despair, & distress whose destruction I make known right in the here & now.

"It's not the case that when there is the view, *'The soul is the same thing as the body,'* there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, *'The soul is one thing and the body another,'* there is the living of the holy life. When there is the view, *'The soul is the same thing as the body,'* and when there is the view, *'The soul is one thing and the body another,'* there is still the birth, there is the aging, there is the death, there is the sorrow, lamentation, pain, despair, & distress whose destruction I make known right in the here & now.

"It's not the case that when there is the view, *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist'* there is the living of the holy life. When there is the view, *'After death a Tathāgata exists'... 'After death a Tathāgata does not exist'... 'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist'... 'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,'* there is still the birth, there is the aging, there is the death, there is the sorrow, lamentation, pain, despair, & distress whose destruction I make known right in the here & now.

"So, Māluṅkyaputta, remember what is undeclared by me as undeclared, and what is declared by me as declared. And what is undeclared by me? *'The cosmos is eternal,'* is undeclared by me. *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* is undeclared by me. *'The cosmos is finite'... 'The cosmos is infinite'... 'The soul is the same thing as the body'... 'The soul is one thing and the body another'... 'After death a Tathāgata exists'... 'After death a Tathāgata does not exist'... 'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist'... 'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,'* is undeclared by me.

"And why are they undeclared by me? Because they are not connected with the goal, are not fundamental to the holy life. They do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That's why they are undeclared by me.

"And what is declared by me? *'This is stress,'* is declared by me. *'This is the origination of stress,'* is declared by me. *'This is the cessation of stress,'* is

declared by me. *'This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,'* is declared by me. And why are they declared by me? Because they are connected with the goal, are fundamental to the holy life. They lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That's why they are declared by me.

"So, Māluṅkyaputta, remember what is undeclared by me as undeclared, and what is declared by me as declared."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Māluṅkyaputta delighted in the Blessed One's words. — *MN 63*

§ 177. On one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying near Rājagaha, at Tapoda monastery. Then, as night was ending, he got up & went to the Tapoda Hot Springs to bathe his limbs. Having bathed his limbs and having gotten out of the springs, he stood wearing only his lower robe, drying his limbs. Kokanuda the wanderer, as night was ending, also got up & went to the Tapoda Hot Springs to bathe his limbs. He saw Ven. Ānanda from afar, and on seeing him said to him, "Who are you, my friend?"

"I am a monk, my friend."

"Which kind of monk?"

"A son-of-the-Sakyan contemplative."

"I would like to ask you about a certain point, if you would give me leave to pose a question."

"Go ahead and ask. Having heard [your question], I'll inform you."

"How is it, my friend: *'The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.'* Is this the sort of view you have?"

"No, my friend, I don't have that sort of view."

"Very well then: *'The cosmos is not eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.'* Is this the sort of view you have?"

"No, my friend, I don't have that sort of view."

"Very well then: *'The cosmos is finite... '... 'The cosmos is infinite... ' ... 'The soul is the same thing as the body... ' ... 'The soul is one thing and the body another... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata exists... '... 'After death a Tathāgata does not exist... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist... ' ... 'After*

death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.' Is this the sort of view you have?"

"No, my friend, I don't have that sort of view."

"Then in that case, do you not know or see?"

"No, my friend. It's not the case that I don't know, I don't see. I do know. I do see."

"But on being asked, 'How is it, my friend: *"The cosmos is eternal.* Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless." Is this the sort of view you have?' you inform me, 'No, my friend, I don't have that sort of view.' On being asked, 'Very well then: *"The cosmos is not eternal... "... "The cosmos is finite... "... "The cosmos is infinite... " ... "The soul is the same thing as the body... " ... "The soul is one thing and the body another... " ... "After death a Tathāgata exists... " ... "After death a Tathāgata does not exist... " ... "After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist... " ... "After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."* Is this the sort of view you have?' you inform me, 'No, my friend, I don't have that sort of view.' But on being asked, 'Then in that case, do you not know or see?' you inform me, 'No, my friend. It's not the case that I don't know or see. I do know. I do see.' Now, how is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

"'The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless,' is a view-standpoint. *'The cosmos is not eternal...' ... 'The cosmos is finite... ' ... 'The cosmos is infinite... ' ... 'The soul is the same thing as the body... ' ... 'The soul is one thing and the body another... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata exists... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata does not exist... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist... ' ... 'After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless,'* is a view-standpoint. The extent to which there are view-standpoints, view-stances, the taking up of views, obsessions with views, the cause of views, & the uprooting of views: that's what I know. That's what I see. Knowing that, I say 'I know.' Seeing that, I say 'I see.' Why should I say 'I don't know, I don't see'? I do know. I do see."

"What is your name, my friend? What do your fellows in the holy life call you?"

"My name is Ānanda, my friend, and that's what my fellows in the holy life call me."

"What? Have I been talking with the great teacher without realizing that he was Ven. Ānanda? Had I recognized that he was Ven. Ānanda, I would not have cross-examined him so much. May Ven. Ānanda please forgive me." — *AN 10:96*

§ 178. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, what is the cause, what is the reason, why uncertainty doesn't arise in an instructed disciple of the noble ones over the undeclared issues?"

"Because of the cessation of views, monk, uncertainty doesn't arise in an instructed disciple of the noble ones over the undeclared issues. The view-standpoint, *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* the view-standpoint, *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* the view-standpoint, *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* the view-standpoint, *'After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist':* The uninstructed run-of-the-mill person doesn't discern view, doesn't discern the origination of view, doesn't discern the cessation of view, doesn't discern the path of practice leading to the cessation of view, and so for him that view grows. He is not freed from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

"But the instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns view, discerns the origination of view, discerns the cessation of view, discerns the path of practice leading to the cessation of view, and so for him that view ceases. He is freed from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs. He is freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

"Thus knowing, thus seeing, the instructed disciple of the noble ones doesn't declare that *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* doesn't declare that *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* doesn't declare that *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* doesn't declare that *'After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist.'* Thus knowing, thus seeing, he is thus of a nature not to declare the undeclared issues. Thus knowing, thus

seeing, he isn't paralyzed, doesn't quake, doesn't shiver or shake over the undeclared issues.

"'*After death a Tathāgata exists*'—this craving-standpoint, this perception-standpoint, this product of conceiving, this product of objectification, this clinging-standpoint: That's [an expression of] anguish.[1] '*After death a Tathāgata doesn't exist*': That's anguish. '*After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist*': That's anguish. '*After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist*': That's anguish.

"The uninstructed run-of-the-mill person doesn't discern anguish, doesn't discern the origination of anguish, doesn't discern the cessation of anguish, doesn't discern the path of practice leading to the cessation of anguish, and so for him that anguish grows. He is not freed from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

"But the instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns anguish, discerns the origination of anguish, discerns the cessation of anguish, discerns the path of practice leading to the cessation of anguish, and so for him that anguish ceases. He is freed from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs. He is freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

"Thus knowing, thus seeing, the instructed disciple of the noble ones doesn't declare that *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* doesn't declare that *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* doesn't declare that *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* doesn't declare that *'After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist.'* Thus knowing, thus seeing, he is thus of a nature not to declare the undeclared issues. Thus knowing, thus seeing, he isn't paralyzed, doesn't quake, doesn't shiver or shake over the undeclared issues." — *AN 7:51*

NOTE: 1. "Anguish" here translates *vippaṭisāra,* which is usually rendered into English as "remorse" or "regret." Here, however, the feeling of *vippaṭisāra* relates to concerns about the future, rather than the past, and so neither remorse nor regret are appropriate to the context. The anguish alluded to in this passage is based either on the fear that awakening would entail an end to existence or on the contrary fear that it wouldn't.

§ 179. When the night had passed, the senior monks put on their robes in the early morning and—taking their bowls & outer robes—went to Citta's residence. There they sat down on the appointed seats. Citta the householder went to them and, having bowed down to them, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the most senior monk:

"Venerable sir, concerning the various views that arise in the world: *'The cosmos is eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is finite,'* or *'The cosmos is infinite,'* or *'The soul is the same thing as the body,'* or *'The soul is one thing and the body another,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist';* these along with the sixty-two views mentioned in the Brahmajāla [DN 1: §152, §184]—when what is present do these views come into being, and when what is absent do they not come into being?"

When this was said, the senior monk was silent. A second time... A third time Citta the householder asked, "Concerning the various views that arise in the world... when what is present do they come into being, and what is absent do they not come into being?" A third time the senior monk was silent.

Now on that occasion Ven. Isidatta was the most junior of all the monks in that Community. Then he said to the senior monk, "Allow me, venerable sir, to answer Citta the householder's question."

"Go ahead & answer it, friend Isidatta."

"Now, householder, are you asking this: 'Concerning the various views that arise in the world... when what is present do they come into being, and what is absent do they not come into being'?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"Concerning the various views that arise in the world, householder... when self-identity view is present, these views come into being; when self-identity view is absent, they don't come into being."

"But, venerable sir, how does self-identity view come into being?"

"There is the case, householder, where an ordinary uninstructed person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the

self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception. He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications. He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. This is how self-identity view comes into being."

"And, venerable sir, how does self-identity view not come into being?"

"There is the case, householder, where a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for men of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—doesn't assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He doesn't assume feeling to be the self.... He doesn't assume perception to be the self.... He doesn't assume fabrications to be the self.... He doesn't assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. This is how self-identity view doesn't come into being."
— *SN 41:3*

§ 180. [Vacchagotta the wanderer:] "Now, Master Moggallāna, what is the cause, what is the reason why—when wanderers of other sects are asked in this way, they answer that *'The cosmos is eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is finite,'* or *'The cosmos is infinite,'* or *'The soul is the same thing as the body,'* or *'The soul is one thing and the body another,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,'* yet when Gotama the contemplative is asked in this way, he does not answer that *'The cosmos is eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is finite,'* or *'The cosmos is infinite,'* or *'The soul is the same thing as the body,'* or *'The soul is one thing and the body another,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist'?"*

[Ven. MahāMoggallāna:] "Vaccha, the members of other sects assume of the eye that 'This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.' They assume of the ear… the nose… the tongue… the body… the intellect that 'This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.' That is why, when asked in this way, they answer *that 'The cosmos is eternal'…* or that *'After death Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist.'* But the Tathāgata, worthy and rightly self-awakened, doesn't assume of the eye that 'This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.' He doesn't assume of the ear… the nose… the tongue… the body… the intellect that 'This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.' That is why, when asked in this way, he does not answer that *'The cosmos is eternal'…* or that *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist.'"*

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer, getting up from his seat, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he [addressed the same questions to the Blessed One and received exactly the same explanation].

"How amazing, Master Gotama! How astounding!—how the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching! Just now, Master Gotama, I went to Moggallāna the contemplative and, on arrival, asked him about this matter, and he answered me with the same words, the same phrasing, as Master Gotama. How amazing, Master Gotama! How astounding!—how the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching!" — *SN 44:7*

§ 181. [Vacchagotta the wanderer:] "Now, Master Gotama, what is the cause, what is the reason why—when wanderers of other sects are asked in this way, they answer that *'The cosmos is eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is not eternal,'* or *'The cosmos is finite,'* or *'The cosmos is infinite,'* or *'The soul is the same thing as the body,'* or *'The soul is one thing and the body another,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,'* yet when Master Gotama is asked in this way, he does not answer that *'The cosmos is eternal,'* or *'The cosmos*

is not eternal,' or *'The cosmos is finite,'* or *'The cosmos is infinite,'* or *'The soul is the same thing as the body,'* or *'The soul is one thing and the body another,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata exists,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist,'* or *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist'?"*

"Vaccha, the members of other sects assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"They assume feeling to be the self...

"They assume perception to be the self...

"They assume fabrications to be the self....

"They assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. That is why, when asked in this way, they answer that *'The cosmos is eternal'...* or that *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist.'*

"But the Tathāgata, worthy and rightly self-awakened, doesn't assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"He doesn't assume feeling to be the self....

"He doesn't assume perception to be the self....

"He doesn't assume fabrications to be the self....

"He doesn't assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. That is why, when asked in this way, he does not answer that *'The cosmos is eternal'...* or that *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist.'"*

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer, getting up from his seat, went to Ven. MahāMoggallāna and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he [addressed the same questions to Ven. MahāMoggallāna and received exactly the same explanation].

"How amazing, Master Moggallāna! How astounding!—how the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching! Just

now, Master Moggallāna, I went to Gotama the contemplative and, on arrival, asked him about this matter, and he answered me with the same words, the same phrasing, as Master Moggallāna. How amazing, Master Moggallāna! How astounding!—how the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching!" — *SN 44:8*

§ 182. Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder went to the wanderers of other sects. On arrival he greeted them courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the wanderers said to him, "Tell us, householder, what views Gotama the contemplative has."

"Venerable sirs, I don't know entirely what views the Blessed One has."

"Well, well. So you don't know entirely what views Gotama the contemplative has. Then tell us what views the monks have."

"I don't even know entirely what views the monks have."

"So you don't know entirely what views Gotama the contemplative has or even that the monks have. Then tell us what views you have."

"It wouldn't be difficult for me to expound to you what views I have. But please let the venerable ones expound each in line with his view-standpoint, and then it won't be difficult for me to expound to you what views I have."

When this had been said, one of the wanderers said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, *"The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.* This is the sort of view I have."

Another wanderer said to Anāthapiṇḍika, *"The cosmos is not eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.* This is the sort of view I have."

Another wanderer said, *"The cosmos is finite..."..."The cosmos is infinite..."..."The soul is the same thing as the body..."..."The soul is one thing and the body another..."..."After death a Tathāgata exists..."..."After death a Tathāgata does not exist..."..."After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist..."..."After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.* This is the sort of view I have."

When this had been said, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder said to the wanderers, "As for the venerable one who says, *'The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.* This is the sort of view I have,' his view arises from his own inappropriate attention or in dependence on the words of another. Now this view has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen. Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stressful. This venerable one thus adheres to that very stress, submits himself to that very stress." [Similarly for the other view-standpoints.]

When this had been said, the wanderers said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, "We have each & every one expounded to you in line with our own view-standpoints. Now tell us what views you have."

"Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stressful. Whatever is stressful is not me, is not what I am, is not my self. This is the sort of view I have."

"So, householder, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stressful. You thus adhere to that very stress, submit yourself to that very stress."

"Venerable sirs, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stressful. Whatever is stressful is not me, is not what I am, is not my self. Having seen this well with right discernment as it has come to be, I also discern the higher escape from it as it has come to be."

When this was said, the wanderers fell silent, abashed, sitting with their shoulders drooping, their heads down, brooding, at a loss for words. Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, sensing that the wanderers were silent, abashed... at a loss for words, got up & went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One the entirety of his discussion with the wanderers.

[The Blessed One said,] "Well done, householder. Well done. That is how you should periodically & righteously refute those foolish men." Then he instructed, urged, roused, and encouraged Anāthapiṇḍika the

householder with a talk on Dhamma. When Anāthapiṇḍika the householder had been instructed, urged, roused, and encouraged by the Blessed One with a talk on Dhamma, he got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and—keeping him to his right—departed. Not long afterward, the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Monks, even a monk who has long penetrated the Dhamma in this Dhamma & Vinaya would do well, periodically & righteously, to refute the wanderers of other sects in just the way Anāthapiṇḍika the householder has done." — *AN 10:93*

§ 183. Then Vacchagotta the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he asked the Blessed One, "How is it, Master Gotama, does Master Gotama hold the view, *'The cosmos is eternal: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"Then does Master Gotama hold the view, *'The cosmos is not eternal: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"Then does Master Gotama hold the view, *'The cosmos is finite: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"Then does Master Gotama hold the view, *'The cosmos is infinite: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"Then does Master Gotama hold the view, *'The soul is the same thing as the body: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"Then does Master Gotama hold the view, *'The soul is one thing and the body another: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"Then does Master Gotama hold the view, *'After death a Tathāgata exists: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"Then does Master Gotama hold the view, *'After death a Tathāgata does not exist: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"Then does Master Gotama hold the view, *'After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"Then does Master Gotama hold the view, *'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless'?"*

"... no..."

"How is it, Master Gotama, when Master Gotama is asked if he holds the view, *'The cosmos is eternal...' .... 'After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless,'* he says '... no...' in each case. Seeing what drawback, then, is Master Gotama thus entirely dissociated from each of these ten view-standpoints?"

"Vaccha, the view-standpoint that *'the cosmos is eternal'* is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by suffering, distress, despair, & fever, and does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation; to calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding.

"The view-standpoint that *'the cosmos is not eternal'*...

"...'the cosmos is finite'...

"...'the cosmos is infinite'...

"...'the soul is the same thing as the body'...

"...'the soul is one thing and the body another'...

"...'after death a Tathāgata exists'...

"...'after death a Tathāgata does not exist'...

"...'after death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist'...

"...'after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist'... does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation; to calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding."

"Does Master Gotama have any view-standpoint at all?"

"A 'view-standpoint,' Vaccha, is something that a Tathāgata has done away with. What a Tathāgata sees is this: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance; such is feeling, such its origination, such its disappearance; such is perception... such are fabrications... such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' Because of this, I say, a Tathāgata—with the ending, fading, cessation, renunciation, & relinquishment of all conceivings, all excogitations, all I-making & mine-making & obsessions with conceit—is, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released." — *MN 72*

VIEW-STANDPOINTS FROM DN 1

§ 184. A categorical Yes to the eternity of the cosmos: "There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman—as a result of ardency, exertion, commitment, heedfulness, & right attention—attains the sort of awareness-concentration whereby he recollects his manifold past lives, i.e., ten eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, twenty... thirty... forty eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, (recollecting,) 'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes & details. He says, 'The self & the cosmos are barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar. And even though beings roam, wander, fall [die], & reappear, it will stay just like that as long as eternity. Why is that? Because I... recollect my manifold past lives in their modes & details. By means of that, I know that the self & the cosmos are barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar. And even though beings roam, wander, fall [die], & reappear, there is just that which will be like that as long as eternity.'"

Another categorical Yes: "There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is a logician, an inquirer. He states his own imagining, hammered out by logic, deduced from his inquiries: 'The self & the cosmos are barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar.

And even though beings roam, wander, fall [die], & reappear, there is just that which will be like that as long as eternity.'"

An analytical answer to the eternity/non-eternity of the cosmos: "There ultimately comes a time when, with the passing of a long stretch of time, this cosmos devolves. When the cosmos is devolving, beings for the most part head toward the Radiant (brahmās). There they stay: mind-made, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, coursing through the air, established in beauty for a long stretch of time. Then there ultimately comes a time when, with the passing of a long stretch of time, this cosmos evolves. When the cosmos is evolving, an empty Brahmā palace appears. Then a certain being—from the exhaustion of his life span or the exhaustion of his merit—falls from the company of the Radiant and re-arises in the empty Brahmā palace. And there he still stays mind-made, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, coursing through the air, established in beauty for a long stretch of time.

"After dwelling there alone for a long time, he experiences displeasure & agitation: 'O, if only other beings would come to this world!'

"Then other beings, through the ending of their life span or the ending of their merit, fall from the company of the Radiant and reappear in the Brahmā palace, in the company of that being. And there they still stay mind-made, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, coursing through the air, established in beauty for a long stretch of time.

"Then the thought occurs to the being who reappeared first: 'I am Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. These beings were created by me. Why is that? First the thought occurred to me, "O, if only other beings would come to this world!" And thus my direction of will brought these beings to this world.' As for the beings who reappeared later, this thought occurs to them: 'This is Brahmā... Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. We were created by this Brahmā. Why is that? We saw that he appeared here before, while we appeared after.' The being who reappeared first is of longer life span, more beautiful, & more influential, while the beings who reappeared later are of shorter life span, less beautiful, & less influential.

"Now, there is the possibility, monks, that a certain being, having fallen from that company, comes to this world. Having come to this world, he goes forth from the home life into homelessness. Having gone forth from the home life into homelessness, he—as a result of ardency, exertion, commitment, heedfulness, & right attention—attains the sort of awareness-concentration whereby he recollects that former life, but nothing beyond that. He says, 'We were created by Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. He is constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change, and will stay just like that as long as eternity. But we who have been created by him—inconstant, impermanent, short-lived, subject to falling—have come to this world.'"

Another analytical answer: "There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is a logician, an inquirer. He states his own imagining, hammered out by logic, deduced from his inquiries: 'That which is called "eye" & "ear" & "nose" & "tongue" & "body": That self is inconstant, impermanent, non-eternal, subject to change. But that which is called "mind" or "intellect" or "consciousness": That self is constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change, and will stay just like that as long as eternity.'"

A categorical No to the eternity of the cosmos: "There are Devas called Beings without Perception. But, with the arising of perception, they fall from that company of devas. Now, there is the possibility, monks, that a certain being, having fallen from that company, comes to this world. Having come to this world, he goes forth from the home life into homelessness. Having gone forth from the home life into homelessness, he—as a result of ardency, exertion, commitment, heedfulness, & right attention—attains the sort of awareness-concentration whereby he recollects the arising of perception, but nothing beyond that. He says, 'The self & the cosmos are spontaneously arisen. Why is that? Because before I wasn't, now I am. Not having been, I sprang into being.'"

Theories on the finitude/infinitude of the cosmos: "There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman—as a result of ardency, exertion, commitment, heedfulness, & right attention—attains the sort of

awareness-concentration whereby he remains with the perception of 'finite' with regard to the cosmos. He says, 'This cosmos is finite, encircled. Why is that? Because I... have attained the sort of awareness-concentration whereby I remain with the perception of "finite" with regard to the cosmos. By means of that, I know that the cosmos is finite, encircled....'

"There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman... attains the sort of awareness-concentration whereby he remains with the perception of 'infinite' with regard to the cosmos. He says, 'This cosmos is infinite, unencircled. Those contemplatives & brahmans who say that this cosmos is finite, encircled, are lying. This cosmos is infinite, unencircled. Why is that? Because I... have attained the sort of awareness-concentration whereby I remain with the perception of "infinite" with regard to the cosmos. By means of that, I know that the cosmos is infinite, unencircled....'

"There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman... attains the sort of awareness-concentration whereby he remains with the perception of 'finite' with regard to the cosmos above & below, but with the perception of 'infinite' all around. He says, 'This cosmos is finite & infinite. Those contemplatives & brahmans who say that this cosmos is finite, encircled, are lying. Those contemplatives & brahmans who say that this cosmos is infinite, unencircled, are lying. This cosmos is finite & infinite. Why is that? Because I... have attained the sort of awareness-concentration whereby I remain with the perception of "finite" with regard to the cosmos above & below, but with the perception of "infinite" all around. By means of that, I know that the cosmos is finite & infinite....'

"There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is a logician, an inquirer. He states his own imagining, hammered out by logic, deduced from his inquiries: 'The cosmos is neither finite nor infinite. Those contemplatives & brahmans who say that this cosmos is finite, encircled, are lying. Those contemplatives & brahmans who say that this cosmos is infinite, unencircled, are lying. Those contemplatives & brahmans who say that this cosmos is finite & infinite are lying. The cosmos is neither finite nor infinite.'"

Refrain: "This, monks, the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns that these standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a

destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond. And he discerns what is higher than this. And yet discerning that, he does not grasp at that act of discerning. And as he is not grasping at it, unbinding *[nibbuti]* is experienced right within. Knowing, as they have come to be, the origination, ending, allure, & drawbacks of feelings, along with the emancipation from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released."

Final analysis: "When those contemplatives & brahmans assert various types of theories... on 62 grounds, that is an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.... That comes from contact as a requisite condition.... That they would experience that other than through contact: That isn't possible.... [Compare §168] They all experience that through repeated contact at the six sense media. For them, from feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"But when a monk discerns the origination, ending, allure, drawbacks of, & emancipation from the six sense media, he discerns what is higher than all of this." — *DN 1*

THE TETRALEMMA

§ 185. "Cunda, whatever in this world—with its deva, Māras, & Brahmās, its generations with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & common people—is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect, that has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata [§46]. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

"From the night the Tathāgata fully awakens to the unsurpassed Right Self-awakening until the night he is totally unbound in the unbinding property with no fuel remaining, whatever the Tathāgata has said,

spoken, explained is just so *(tatha)* and not otherwise. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

"The Tathāgata is one who does in line with *(tatha)* what he teaches, one who teaches in line with what he does. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

"In this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, its generations with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & common people, the Tathāgata is the unconquered conqueror, all-seeing, the wielder of power. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

"It's possible, Cunda, that wanderers of other sects might say, 'How is it, friends? Is it the case that *"after death a Tathāgata exists: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless"?'* The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, 'Friends, it is undeclared by the Tathāgata that *"after death a Tathāgata exists: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless."'*

"It's possible that wanderers of other sects might say, 'How is it, friends? Is it the case that *"after death a Tathāgata does not exist..."... "both exists & does not exist..."... "neither does nor doesn't exist: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless"?'* The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, 'Friends, it is undeclared by the Tathāgata that *"after death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless."'*

"It's possible that wanderers of other sects might say, 'But why, friends, is this undeclared by Gotama the contemplative?' The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, 'Friends, it isn't connected with the goal, isn't connected with the Dhamma, isn't fundamental to the holy life. It doesn't lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That's why it's undeclared by the Blessed One.'

"It's possible that wanderers of other sects might say, 'But what, friends, *is* declared by Gotama the contemplative?' The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, *'"This is stress,"* is declared by the Blessed One. *"This is the origination of stress,"* is declared by the Blessed One. *"This is the cessation of stress,"* is declared by the Blessed One. *"This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,"* is declared by the Blessed One.'

"It's possible that wanderers of other sects might say, 'And why, friends, is this declared by Gotama the contemplative?' The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, 'This is connected with the goal, is connected with the Dhamma, is fundamental to the holy life. It leads to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That's why it's declared by the Blessed One.'" — *DN 29*

§ 186. [Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "Now, friend Sāriputta, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, 'That has not been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata exists after death."' When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists & does not exist after death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, 'That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death."' Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "'The Tathāgata exists after death' is [a view] immersed in form. 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' is immersed in form. 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' is immersed in form. 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' is immersed in form.

"'The Tathāgata exists after death' is immersed in feeling....

"'The Tathāgata exists after death' is immersed in perception....

"'The Tathāgata exists after death' is immersed in fabrication....

"'The Tathāgata exists after death' is immersed in consciousness. 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' is immersed in consciousness. 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' is immersed in consciousness. 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist death' is immersed in consciousness.

"This is the cause, this is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One." — *SN 44:3*

§ 187. [Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "Now, friend Sāriputta, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, 'That hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata exists after death."' When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists & does not exist after

death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, 'That too hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death."' Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "For one who doesn't know & see form as it has come to be, who does not know & see the origination of form... the cessation of form... the path of practice leading to the cessation of form as it has come to be, there occurs the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"For one who doesn't know & see feeling as it has come to be....

"For one who doesn't know & see perception as it has come to be....

"For one who doesn't know & see fabrications as they have come to be....

"For one who doesn't know & see consciousness as it has come to be, who does not know & see the origination of consciousness... the cessation of consciousness... the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness as it has come to be, there occurs the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"But for one who knows & sees form as it has come to be, who knows & sees the origination of form... the cessation of form... the path of practice leading to the cessation of form as it has come to be, the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't occur.

"For one who knows & sees feeling as it has come to be....

"For one who knows & sees perception as it has come to be....

"For one who knows & sees fabrications as they have come to be....

"For one who knows & sees consciousness as it has come to be, who knows & sees the origination of consciousness... the cessation of consciousness... the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness as it has come to be, the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists

after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't occur.

"This is the cause, this is the reason, why that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One." — *SN 44:4*

§ 188. [Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "Now, friend Sāriputta, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, 'That hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata exists after death."' When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists & does not exist after death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, 'That too hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death."' Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "For one whose passion for form has not been removed, whose desire... affection... thirst... fever... craving for form has not been removed, there occurs the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"For one whose passion for feeling has not been removed....

"For one whose passion for perception has not been removed....

"For one whose passion for fabrication has not been removed....

"For one whose passion for consciousness has not been removed, whose desire... affection... thirst... fever... craving for consciousness has not been removed, there occurs the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"But for one whose passion for form has been removed, whose desire... affection... thirst... fever... craving for form has been removed, the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't occur.

"For one whose passion for feeling has been removed....

"For one whose passion for perception has been removed....

"For one whose passion for fabrication has been removed....

"For one whose passion for consciousness has been removed, whose desire... affection... thirst... fever... craving for consciousness has been removed, the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't occur.

"This is the cause, this is the reason, why that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One." — *SN 44:5*

§ 189. [Ven. Sāriputta:] "Now, friend Koṭṭhita, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, 'That hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata exists after death."' When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists & does not exist after death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, 'That too hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death."' Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One?"

[Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "For one who loves form, who is fond of form, who cherishes form, who does not know or see, as it has come to be, the cessation of form, there occurs the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"For one who loves feeling....

"For one who loves perception....

"For one who loves fabrication....

"For one who loves consciousness, who is fond of consciousness, who cherishes consciousness, who does not know or see, as it has come to be, the cessation of consciousness, there occurs the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"But for one who doesn't love form, who isn't fond of form, who doesn't cherish form, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the

cessation of form, the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't occur.

"For one who doesn't love feeling....

"For one who doesn't love perception....

"For one who doesn't love fabrication....

"For one who doesn't love consciousness, who isn't fond of consciousness, who doesn't cherish consciousness, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the cessation of consciousness, the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't occur.

"This is the cause, this is the reason, why that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One."

"But, my friend, would there another line of reasoning, in line with which that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One?"

"There would, my friend. For one who loves becoming, who is fond of becoming, who cherishes becoming, who does not know or see, as it has come to be, the cessation of becoming, there occurs the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"But for one who doesn't love becoming, who isn't fond of becoming, who doesn't cherish becoming, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the cessation of becoming, the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't occur.

"This too is a line of reasoning in line with which that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One."

"But, my friend, would there another line of reasoning, in line with which that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One?"

"There would, my friend. For one who loves clinging/sustenance, who is fond of clinging/sustenance, who cherishes clinging/sustenance, who

does not know or see, as it has come to be, the cessation of clinging/sustenance, there occurs the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"But for one who doesn't love clinging/sustenance, who isn't fond of clinging/sustenance, who doesn't cherish clinging/sustenance, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the cessation of clinging/sustenance, the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't occur.

"This too is a line of reasoning in line with which that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One."

"But, my friend, would there another line of reasoning, in line with which that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One?"

"There would, my friend. For one who loves craving, who is fond of craving, who cherishes craving, who does not know or see, as it has come to be, the cessation of craving, there occurs the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'

"But for one who doesn't love craving, who isn't fond of craving, who doesn't cherish craving, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the cessation of craving, the thought, 'The Tathāgata exists after death' or 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' or 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't occur.

"This too is a line of reasoning in line with which that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One."

"But, my friend, would there another line of reasoning, in line with which that hasn't been declared by the Blessed One?"

"Now, what more do you want, friend Sāriputta? When a monk has been freed from the classification of craving, there exists no cycle for describing him." — *SN 44:6*

THE TETRALEMMA DECLARED MEANINGLESS

§ 190. [Vacchagotta the wanderer:] "Does Master Gotama have any view-standpoint at all?"

"A 'view-standpoint,' Vaccha, is something that a Tathāgata has done away with. What a Tathāgata sees is this: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance; such is feeling, such its origination, such its disappearance; such is perception... such are fabrications... such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' Because of this, I say, a Tathāgata—with the ending, fading, cessation, renunciation, & relinquishment of all conceivings, all excogitations, all I-making & mine-making & obsessions with conceit—is, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released."

"But, Master Gotama, the monk whose mind is thus released:[1] Where does he reappear?"

"'Reappear,' Vaccha, doesn't apply."

"Very well then, Master Gotama, does he not reappear?"

"'Does not reappear,' Vaccha, doesn't apply."

"Very well then, Master Gotama, does he both reappear & not reappear?"

"'Both reappears & does not reappear,' Vaccha, doesn't apply."

"Very well then, Master Gotama, does he neither reappear nor not reappear?"

"'Neither reappears nor does not reappear,' Vaccha, doesn't apply."

"How is it, Master Gotama, when Master Gotama is asked if the monk reappears... does not reappear... both does & does not reappear... neither does nor does not reappear, he says, '... doesn't apply' in each case? At this point, Master Gotama, I am befuddled; at this point, confused. The modicum of clarity coming to me from your earlier discussion is now obscured."

"Of course you're befuddled, Vaccha. Of course you're confused. Deep, Vaccha, is this phenomenon, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. For those with other views, other practices, other satisfactions, other aims, other teachers, it is difficult to know. That being the case, I will counter-

question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think, Vaccha? If a fire were burning in front of you, would you know that 'This fire is burning in front of me'?"

"... yes..."

"And if someone were to ask you, Vaccha, 'This fire burning in front of you: Dependent on what is it burning?' Thus asked, how would you reply?"

"... I would reply, 'This fire burning in front of me is burning dependent on grass & timber as its sustenance.'"

"If the fire burning in front of you were to go out, would you know that 'This fire burning in front of me has gone out'?"

"... yes..."

"And if someone were to ask you, 'This fire that has gone out in front of you: In which direction from here has it gone? East? West? North? Or south?' Thus asked, how would you reply?"

"That doesn't apply, Master Gotama. Any fire burning dependent on a sustenance of grass & timber, being unnourished—from having consumed (that sustenance) and not being offered any other—is classified simply as 'out' [unbound]."

"In the same way, Vaccha, any form by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That form the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of form, Vaccha, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean. 'Reappears' doesn't apply. 'Does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Both does & does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Neither reappears nor does not reappear' doesn't apply.

"Any feeling.... Any perception.... Any fabrications....

"Any consciousness by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That consciousness the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of consciousness, Vaccha, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean. 'Reappears' doesn't apply. 'Does not reappear'

doesn't apply. 'Both does & does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Neither reappears nor does not reappear' doesn't apply." — *MN 72*

NOTE: 1. The fact that the terminology here switches from the Tathāgata to a monk whose mind is released shows that, in this context at least, the two terms are interchangeable. This is one of the few passages in the Canon where the term Tathāgata has this meaning. (For another, see §193.)

§ 191. On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion the bhikkhunī Khemā, wandering on tour among the Kosalans, had taken up residence between Sāvatthī and Sāketa at Toraṇavatthu. Then King Pasenadi Kosala, while traveling from Sāketa to Sāvatthī, took up a one-night residence between Sāvatthī and Sāketa at Toraṇavatthu. Then he addressed a certain man, "Come, now, my good man. Find out if in Toraṇavatthu there's the sort of contemplative or brahman I might visit today."

"As you say, sire," the man replied to the king, but having roamed all over Toraṇavatthu he did not see the sort of contemplative or brahman the king might visit. But he did see the bhikkhunī Khemā residing in Toraṇavatthu. On seeing her, he went to King Pasenadi Kosala and on arrival said to him, "Sire, in Toraṇavatthu there is no contemplative or brahman of the sort your majesty might visit. But there is a bhikkhunī named Khemā, a disciple of the Blessed One, worthy and rightly self-awakened. And of this lady, this admirable report has spread about: 'She is wise, competent, intelligent, learned, a fluent speaker, admirable in her ingenuity.' Let your majesty visit her."

Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the bhikkhunī Khemā and, on arrival, having bowed down to her, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to her, "Now then, lady, does the Tathāgata exist after death?"

"That, great king, hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: 'The Tathāgata exists after death.'"

"Well then, lady, does the Tathāgata not exist after death?"

"Great king, that too hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death.'"

"Then does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?"

“That hasn’t been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death.’”

“Well then, does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“That too hasn’t been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

“Now, lady, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, ‘That hasn’t been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata exists after death.”’ When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death… both exists & does not exist after death… neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, ‘That too hasn’t been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.”’ Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that hasn’t been declared by the Blessed One?”

“Very well then, great king, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think, great king? Do you have an accountant or calculator or mathematician who can count the grains of sand in the river Ganges as ‘so many grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of grains of sand’ or ‘so many thousands of grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of grains of sand’?”

“No, lady.”

“Then do you have an accountant or calculator or mathematician who can count the water in the great ocean as ‘so many buckets of water’ or ‘so many hundreds of buckets of water’ or ‘so many thousands of buckets of water’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of buckets of water’?”

“No, lady. Why is that? The great ocean is deep, boundless, hard to fathom.”

“Even so, great king, any form by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That form the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of form, great king, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean. ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t apply.

"Any feeling.... Any perception.... Any fabrications....

"Any consciousness by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That consciousness the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of consciousness, great king, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean. 'The Tathāgata exists after death' doesn't apply. 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death doesn't apply. 'The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death' doesn't apply. 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death' doesn't apply."

Then King Pasenadi Kosala, delighting in & approving of the bhikkhunī Khemā's words, got up from his seat, bowed down to her and—keeping her to his right—departed.

Then at another time he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, [he asked the Blessed One the same questions he had asked the bhikkhunī Khemā, and received precisely the same responses and analogies. Then he exclaimed:]

"How amazing, lord! How astounding!—how the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching! Recently, lord, I went to the bhikkhunī Khemā and, on arrival, asked her about this matter, and she answered me with the same words, the same phrasing, as the Blessed One. How amazing, lord! How astounding!—how the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching!

"Now, lord, we must go. Many are our duties, many our responsibilities."

"Then do, great king, what you think it is now time to do."

So King Pasenadi Kosala, delighting in and approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from his set, bowed down to the Blessed One and—keeping him to his right—departed. — *SN 44:1*

§ 192. Then Ven. Anurādha went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Just now I was staying not far from the

Blessed One in a wilderness hut. Then a large number of wandering sectarians came and.... said to me, 'Friend Anurādha, the Tathāgata—the supreme person, the superlative person, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described with [one of] these four positions: After death the Tathāgata exists; after death he does not exist; after death he both exists & does not exist; after death he neither exists nor does not exist.'

"When this was said, I said to them, 'Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme person, the superlative person, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: After death the Tathāgata exists; after death he does not exist; after death he both exists & does not exist; after death he neither exists nor does not exist.'

"When this was said, the wandering sectarians said to me, 'This monk is either a newcomer, not long gone forth, or else an elder who is foolish & inexperienced.' So, addressing me as they would a newcomer or a fool, they got up from their seats and left.

"Then not long after the wandering sectarians had left, this thought occurred to me, 'If I am questioned again by those wandering sectarians, how will I answer in such a way that will I speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, so that the legitimate implications of what I say give no grounds for criticism?'"

"What do you think, Anurādha? Is form constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"Is feeling constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord"....

"Is perception constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord"....

"Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"

“Inconstant, lord”....

“Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“Now, what do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard form as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard feeling as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard perception as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard fabrications as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard consciousness as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Now, what do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard the Tathāgata as being in form?... Elsewhere than form?... In feeling?... Elsewhere than feeling?... In perception?... Elsewhere than perception?... In fabrications?... Elsewhere than fabrications?... In consciousness?... Elsewhere than consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“And so, Anurādha—when you can’t pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, ‘Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme person, the superlative person, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: After death the Tathāgata exists; after death he does not exist; after death he both exists & does not exist; after death he neither exists nor does not exist’?”

“No, lord.”

“Very good, Anurādha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress.” — *SN 44:2*

§ 193. Then in the evening Ven. Sāriputta left his seclusion, went to Ven. Yamaka, and on arrival exchanged courteous greetings. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Yamaka, “Is it true, my friend Yamaka, that this evil supposition has arisen to you: ‘As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more fermentations, with the breakup of the body, is annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death.’

“Yes, my friend. As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more fermentations, with the breakup of the body, is annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death.”

“Now, what do you think, my friend Yamaka? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, my friend.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, my friend.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, my friend.”

“Is feeling constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, my friend”....

“Is perception constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, my friend”....

“Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, my friend”....

“Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, my friend.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, my friend.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, my friend.”

“Now, what do you think? Do you regard form as the Tathāgata?”[1]

“No, my friend.”

“Do you regard feeling as the Tathāgata?”

“No, my friend.”

“Do you regard perception as the Tathāgata?”

“No, my friend.”

“Do you regard fabrications as the Tathāgata?”

“No, my friend.”

“Do you regard consciousness as the Tathāgata?”

“No, my friend.”

“Now, what do you think? Do you regard the Tathāgata as being in form?.... Elsewhere than form?... In feeling?... Elsewhere than feeling?... In perception?... Elsewhere than perception?... In fabrications?... Elsewhere than fabrications?... In consciousness?... Elsewhere than consciousness?”

“No, my friend.”

“What do you think? Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?”

“No, my friend.”

“What do you think? Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?”

“No, my friend.”

“And so, my friend Yamaka—when you can’t pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, ‘As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with

no more fermentations, with the breakup of the body, is annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death'?"

"Previously, my friend Sāriputta, I did foolishly hold that evil supposition. But now, having heard your explanation of the Dhamma, I have abandoned that evil supposition and have broken through to the Dhamma."

"Then, friend Yamaka, how would you answer if you are asked, 'A monk, a worthy one, with no more fermentations: What is he with the breakup of the body, after death?'"

"Thus asked, my friend, I would answer, 'Form is inconstant... Feeling... Perception... Fabrications... Consciousness is inconstant. That which is inconstant is stressful. That which is stressful has ceased and gone to its end."

"Very good, my friend Yamaka. Very good." — *SN 22:85*

NOTE: 1. The fact that the terminology here switches from the monk whose mind is released to the Tathāgata shows that, in this context at least, the two terms are interchangeable. This is one of the few passages in the Canon where the term Tathāgata has this meaning. (For another, see §190.)

§ 194. [Vacchagotta the wanderer:] "Now, Master Kaccāyana, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, 'That hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata exists after death."' When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death, you say, 'That too hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata does not exist after death."' When asked if the Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death, you say, 'That hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death."' When asked if the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, 'That too hasn't been declared by the Blessed One: "The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death."' Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that hasn't been declared by Gotama the contemplative?"

[Ven. Sabhiya Kaccāyana:] "Vaccha, whatever cause, whatever reason there would be for describing him as 'possessed of form' or 'formless' or 'percipient' or 'non-percipient' or 'neither percipient nor non-percipient': If that cause, that reason, were to cease totally everywhere, totally in every way without remainder, then describing him by what means would one

describe him as ‘possessed of form’ or ‘formless’ or ‘percipient’ or ‘non-percipient’ or ‘neither percipient nor non-percipient’?”

“How long has it been since you went forth, Master Kaccāyana?”

“Not long, my friend. Three years.”

“Whoever has gained just this much in this much time has gained a great deal, my friend—to say nothing of what he has thus gone beyond.” — *SN 44:11*

§ 195. “Now, Ānanda, insofar as a monk doesn’t assume feeling to be the self, nor the self as oblivious, nor that ‘My self feels, in that my self is subject to feeling,’ then, not assuming in this way, he is not sustained by anything [does not cling to anything] in the world. Unsustained, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is totally unbound right within. He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“If anyone were to say with regard to a monk whose mind is thus released that ‘The Tathāgata exists after death,’ is his view, that would be mistaken; that ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’... that ‘The Tathāgata both exists & does not exist after death’... that ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ is his view, that would be mistaken. Why? Having directly known the extent of designation and the extent of the objects of designation, the extent of expression and the extent of the objects of expression, the extent of description and the extent of the objects of description, the extent of discernment and the extent of the objects of discernment, the extent to which the cycle revolves: Having directly known that, the monk is released. The view that, ‘Having directly known that, the monk released does not see, does not know’: That would be mistaken.”[1] — *DN 15*

NOTE: 1. The various readings for this sentence all seem corrupt. The sense of the paragraph, read in light of AN 10:96 [§177], demands that the view expressed in the last sentence be *about* the monk released, unlike the four earlier views, which are wrongly *attributed to* the monk released. In other words, the monk released has no opinion on the question of whether the Tathāgata does, doesn’t, etc., exist after death. This might lead to the supposition that his lack of opinion comes from a lack of knowledge or vision. The description of what he comes to know in the course of gaining release shows that this supposition is

inappropriate. He does know, he does see, and what he knows and sees about the limitations of language and concepts shows him that the question of the existence of the Tathāgata after death should be set aside.

Thus I would reconstruct the Pali of the final sentence in this paragraph as: *Tad-abhiññā vimutto bhikkhu na jānāti na passati iti sā diṭṭhi tad-akallaṁ.*

§ 196. This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: "There are these three times. Which three? Past time, future time, & present time. These are the three times."

Perceiving in terms of signs, beings
take a stand on signs.
Not fully comprehending signs, they
come into the bonds
of death.
But fully comprehending signs, one
doesn't construe a signifier.
Touching liberation with the heart,
the state of peace unsurpassed,
consummate in terms of signs,
peaceful,
enjoying the peaceful state,
judicious,
an attainer-of-wisdom
makes use of classifications
but can't be classified.[1] — *Iti 63*

NOTE: 1. At first glance, the verses here don't bear much relationship to the prose introduction. However, when viewed in the context of MN 2 [§25], their relationship becomes clear: The person who applies appropriate attention to the notion of past, present, and future time does not define him or herself in those terms, and so does not cling to any sense of self in those terms. Without clinging, one is liberated from birth and death.

This verse is almost identical with one in SN 1:20:

Perceiving in terms of signs, beings
take a stand on signs.
Not fully comprehending signs, they

come into the bonds
of death.
But fully comprehending signs, one
doesn't construe
a signifier.
Yet nothing exists for him
by which one would say,
'To him no thought occurs.'

The point of this version of the verse is that the mind of the awakened one is so unknowable that one cannot say whether he or she thinks or not. See AN 11:10.

§ 197. "Monks, I will teach you the all. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, "What is the all? Simply the eye & forms, ear & sounds, nose & aromas, tongue & flavors, body & tactile sensations, intellect & ideas. This, monks, is called the all.[1] Anyone who would say, 'Repudiating this all, I will describe another,' if questioned on what exactly might be the grounds for his statement, would be unable to explain, and furthermore, would be put to grief. Why? Because it lies beyond range." — *SN 35:23*

NOTE: 1. The Commentary's treatment of this discourse is very peculiar. To begin with, it delineates three additional "all's," one of them supposedly larger in scope than the one defined here: the allness of the Buddha's omniscience (literally, All-knowingness). This, despite the fact that the discourse says that the description of such an all lies beyond the range of explanation.

Secondly, the Commentary includes nibbāna (unbinding) within the scope of the all described here—as a dhamma, or object of the intellect—even though many other discourses in the Canon specifically state that nibbāna lies beyond the range of the six senses and their objects. Sn 5:6 [§202], for instance, indicates that a person who has attained nibbāna has gone beyond all phenomena *(sabbe dhammā),* and therefore cannot be described. MN 49 [§204] discusses a "consciousness without surface" (*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ)* that does not partake of the "allness of the all." AN 9:36 [§139] states that full awakening occurs only when passion and delight for the dhamma of deathlessness—i.e.,

the perception of the deathless as a dhamma—is abandoned. Furthermore, SN 35:24 says that the "all" is to be abandoned. At no point does the Canon say that nibbāna is to be abandoned. Nibbāna follows on cessation *(nirodha),* which is to be realized. Once nibbāna is realized, there are no further tasks to be done.

Thus a better interpretation would be to read this discourse's discussion of "all" as intended to limit the use of the word "all" throughout the Buddha's teachings to the six sense spheres and their objects. As SN 35:24 and SN 35:28 both show, this would also include the consciousness, contact, and feelings connected with the sense spheres and their objects. Nibbāna would lie outside of the word, "all." This interpretation coincides with another point made several times in the Canon: that dispassion is the highest of all dhammas (Iti 90), while the arahant has gone beyond even dispassion (Sn 4:6; Sn 4:10).

This raises the question, if the word "all" does not include nibbāna, does that mean that one may infer from the statement, "all phenomena are not-self" that nibbāna is self? The answer is No. As AN 4:173 [§208] states, even to ask if there is anything remaining or not remaining (or both, or neither) after the cessation of the six sense spheres is to objectify what is by nature not objectified. The range of objectification goes only as far as the "all." Perceptions of self or no self, which would count as objectification, would not apply beyond the "all." When the cessation of the "all" is experienced, all objectification is allayed.

§ 198. "Monks, that dimension should be experienced where the eye ceases and the perception of form fades. That dimension is to be experienced where the ear ceases and the perception of sound fades... where the nose ceases and the perception of aroma fades... where the tongue ceases and the perception of flavor fades... where the body ceases and the perception of tactile sensation fades... where the intellect ceases and the perception of idea/phenomenon fades: That dimension should be experienced." — *SN 35:117*

§ 199. As he was sitting there, Ven. Rādha said to the Blessed One: "'A being,' lord. 'A being,' it's said. To what extent is one said to be 'a being'?"

"Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Rādha: When one is caught up *[satta]* there, tied up *[visatta]* there, one is said to be 'a being *[satta].'*

"Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for feeling... perception... fabrications...

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for consciousness, Rādha: When one is caught up there, tied up there, one is said to be ‘a being.’

“Just as when boys or girls are playing with little sand castles [lit: dirt houses]: As long as they are not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for those little sand castles, that’s how long they have fun with those sand castles, enjoy them, treasure them, feel possessive of them. But when they become free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for those little sand castles, then they smash them, scatter them, demolish them with their hands or feet and make them unfit for play.

“In the same way, Rādha, you too should smash, scatter, demolish form, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for form.

“You should smash, scatter, demolish feeling, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for feeling.

“You should smash, scatter, demolish perception, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for perception.

“You should smash, scatter, demolish fabrications, and make them unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for fabrications.

“You should smash, scatter, demolish consciousness, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for consciousness—because the ending of craving, Rādha, is unbinding.” — *SN 23:2*

§ 200. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief such that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute.”

“Monk, whatever one stays obsessed with, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified. Whatever one doesn’t stay obsessed with, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.”

“I understand, O Blessed One! I understand, O One Well-gone!”

“And how, monk, do you understand the detailed meaning of what I have said in brief?”

“If one stays obsessed with form, lord, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“If one stays obsessed with feeling....

“If one stays obsessed with perception....

“If one stays obsessed with fabrications....

“If one stays obsessed with consciousness, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“But if one doesn’t stay obsessed with form, lord, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with feeling....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with perception....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with fabrications....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with consciousness, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.

“Lord, this is how I understand the detailed meaning of what you have said in brief.”

“Good, monk. Very good. It’s good that this is how you understand the detailed meaning of what I have said in brief.

“If one stays obsessed with form, monk, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“If one stays obsessed with feeling....

“If one stays obsessed with perception....

“If one stays obsessed with fabrications....

“If one stays obsessed with consciousness, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“But if one doesn’t stay obsessed with form, monk, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with feeling....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with perception....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with fabrications....

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with consciousness, that's not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified.

"This is how the detailed meaning of what I have said in brief should be seen."

Then the monk, delighting in and approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and bowed down to the Blessed One, circled around him, keeping the Blessed One to his right, and departed. Then, dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew, "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And thus he became another one of the arahants. — *SN 22:36*

§ 201. "Freed, disjoined, & released from ten things, Bāhuna, the Tathāgata dwells with unrestricted awareness. Which ten? Freed, disjoined, & released from form, the Tathāgata dwells with unrestricted awareness. Freed, disjoined, & released from feeling... Freed, disjoined, & released from perception... Freed, disjoined, & released from fabrications... Freed, disjoined, & released from consciousness... Freed, disjoined, & released from birth... Freed, disjoined, & released from aging... Freed, disjoined, & released from death... Freed, disjoined, & released from stress... Freed, disjoined, & released from defilement, the Tathāgata dwells with unrestricted awareness.

"Just as a red, blue, or white lotus born in the water and growing in the water, rises up above the water and stands with no water adhering to it, in the same way the Tathāgata—freed, disjoined, & released from these ten things—dwells with unrestricted awareness." — *AN 10:81*

§ 202.

Upasīva:

One free from passion
for all sensual pleasures
relying on nothingness, letting go of all else,
released in the highest emancipation of perception:

Does he stay there unaffected?

The Buddha:

One free from passion
for all sensual pleasures
relying on nothingness, letting go of all else,
released in the highest emancipation of perception:
He stays there unaffected.

Upasīva:

If he stays there, O All-around Eye,
unaffected for many years,
right there
would he be cooled & released?
Would his consciousness be like that?

The Buddha:

As a flame overthrown by the force of the wind
goes to an end
that cannot be classified,
so the sage free from naming activity
goes to an end
that cannot be classified.

Upasīva:

He who has reached the end:
Does he not exist,
or is he for eternity
free from dis-ease?
Please, sage, declare this to me
as this phenomenon *[dhamma]*
has been known by you.

The Buddha:

One who has reached the end
        has no criterion
by which anyone would say that—
for him it doesn't exist.
When all phenomena are done away with,
        all means of speaking
        are done away with as well. — *Sn 5:6*

DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO SIMILAR QUESTIONS

§ 203.

Māra:

"By whom was this being created?
Where is the being's maker?
Where has the being originated?
Where does the being cease?"

Sister Vajirā:

"What? Do you assume a 'being,' Māra?
Have you gone to a view-standpoint?
This is purely a pile of fabrications.
        Here no being
        can be pinned down.
Just as when, with an assemblage of parts,
        there's the word,
                chariot,
even so when aggregates are present,
        there's the convention of
                a being.

For only stress is what comes to be;
                stress, what remains & falls away.
Nothing but stress comes to be.
  Nothing ceases but stress."

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "Vajirā the bhikkhunī knows me"—vanished right there. — *SN 5:10*

§ 204. Then Vacchagotta the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, a few days ago a large number of contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers of various sects were sitting together in the Debating Hall when this discussion arose among them: 'This Pūraṇa Kassapa—the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people—describes a disciple who has died and passed on in terms of places of rebirth: "That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there." Even when the disciple is a supreme person, a superlative person, attained to the superlative attainment, Pūraṇa Kassapa describes him, when he has died and passed on, in terms of places of rebirth: "That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there."

"'This Makkhali Gosāla... This Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta... This Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta... This Pakudha Kaccāyana... This Ajita Kesakambalin—the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people—describes a disciple who has died and passed on in terms of places of rebirth: "That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there." Even when the disciple is a supreme person, a superlative person, attained to the superlative attainment, Ajita Kesakambalin describes him, when he has died and passed on, in terms of places of rebirth: "That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there."

"'This contemplative Gotama—the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people—describes a disciple who has died and passed on in terms of places of rebirth: "That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there." But when the disciple is a supreme person, a superlative person, attained to the superlative attainment, Gotama the contemplative does not describe him, when he has died and passed on, in terms of places of rebirth: "That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there." Instead, he describes him thus: "He has cut through craving, severed the fetter, and

by rightly breaking through conceit has made an end of suffering & stress."'

"So I was simply befuddled. I was uncertain: How is the teaching of Gotama the contemplative to be understood?"

"Of course you're befuddled, Vaccha. Of course you're uncertain. When there is a reason for befuddlement in you, uncertainty arises. I designate the rebirth of one who has clinging/sustenance, Vaccha, and not of one without clinging/sustenance. Just as a fire burns with clinging/sustenance and not without clinging/sustenance, even so I designate the rebirth of one who has clinging/sustenance and not of one without clinging/sustenance."

"But, Master Gotama, at the moment a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, what do you designate as its clinging/sustenance then?"

"Vaccha, when a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, I designate it as wind-sustained, for the wind is its clinging/sustenance at that time."

"And at the moment when a being sets this body aside and is not yet reborn in another body, what do you designate as its clinging/sustenance then?"

"Vaccha, when a being sets this body aside and is not yet reborn in another body, I designate it as craving-sustained, for craving is its clinging/sustenance at that time." — *SN 44:9*

§ 205. "[Baka Brahmā:] 'Well, monk, how do you discern my sphere, how do you discern my splendor: "Baka Brahmā has this much great power. Baka Brahmā has this much great might. Baka Brahmā has this much great influence"?'

> "[The Buddha:] 'As far as suns & moons revolve,
> shining, illuminating the directions,
> over a thousand-fold world
> your control holds sway.
> There you know those above & below,
> those with lust & those without,
> the state of what is as it is,
> the state of what becomes otherwise,

the coming & going of beings.

"'That, brahmā, is how I discern your sphere, that is how I discern your splendor: "Baka Brahmā has this much great power. Baka Brahmā has this much great might. Baka Brahmā has this much great influence." There are, brahmā, groups other than yours that you don't know, don't see, but that I know, I see. There is, brahmā, the group named Ābhassara [Radiant/Luminous] from which you fell away & reappeared here. From your having lived here so long, your memory of that has become muddled. That is why you don't know it, don't see it, but I know it, I see it. Thus I am not your mere equal in terms of direct knowing, so how could I be inferior? I am actually superior to you.

"'There is, brahmā, the group named Subhakiṇha [Beautiful Black/Refulgent Glory].... the group named Vehapphala [Sky-fruit/Great Fruit], {....the group named Abhibhū [Conqueror]}[1] which you don't know, don't see, but that I know, I see. Thus I am not your mere equal in terms of direct knowing, so how could I be your inferior? I am actually superior to you.

"'Having directly known earth as earth, and having directly known the extent of what has not been experienced through the earthness of earth,[2] I wasn't earth, I wasn't in earth, I wasn't coming from earth, I wasn't "Earth is mine." I didn't affirm earth.[3] Thus I am not your mere equal in terms of direct knowing, so how could I be inferior? I am actually superior to you.

"'Having directly known liquid as liquid... fire as fire... wind as wind... beings as beings... devas as devas... Pajāpati as Pajāpati... brahmā as brahmā... the radiant as radiant... the beautiful black as the beautiful black... the sky-fruit as the sky-fruit... the conqueror as the conqueror...

"'Having directly known the all as the all, and having directly known the extent of what has not been experienced through the allness of the all, I wasn't the all, I wasn't in the all, I wasn't coming forth from the all, I wasn't "The all is mine." I didn't affirm the all. Thus I am not your mere equal in terms of direct knowing, so how could I be inferior? I am actually superior to you.'

"'If, good sir, you have directly known the extent of what has not been experienced through the allness of the all, may it not turn out to be

actually vain and void for you.'

"'Consciousness without surface,
without end, luminous all around,

has not been experienced through the earthness of earth... the liquidity of liquid... the fieriness of fire... the windiness of wind... the allness of the all.'[4]

"'Well then, good sir, I will disappear from you.'

"'Well then, brahmā, disappear from me if you can.'

"Then Baka Brahmā, (thinking,) 'I will disappear from Gotama the contemplative. I will disappear from Gotama the contemplative,' was not able to disappear from me. When this was said, I said to Baka Brahmā, 'Well then, brahmā, I will disappear from you.'

"'Well then, good sir, disappear from me if you can.'

"So then, monks, I fabricated a fabrication of psychic power to the extent that Brahmā, the Brahma-assembly, and the attendants of the Brahma-assembly heard my voice but did not see me. Having disappeared, I recited this verse:

'Having seen
danger
right in becoming,
and becoming
searching for non-becoming,
I didn't affirm
any kind of becoming,
or cling to any delight.'

"Then in Brahmā, the Brahma-assembly, and the attendants of the Brahma-assembly there arose a sense of amazement & astonishment: 'How amazing! How astounding!—the great power, the great might of Gotama the contemplative! Never before have we seen or heard of any other contemplative or brahman of such great power, such great might as that of this Gotama the contemplative, who went forth from a Sakyan clan! Living in a generation that so delights in becoming, so rejoices in becoming, is so fond of becoming, he has pulled out becoming by the root!'" — *MN 49*

NOTES

1. The phrase in braces is from the Burmese edition of the Canon.

2. What is not experienced through the earthness of earth (and so on through the list of categories up through the allness of the all) is nibbāna, or unbinding. It is described in these terms because it is directly known, without intermediary of any sort.

3. These statements can be read in two ways. The first way is to regard them in light of the standard definition of self-identity view [§179] in which one defines self either as identical with an aggregate, as possessing an aggregate, as being contained in an aggregate, or as containing an aggregate within it. The second way is to regard the statements in light of the parallel passage from MN 1, in which one engages in metaphysical speculation as to whether one's being is identical with something, lies within something, or comes from something. For more on this topic, see the introduction to the Mūlapariyāya Sutta (MN 1) in *Handful of Leaves,* volume one.

4. Consciousness without surface *(viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ):* This term appears to be related to the following image from SN 12:64:

"Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?"

"On the western wall, lord."

"And if there is no western wall, where does it land?"

"On the ground, lord."

"And if there is no ground, where does it land?"

"On the water, lord."

"And if there is no water, where does it land?"

"It doesn't land, lord."

"In the same way, where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food... contact... intellectual intention... consciousness, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or grow. Where consciousness does not land or grow, name-&-form does not alight. Where name-&-form does not alight, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair."

In other words, normal sensory consciousness is experienced because it has a "surface" against which it lands: the sense organs and their objects, which constitute the "all." For instance, one experiences visual consciousness because of the eye and forms of which one is conscious. Consciousness without surface, however, is directly known, without intermediary, free from any dependence on conditions at all. In terms of the above image, it is a paradoxical luminosity that does not reflect off of anything at all.

This consciousness thus differs from the consciousness factor in dependent co-arising, which is defined in terms of the six sense media. Lying outside of time and space, it would also not come under the consciousness-aggregate, which covers all consciousness near and far; past, present, and future. And, as SN 35:23 [§197] notes, the word "all" in the Buddha's teaching covers only the six sense media, which is another reason for not including this consciousness under the aggregates. However, the fact that it is outside of time and space—in a dimension where there is no here, there, or in between [§173], no coming, no going, or staying [§206]—means that it cannot be described as permanent or omnipresent, terms that have meaning only within space and time.

Some have objected to the equation of this consciousness with nibbāna, on the grounds that nibbāna is nowhere else in the Canon described as a form of consciousness. Thus they have proposed that consciousness without surface be regarded as an arahant's consciousness of nibbāna in meditative experience, and not nibbāna itself. This argument, however, contains two flaws: (1) The term *viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ* also occurs in DN 11 [§161], where it is described as "where name & form are brought to a stop": surely a synonym for nibbāna. (2) If nibbāna is an object of mental consciousness (as a *dhamma),* it would come under the all, as an object of the intellect. There are passages in the Canon [§139] that describe meditators experiencing nibbāna as a dhamma, but these passages seem to indicate that this description applies up through the level of non-returning. Other passages, however, describe nibbāna as the ending of all dhammas. For instance, Sn 5:6 [§202] quotes the Buddha as calling the attainment of the goal the transcending of all dhammas. Sn 4:6 and Sn 4:10 state that the arahant has transcended dispassion, said to be the highest dhamma. Thus, for the arahant, nibbāna is not an object of consciousness. Instead it is directly known without mediation. Because consciousness without surface is directly known without mediation, there seems good reason to equate the two.

§ 206. Now at that time the Blessed One was instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the monks with Dhamma-talk concerned with unbinding. The monks—receptive, attentive, focusing their entire awareness, lending ear—listened to the Dhamma.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

> "There is that dimension where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind; neither dimension of the infinitude of space, nor dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, nor dimension of nothingness, nor dimension of neither perception nor non-perception; neither this world, nor the next world, nor sun, nor moon. And there, I say, there is neither coming, nor going, nor staying; neither passing away nor arising: unestablished, unevolving, without support [mental object]. This, just this, is the end of stress." — *Ud 8:1*

§ 207.

> It's hard to see the unaffected,
> for the truth is not easily seen.
> Craving is pierced
> in one who knows;
> for one who sees,
> there is nothing. — *Ud 8:2*

§ 208. Then Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita went to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sāriputta, "With the remainderless cessation & fading of the six contact-media [vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, & intellection], is it the case that there is anything else?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "Don't say that, my friend."

[Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] "With the remainderless cessation & fading of the six contact-media, is it the case that there is not anything else?"

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "Don't say that, my friend."

[Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] “...is it the case that there both is & is not anything else?”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “Don’t say that, my friend.”

[Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] “...is it the case that there neither is nor is not anything else?”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “Don’t say that, my friend.”

[Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita:] “Being asked if, with the remainderless cessation & fading of the six contact-media, there is anything else, you say, ‘Don’t say that, my friend.’ Being asked if... there is not anything else... there both is & is not anything else... there neither is nor is not anything else, you say, ‘Don’t say that, my friend.’ Now, how is the meaning of your words to be understood?”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “The statement, ‘With the remainderless cessation & fading of the six contact-media is it the case that there is anything else?’ objectifies the non-objectified. The statement, ‘... is it the case that there is not anything else... is it the case that there both is & is not anything else... is it the case that there neither is nor is not anything else?’ objectifies the non-objectified. However far the six contact-media go, that is how far objectification goes. However far objectification goes, that is how far the six contact media go. With the remainderless fading & cessation of the six contact-media, there comes to be the cessation, the allaying of objectification.” — *AN 4:173*

Chapter Nine

A Path of Questions

In the course of this book we have frequently noted the close connection between the *how* and the *what* in the Buddha's teaching. *How* he taught was shaped by *what* he taught, and what he taught was shaped by how. The reason this connection is so close is because what he taught *was* a how: a path of practice, a set of skills aimed at a very particular goal. Even the views that explain the path and form its first factor were chosen for their beneficial, pragmatic value in helping make progress on the path. These truths are thus instrumental and teleological—to be used as means to the goal of putting an end to suffering and stress.

The Buddha's conception of his act of teaching these truths was thus also teleological: His primary concern was with the effect that his words would have on his listeners. In this way, his approach was rhetorical rather than dialectical. Instead of seeing words as primarily descriptive—*talking about* things—he saw them as performative: *doing* things, having an effect on their listeners. And like any rhetorician, he found it most effective to teach not only by word but also by example. Thus he was careful to teach in a way that illustrated what he was trying to teach.

This was especially true in the way he handled questions. As we noted in the Introduction, a practical question expresses a desire for knowledge that fits a certain shape and function: the shape determined by what makes sense in terms of what we already know or control, the function by what we want the knowledge to do. The fact that questions provide a shape for the knowledge connects directly with the role of right view on the path, which is to act as a frame for experience—not only providing knowledge *about* the issues of skillful and unskillful action, together with the truths of stress, its origination, its cessation, and the path to cessation; but also showing how to view experience *in terms of* these categories. This means that the ability to frame questions in terms of right view is an

essential part of the path. The fact that questions express desires connects both with the truth of the origination of stress—the three forms of craving that lead to further becoming—and with the factor of right effort in the truth of the path, which includes the act of generating desire to abandon unskillful qualities and to develop skillful ones in their place. This means that skill in questions has to be mastered in order to encourage appropriate forms of the desire for knowledge, leading to the end of suffering, and to avoid inappropriate forms that would lead in the other direction.

This is why the Buddha emphasized the ability to respond skillfully to questions as an important measure of wisdom and discernment. To illustrate this principle, he not only described four strategies for responding to questions but also employed all four in the course of his teaching career. These response-strategies play an important role in establishing and clarifying the frame of right view. Categorical responses show that the questions they address are already framed in appropriate terms; analytical responses show which factors have to be added to questions inadequately framed in order to bring them into line; cross-questioning responses show how unexpected subtleties in the frame of right view can be understood through comparison with skills and activities with which the listener is already familiar; and the response of putting a question aside shows that the question is so improperly framed that it needs to be totally abandoned before one can start over with the proper frame.

However, in addition to establishing the frame of right view, the Buddha's skill in questions also taught how to test that frame and its application through the subset of cross-questioning that we have termed self cross-examination. This, in fact, is the approach that determines whether the answers provided by the frame of right view actually perform the desired function of putting an end to suffering and stress.

To understand the interaction among these various response-strategies, it's useful to look at them in the larger context of the Buddha's approach to questions, taken as a whole, in the various forms we have encountered in this book. This enables us to see the broader outlines of his rhetorical strategy in demonstrating not only the discernment needed skillfully to employ the categories of right view and skillful questioning,

but also the qualities of heart and mind needed to respond wisely to those questions and thus bring the entire path to fruition.

Taking this perspective, we can see that there were at least seven types of questions that played a role in the Buddha's discovery and teaching of the path.

1) The primary question to which the path is a response.
2) The bodhisatta's own questions in which he asked himself why he was acting in a particular way.
3) The questions with which he proposed another course of action.
4) The questions that established the frame of right view and appropriate attention.
5) The questions that refined that frame.
6) The questions that tested that frame by applying it to specific actions, and tested specific actions against the frame.
7) The questions that induced the right attitudes and mental qualities needed to keep one on the path.

Many lessons about the path can be learned—and many mistaken notions corrected—by looking in more detail at these seven types of questions. These lessons cover not only the content of the right views the Buddha was trying to communicate, but also the qualities of the heart that need to be developed as an essential part of the practice.

1) As AN 6:63 (Chapter One) notes, one of the primary responses to stress is a question that expresses a search: "Who knows a way or two to stop this stress?" Although this question doesn't necessarily call for a path to practice—it may simply indicate a desire for someone or something else to solve the problem of stress from outside—the fact that the Buddha's teaching is a response to this question establishes several important facts about the path he taught.

To begin with, it establishes the path's obvious focus on putting an end to stress. This in turn establishes the teleological nature of the path: Its every aspect is aimed at a particular goal. In the simple fact of responding to this question, the Buddha indicated that the desire to know a way out of stress is something to be encouraged. He didn't want people simply to accept things as they are, or to resign themselves to the thought, "That's just the way it is." He wanted them to recognize that something is wrong

and to develop the conviction that it can be corrected—thus the role played by conviction not only as the first of the five faculties (SN 48:10), but also as the important turning point in the extended formula of dependent co-arising (SN 12:23) that treats the experience of stress as a motivating factor for developing the path to release.

The searching question cited in AN 6:63 also suggests that it's possible to look to others for advice on what to do to put an end to stress. In fact, that is what the bodhisatta did at the beginning of his quest for awakening. Only when he came to the conclusion that no one at the time had the knowledge he was seeking did he try to find the path on his own. But even though he ultimately gained the knowledge he was seeking through his own efforts, he did not conclude that the search for someone who knows is totally misguided. Having gained the knowledge of how to go beyond stress, he was in a position to share it with others, at least to the extent of telling them what they needed to do to gain release from stress through their own efforts. In fact, as he later told Ven. Ānanda (SN 45:2), if it weren't for him as an admirable friend, the beings of the world wouldn't even know the path, much less be able to follow it. Thus the ability to judge who is and isn't an admirable friend is an essential skill in pursuing the path.

2) When the Buddha described his quest for awakening as a series of responses to questions of the form, "Why am I doing this?" he was indicating the point at which the search for a way out of stress turns inward: the realization that stress may be caused by one's own actions. He was also indicating that an important part of the path consists of the realization that one's habits—and in particular, one's intentions—are not to be blindly accepted or taken for granted. They should be called into question and subjected to honest scrutiny. However, he also was indicating that not everything is to be questioned—in particular, conviction in the efficacy of action should be maintained as a working hypothesis all the way to release.

3) When the Buddha told how he followed the question, "Why am I doing this?" with the question, "What if I were to do something else?" he was indicating the point where the notion of a path of practice actually begins to take shape: the realization that one can act in different ways and

that, perhaps by changing one's ways of acting, one can put an end to suffering and stress. This question also emphasizes the mind's freedom to think of alternatives, to use imagination in proposing new ways of acting. The assumption of freedom of choice is what makes a holy life dedicated to the end of stress a genuine possibility.

4) The questions that establish the frame of right view are the ones with which we move from the story of the bodhisatta's quest to the example set by the Buddha as a teacher. Establishing this frame is a primary function of three of the Buddha's four response-strategies. Categorical answers do so simply by answering questions that are already properly framed; analytical answers, by adding whatever variables are necessary to approach the issue at hand from the proper frame; questions put aside (followed by different questions to establish the frame), by drawing a clear line between what does and what doesn't correspond to the frame. In particular, in the course of employing this last strategy, the Buddha focuses on how the mental processes of objectification *(papañca)* encourage the terms of becoming—selves operating in worlds—and how questions derived from these terms get in the way of the path.

In contrast, the actual frame of right view and appropriate attention builds on the assumptions underlying the questions in categories (2) and (3) by looking at experience, not in terms of things, but in terms of actions and results. We noted above that the Buddha's words are not simply descriptive, *talking about* things; it's also true that teachings based on the frame of right view and appropriate attention are not talking about *things.* They talk about action and result, focusing attention on identifying which ways of acting are unskillful—leading to suffering and stress—and which are skillful, leading to the end of suffering and stress. When the Buddha's responses to questions establish this frame, they also establish right view as an important element in the path—as a type of action needed for other skillful actions. They also establish the role of that frame as a set of instrumental truths used to analyze experience so as to determine the skillful response.

The fact that action—kamma—plays the primary role in establishing the frame of right view shows how important this teaching is in providing the context for understanding all aspects of what the Buddha taught. This is especially crucial in understanding the teaching on not-self, for often

the connection between not-self and kamma is approached by taking not-self as the frame, and kamma as a teaching that doesn't fit into the frame: If all things are not-self, who performs an action and who will receive the results of the action? Actually, the relationship between these two teachings goes the other way. *Kamma is the frame, and not-self the teaching that fits into the frame:* When is it a skillful action to employ the perception of self? When is it a skillful action to employ the perception of not-self?

To view the teaching on not-self within the framework of kamma helps to clear up many of the issues that have developed around this teaching over the centuries. Buddhist philosophers, ignoring the message of SN 44:10 [§162] and MN 2 [§25] that questions about the existence and non-existence of the self should be put aside, have often tried to provide analytical answers to these questions—stating, for instance, that Yes, the self has conventional existence but No, not ultimate existence; that Yes, the self defined as impersonal phenomena, i.e., the five aggregates, does exist, but No, the self defined as a person doesn't; or that No, there is no self, but Yes, there is an empirical personality and personal continuity after death. More modern philosophers have offered analytical answers of their own, introducing the variables of individual self *vs.* cosmic self, stating either that individual self does exist, whereas the cosmic self doesn't; or—the exact opposite—that the individual self doesn't exist whereas the cosmic self does.

All of these analytical answers, however, ignore the fact that the Buddha could have given an analytical answer to these questions had he wanted to—but he didn't. They also all deal in terms of inappropriate attention and blatant objectification: categories of existence and non-existence, questions of how to define the "I" in "I am the thinker" over the course of the past, present, and future. As the discussions in Chapters Three and Eight have shown, the act of blatant objectification is a form of unskillful kamma that moves in the opposite direction from the duties of the four noble truths. Thus a more useful approach is to view the perceptions of self and not-self as actions in the context of dependent co-arising, to see how they *do* promote the duties of the four noble truths, and to put the analytical answers of the philosophers aside. In fact, this principle applies to all the perceptions and categories of blatant objectification: self/not-self; existence/non-existence. When questions of

skillful kamma are framed on their most subtle level, in terms of dependent co-arising, they provide the framework by which these categories can be comprehended both as instances of stress and as causes of stress. This allows for their abandoning. Then the terms of dependent co-arising, having performed their function, can be abandoned as well.

Thus, by using the teaching of kamma as the primary frame of understanding, it's possible to gain important insights into the Buddha's teachings on not-self and into other topics as well. For instance, on the issue of judging people: Given that the primal question in category (1) focuses on looking to others for help in the end of suffering, the Buddha regarded as an essential duty the ability to judge who might be a reliable guide on the path. Instead of viewing the act of judging others as inappropriate and inhumane, he saw it as absolutely central to the path. But because people tend to use inappropriate categories in judging others, he used analytical answers to show that other people are to be judged primarily, not as to their ultimate worth, but simply as to their helpfulness in one's own search for skillfulness. At the same time, they are to be judged not by their status, race, or occupation, but by the skillfulness of their actions. And to be able accurately to judge the integrity of others, one has to develop one's own integrity as well.

The Buddha's lessons on kamma appear not only in the content of his responses to questions, but also in the values he taught by the way he responded. The simple fact that he answered questions indicates that the principle of action is such that the act of asking others for advice can be a helpful part of the path. He expanded on this point in the several discourses where he suggested going to experienced people to gain advice on how to act [§43, §44, §131]. However, the nature of the advice he gave —and that he said should be expected from others—shows that a teacher cannot get rid of stress and suffering for another person, that each person also has to cooperate by acting on that advice. This utilizes one of the windows of opportunity provided by the Buddha's teaching on kamma: Even though one's experience is shaped primarily by one's own actions, this does not preclude one's benefiting from the help of others. The proper use of this opportunity lies in approaching the act of teaching and learning the path to the end of stress as a cooperative effort.

The Buddha's care in responding to questions in these ways shows some of the qualities needed in this cooperative effort. By teaching only truths that are beneficial, and by taking care to ensure that his responses were appropriate to his listeners, he showed that compassion is needed for teaching and learning to succeed. He also showed compassion in observing the etiquette of not harming himself or others—not exalting himself or disparaging others by name—in the course of his teaching. By giving displeasing answers when they were timely, he showed that compassion has to be responsible: It's not a matter of giving the listeners what they want or making them feel good. Instead, it requires keeping their long-term benefit foremost in mind.

The Buddha's general openness to being cross-questioned on his teachings was also an object lesson in the compassionate sense of responsibility he brought to the act of teaching. As we have noted, a teacher not open to cross-questioning is guilty of objectifying himself and his audience. A teacher who welcomes cross-questioning is concerned less with his status as a teacher—and his teaching as a finished product—and more with the communication of something useful and clear. Thus the act of teaching is part of a process leading to a goal, rather than an exposition of the goal itself. In honoring his listeners' freedom to question in the course of this process, the Buddha opened the discussion to their subjective experience of doubt. He also honored their desire to know about the skills needed to end that doubt and to attain release from their subjective experience of suffering and stress. At the same time, he avoided many of the conflicts implicit in blatant objectification by offering his teachings less as a set body of knowledge about people and the world to be imposed on those people and their worlds, than as an array of tools that his listeners were free to take or leave as they pleased.

5) The questions that refine the frame of right view include those that, asking for details about the terms of right view and appropriate attention, deserve categorical responses; those that deserve analytical responses showing how even categorical teachings have to be applied differently to listeners with different levels of skill; and those that deserve to be cross-questioned with reference to hypothetical analogies and examples to show how the frame of skillful and unskillful action should be called to mind and applied to areas where the listeners don't understand how to do

so on their own. The frame of right view is also refined by the questions of self cross-examination that the Buddha recommended be applied to one's specific actions, all the way to the action of assuming a sense of self and other subtle forms of clinging.

The extent to which the Buddha had to explain and refine the frame of skillful and unskillful kamma—especially through analytical responses and cross-questioning about hypotheticals dealing with actions and skills—shows that his listeners had trouble understanding the implications of his concept of kamma. This in turn suggests that it was new to them. In other words, even though the word *kamma* was something the Buddha picked up from his environment, his understanding of kamma was not. This point is underlined by the fact that he went out of his way to refute the teachings of those who taught a deterministic version of the doctrine of kamma. In doing so, he revealed a second window of opportunity in the principle of kamma: that even though actions have consequences, sometimes imposing severe limitations on the choices available at any given moment, one is always free within those limitations to follow the skillful path toward the end of stress and suffering through one's choice of what to do in the present.

The Buddha's responses to these questions also demonstrated in action the extra levels of refinement in the compassion and sense of responsibility that he brought to the act of teaching—and that he expected his listeners to bring to the act of learning. In particular, the way he used hypotheticals in cross-questioning his listeners was an object lesson in the need for truthfulness and mutual respect. By recognizing the special skills and knowledge his listeners brought with them, he induced an attitude of respect in return.

The way he engaged in arguments also taught many lessons in respect. To begin with, he was willing to enter into discussion only with people whom he trusted and respected to have a sincere desire for the truth. His purpose in engaging in debates was not to score points but to clear up his opponent's misunderstandings. In fact, the way he used hypotheticals in cross-questioning his opponents—a strategy he used elsewhere to clarify difficult points of doctrine—showed that debate, for him, was principally a matter of clarification.

The aggressiveness with which he pursued his points, however, showed that respect was not necessarily a matter of honoring other people's points of view. Instead, when combined with compassion and a sense of responsibility, true respect means the desire not to leave one's opponent mired in wrong views, for views of that sort can have dire consequences. In the same way that he saw strict enforcement of the rules of the Vinaya as an expression of compassion, he saw the rigorous uprooting of wrong view in his opponents as an act both of kindness and respect.

6) The questions of self cross-examination test the frame of right view in action—to see if it really does aid in eliminating stress—at the same time testing actions against the frame of right view, to see if they actually follow the path. In this process one cross-questions oneself about one's actions to see how they fit against the frame, from the common level of words and deeds to the subtlest levels within the mind: testing acts of perception, such as perceptions of self and cosmos. Self cross-examination also checks one's progress on the path, both as a means of testing the path and as a means of gauging one's skill in following it.

This process helps to develop the analysis of qualities as a factor of awakening *(dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga).* At the same time, it starves the hindrance of uncertainty, and in doing so responds to the bewilderment that is often the result of suffering and stress. The fact that doubt is overcome and conviction established by exploring and testing—and not by simply denying doubt or waiting for it to go away on its own—shows the confidence the Buddha had in his teachings: that they would withstand any sincere test. It also shows the active role of discernment, not as a set of propositions to be simply accepted or cloned, but as an active faculty to be developed through skillful inquiry.

Self cross-examination succeeds in producing insights—and, in some cases, precipitating total release—by helping one to look at familiar events in a new frame. The fact that one is able to choose one's frame of understanding, and not simply take it for granted, is another expression of freedom. And the fact that total freedom comes from applying appropriate attention to one's actions makes an important point about the focus of the practice: that the freedom of total release is to be found by exploring—through exercising—one's moment-to-moment freedom to choose to act skillfully.

In testing one's actions, the questions of self cross-examination set the bar for gauging one's skillfulness progressively higher and higher. They start with the simple aim of not harming oneself and others, progress through the aim of bringing the mind to a point where it is ready to face death at any moment, and finally aim at erasing craving and clinging of every sort. The more basic levels of these questions deal in terms of "I" and "mine," while the more advanced are aimed at dismantling any need for those perceptions. These questions thus establish the fact that the path goes through many stages, and that concepts and perceptions useful at one stage of the path may need to be abandoned later. Thus the consistency of the path lies, not in an adherence to a consistent vocabulary or set of first principles, but in the common goal to which all of its stages are aimed.

7) The questions that induce the right attitudes and mental qualities needed to keep one on the path are another subset of the questions of self cross-examination. On a preliminary level, these questions encourage a healthy type of conceit and craving needed to get one started on the path to mastery. When that mastery has reached the point where conceit and craving are no longer needed to stay on the path, a more advanced level of cross-questioning focuses on uprooting any remaining conceit and craving that would block further progress.

The most basic attitudes encouraged by this type of cross-questioning are compassion, integrity, and truthfulness. Compassion is needed in that the goal of putting an end to stress and suffering, and to find a happiness without blame, is essentially a compassionate quest aimed at one's own well-being and that of all others. Integrity and truthfulness are needed to stick with the skillful path because defilements can easily disguise themselves under the cloak of delusion and denial, and the habit of denying any unskillful elements in one's actions and intentions is delusion in its most pernicious and tenacious form. There are times when the frames of objectification aid in this denial and become a form of avoidance, acting as a cover for attachment. Thus truthfulness is needed to dig out and expose that attachment for what it is.

Self cross-examination also works together with the cross-questioning of hypotheticals to encourage mindfulness and alertness: mindfulness in calling to mind useful frameworks of thinking and understanding;

alertness in applying these standards to examining one's actions—physical, verbal, and mental—in the present moment.

Finally, the most crucial attitude fostered by the questions of self cross-examination is that of heedfulness. As the Buddha pointed out, all skillfulness—including the skill of questions—is rooted in heedfulness. People become skillful not through any innate goodness of the mind, but by clearly realizing—and taking to heart—the danger of unskillful action and the benefits of skillful action. The questions of self cross-examination are meant to keep this realization firmly in mind and to bring it to bear in all one's activities. When heedfulness is combined with the understanding of right view, as encouraged by the framework of skillful questioning, it gives rise to right effort. When combined with the mindfulness and alertness encouraged by skillful cross-questioning, right effort—in the form of ardency—completes the set of qualities needed to bring right mindfulness and right concentration to the culmination of their development.

Right mindfulness and right concentration, in turn, allow the mind to become more sensitive to even its subtlest actions. As the principle of heedfulness continues to inform the process of self cross-examination into these actions, it first strips away any attachment to activities that lie outside of the path. Then it helps to root out any traces of unskillfulness, any remnants of I-making or my-making, that may still hover around the mastery of the path factors themselves. This is what ultimately frees the mind from all the activities of objectification and attachment, even in their subtlest forms.

In these ways, skill in questions helps to foster a cluster of skillful mental qualities that, acting in concert, form a path leading to the primary aim of the Buddha's act of teaching: a dimension beyond action, total release.

Appendix One

Buddhaghosa on the four categories of questions

Writing in the fifth century C.E., Buddhaghosa—the primary commentator of the Theravada tradition—explained the Buddha's four categories of questions in terms of the formal or logical structure of the question.

> "If asked, 'Is the eye inconstant?' one should answer categorically, 'Yes, it's inconstant.' This pattern [holds] with regard to the ear, etc. This is the categorical question. If asked, 'Does inconstant mean eye?' one should answer analyzing, 'Not just the eye; the ear is also inconstant, the nose is also inconstant.' This is an analytical question. If asked, for example, 'Is the eye like the ear? Is the ear like the eye?' and one cross-questions, 'In what sense are you asking?' then if told, 'I am asking in the sense of seeing,' one should answer, 'No.' If told, 'I am asking in the sense of inconstancy,' one should answer, 'Yes.' This is a cross-questioning question. When asked, for example, 'Is the soul the same thing as the body?' one should put it aside, (saying,) 'This is unanswered by the Blessed One.' This question is not to be answered. This is a question to be put aside. *Thus the form in which the question is presented is the measure of the four ways of answering questions.* It is under the guidance of these [categories] that a question should be answered." — *Commentary to DN 33* [emphasis added]

From this perspective, a question deserving a categorical answer is one that, in formal terms, reads, *" Is all A, B?"* ("Are all tigers striped animals?") This type of question can be clearly answered Yes or No.

The next two categories of questions are those that could lead the answerer to being trapped in a logical fallacy, and so must be treated analytically or with a cross-question to avoid the trap. The question deserving an analytical answer is one that—after establishing that all A is B—asks, *"Is all B, A?"* ("Are all striped animals tigers?") The trap here would be, *"If all A is B, then all B is A"* (e.g., "If all tigers are striped animals, then all striped animals are tigers;" "If the eye is inconstant, then all inconstant things are the eye"). Thus an analytical answer would show that inconstancy covers other things beside the eye as well: *"All A is B, but not all B is A."*

The question deserving cross-questioning is one that has to be clarified before it can be answered. Thus the cross-question is simply, "What do you mean?" Buddhaghosa's example is of a question that could lead to the trap, *"If all A is B, and all C is B, then if all A is also D, all C is also D"* (e.g., "If all tigers are striped animals and all zebras are striped animals, then if all tigers are cats, all zebras are cats;" "If the eye is inconstant and the ear is inconstant, then if the eye sees, the ear sees"). The cross-question is necessary to clarify the sense of the question and to make the point that even though the eye and ear are similar in some ways, that does not mean that they are similar in all ways: *"All A is B and all C is B; all A is also D, but it is not the case that all C is also D."*

Unlike his handling of the second and third categories, Buddhaghosa illustrates the fourth category with an example from the Canon—one of the ten "undeclared issues" *(avyākata-dhamma)*—but this leads him to an inconsistency. Although he says that the form of the question is what determines the response-strategy it deserves, there is nothing about the formal structure of this question to indicate why it falls into a separate category. He simply notes that because the Buddha put it aside it should stay there.

However, in terms of the first three categories, it is obvious that Buddhaghosa—and the tradition he draws from—is thinking in terms of the questions and logical traps encountered in formal debate, especially of the sort that shaped the way the commentarial tradition evolved. Thus these categories are determined strictly by their logical form. The difficulty in accepting Buddhaghosa's interpretation here is that the Buddha never engaged in formal debates of this sort, and there is no

record in the Pali Canon of his ever encountering the types of question that Buddhaghosa uses to explain the second and third categories. Also, Buddhaghosa's example of a cross-questioning question comes nowhere near to doing full justice to the many ways in which the Buddha used and encouraged cross-questioning in the discourses. Thus it is unlikely that Buddhaghosa's examples—and the definitions determining their classification—correspond to what the Buddha had in mind when formulating his four response-strategies, and they certainly don't reflect the use of these strategies in the Buddha's hands.

Appendix Two

Mnemonic Questions

In the culture of the Buddha's time, writing was used for calculating, accounting, and other business and government transactions, but not for recording spiritual teachings. Perhaps it was considered too lowly for this purpose or too unreliable: Scribal errors could easily creep into a teaching and not be recognized as such. A great deal of effort was thus put into finding mnemonic devices to help students memorize large bodies of spiritual teachings—in particular, the traditions of the Vedas. At the same time, groups of students were taught to memorize together as a way of compensating for the vagaries of each individual memory. Thus by the Buddha's time, Indian culture had developed a sophisticated tradition for training people to develop the mental skills needed to maintain spiritual teachings accurately from one generation to the next.

Working within this culture, the Buddha presented his teachings so that they would be easy both to memorize and to understand. His use of questions was geared to help accomplish both of these aims. In this book, we have focused on questions framed primarily for the sake of understanding, and secondarily for memorization, but the Buddha also employed questions in which these priorities were reversed: either as a way of introducing basic topics for new students to memorize, or as a mnemonic aid for those who had already come to understand the teachings but needed help in trying to remember them. Strictly speaking, these questions all fall under the category of categorical questions, but because of their special purpose and the special issues surrounding them, I am treating them separately in this appendix.

The primary mnemonic device in these questions is the use of numbers. In this, these questions are obviously connected to a common opening question-format in the Buddha's discourses: "Nandaka, a disciple of the noble ones endowed with four qualities is a stream-winner... Which

four?" "Monks, there are these five faculties. Which five?" These numerical introductions clearly serve a mnemonic function, but the discourses they introduce differ from purely mnemonic ones in that the factors in their lists of four, five, etc., are organically related.

In the mnemonic discourses, however, the relationship among the factors is purely numerical, with one factor bearing little if any relationship to its neighbors aside from the fact that they share the same number of sub-factors or fall into a numerical sequence. For this reason, these discourses do not follow the Buddha's instructions in §8, that a Dhamma teacher should speak explaining the sequence, but perhaps these discourses were not considered Dhamma talks. As DN 33 suggests, they may have been designed for the monks to chant together, as a way of providing successive generations with short compendia of the major teachings.

On the shorter end of the spectrum, these mnemonic discourses consist of brief riddles—or riddles implicit in cryptic statements:

> Having killed mother & father,
> two learned kings,
> &, fifth, a tiger—
> the brahman, untroubled, travels on. — *Dhp 295*

> Cut through five,
> let go of five,
> & develop five above all.
> A monk gone past five attachments
> is said to have crossed the flood. — *Dhp 370*

On the longer end of the spectrum, mnemonic discourses are arranged around architectonic questionnaires that organize large bodies of disparate materials in a numerical way. The prime examples here are DN 33 & 34, both of which are attributed to Ven. Sāriputta.

The questions framing mnemonic discourses fall into two broad categories: those that do not provide a framework for understanding the answer, and those that do. DN 33, for example, falls into the first category, in that the basic framework of its organizing questions is purely numerical.

> "There are [set(s) of] *x* thing(s) rightly proclaimed by the Blessed One—who knows, who sees, worthy, & rightly self-awakened—that we should all recite together, without quarreling, so that this holy life might endure and last for a long time, for the welfare of the many, the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare & happiness of human & divine beings. Which [set(s) of] *x* thing(s)?"

Each of these questions—in which *x* ranges from one to ten—is then followed by a list of lists, with little if anything in the framework of the discourse to indicate how the individual lists are to be used in the practice.

However, in DN 34 the framework questions call for a rudimentary understanding of the lists given in response, in that they are organized not only by number but also by function.

> "Which *x* thing(s) is/are very helpful? ... Which *x* thing(s) should be developed? ... Which *x* thing(s) should be comprehended? ... Which *x* thing(s) should be abandoned? ... Which *x* thing(s) is/are on the side of decline? ... Which *x* thing(s) is/are on the side of distinction? ... Which *x* thing(s) is/are hard to penetrate? ... Which *x* thing(s) should be made to arise? ... Which *x* thing(s) should be directly known? ... Which *x* thing(s) should be realized?"

Here again, in each set of questions, *x* ranges from one through ten. And even though the answers in each set of *x* are related only by number, the fact that the lists are sorted by function gives more coherence to the discourse and makes it more useful in practice.

This distinction between mnemonic questions that are purely numerical and those that provide a context in addition to number occurs in other discourses as well. Perhaps the most interesting examples of this distinction occur in the three discourses that discuss in detail a set of ten questions that apparently served as a sort of catechism in the early Buddhist Saṅgha.

The simplest statement of this catechism is Khp 4, The Novice's Questions:

> What is one? All animals subsist on nutriment.

> What is two? Name & form.
> What is three? Three types of feeling.
> What is four? Four noble truths.
> What is five? Five clinging-aggregates.
> What is six? Six internal sense media.
> What is seven? Seven factors for awakening.
> What is eight? The noble eightfold path.
> What is nine? The nine abodes for beings.
> What is ten? Endowed with ten qualities, one is called an arahant.

In this version of the catechism, the questions are purely numerical, functioning simply to test one's memory of basic Buddhist terms, without providing a framework for understanding what those terms mean and how to use them in practice. Apparently this version of the catechism would be employed in a situation where the teacher could then provide this understanding, drawing on other discourses to explain the answers. For example, to explain the nine abodes of beings, the teacher could quote from DN 15:

> "There are beings with diversity of body and diversity of perception, such as human beings, some devas, and some beings in the lower realms. This is the first station of consciousness.
> "There are beings with diversity of body and singularity of perception, such as the devas of the Brahmā hosts generated by the first [jhāna]. This is the second station of consciousness.
> "There are beings with singularity of body and diversity of perception, such as the Radiant Devas. This is the third station of consciousness.
> "There are beings with singularity of body and singularity of perception, such as the Beautiful Black Devas. This is the fourth station of consciousness.
> "There are beings who, with the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, (perceiving,) 'Infinite space,' arrive at the dimension of the infinitude of space. This is the fifth station of consciousness.

> "There are beings who, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) 'Infinite consciousness,' arrive at the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. This is the sixth station of consciousness.
> "There are beings who, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) 'There is nothing,' arrive at the dimension of nothingness. This is the seventh station of consciousness.
> "The dimension of non-percipient beings and, second, the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. These are the two dimensions."

To explain the ten qualities of the arahant, the teacher could quote from AN 10:112:

> "Monks, there are these ten qualities of one beyond training. Which ten? the right view of one beyond training, the right resolve of one beyond training, the right speech of one beyond training, the right action of one beyond training, the right livelihood of one beyond training, the right effort of one beyond training, the right mindfulness of one beyond training, the right concentration of one beyond training, the right knowledge of one beyond training, the right release of one beyond training."

Thus the questions of the Novice's Questions require a teaching context before they can provide understanding. On their own, they simply provide aids in memorizing basic Buddhist vocabulary.

SN 41:8 contains what is apparently a reference to the ten Novice's Questions. In that discourse, Citta the householder—after a brief but fruitless conversation with Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta—states that Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and his following would be fit to engage with him in discussion only when they learn the meaning of these ten questions. However, Citta's reference to the questions provides no context for understanding their answers. In fact, he doesn't even state what the questions or answers are.

> [Citta:] "These ten righteous questions have come up, venerable sir. When you learn their meaning, then you—together with your Nigaṇṭha company—can argue with me.

> "One question, one synopsis, one answer. Two questions, two synopses, two answers. Three questions… Four questions… Five… Six… Seven… Eight… Nine… Ten questions, ten synopses, ten answers."
> Then having entrusted *[āpucchitvā]* these ten questions to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, Citta the householder got up from his seat and left.

Citta's reference to the questions is not only cryptic, but—if he really is referring to the Novice's Questions—a little misleading. He seems to indicate that each set contains an ever-increasing number of questions, synopses, and answers, whereas in fact each set contains only a single question, etc., about topics that have increasing numbers in their answers.

The fact that he is referring to these questions is supported by AN 10:27 and AN 10:28, which provide two alternative ways of explaining Citta's reference by following a form similar to that of the Novice's Questions. Their major difference from the Novice's Questions is that their framing questions actually provide a context for understanding the meaning and purpose of the answers. Scholars have noted that the answers to the questions in these two discourses are the same in some cases and not in others; and that the answers in both contain similarities and differences with those in the Novice's Questions. What they have failed to note is that, in the cases where the answers differ, it's because the questions do.

Neither discourse explicitly explains Citta's threefold analysis—question, synopsis, and answer—but they both show it in the way they organize each set. This organization can be illustrated by one of the sets they have in common, the first:

> "'One question, one synopsis, one answer.' Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? Rightly being disenchanted, rightly being dispassioned, rightly released, rightly seeing the total end, rightly breaking through with regard to one thing, a monk is one who puts an end to stress. With regard to which one thing?"
>
> That much is the question.
>
> "All animals subsist on nutriment."
>
> That is the synopsis.

> "Rightly disenchanted, rightly dispassioned, rightly released, rightly seeing the total end, rightly breaking through with regard to this one thing, a monk is one who puts an end to stress."

That is the answer—although it might be better to say that the synopsis is part of the answer as well.

In AN 10:27, the Buddha is the speaker giving the explanation, and in every case the question takes the same form:

> "Rightly disenchanted, rightly dispassioned, rightly released, rightly seeing the total end, rightly breaking through with regard to *x* thing(s), a monk is one who puts an end to stress. With regard to which *x* thing(s)?"

The synopses in the answers are these:

> One: All animals subsist on nutriment.
> Two: Name and form.
> Three: Three feelings.
> Four: Four nutriments.
> Five: Five clinging-aggregates.
> Six: Six internal sense media.
> Seven: Seven stations of consciousness.
> Eight: Eight worldly conditions.
> Nine: Nine abodes of beings.
> Ten: Ten unskillful action-paths.

Of these sets, only the fourth and the eighth are not explained in this book. The fourth set is explained in SN 12:64:

> "There are these four nutriments for the establishing of beings who have taken birth or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical nutriment, gross or refined; contact as the second, intellectual intention the third, and consciousness the fourth."

The eighth set is explained in AN 8:6:

> "Monks, these eight worldly conditions spin after the world, and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions. Which eight?

Gain, loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, & pain." [See §55.]

The ten unskillful action-paths are the same as the ten unskillful types of action listed in §28.

From the perspective of the discussion in Chapter Three, what's noteworthy about the questions in this version of the catechism is that their framework calls for answers that fall under the duties to be followed with regard to the first and second noble truths. In other words, these are all things to be comprehended to the point of dispassion, after which they can be abandoned. As for the answers, they are all expressed in terms of different levels of appropriate attention. One, four, and seven through ten are expressed in terms of mundane right view, dealing with beings, skillful and unskillful actions, the factors that can motivate unskillful action (eight), and the results—in this life and the next—to which the various levels of skill can lead (seven through ten). Two, three, five, and six are expressed in terms of the factors of dependent co-arising.

In AN 10:28, a group of householders in Kajaṅgalā ask a bhikkhunī identified only as "the Kajaṅgalā bhikkhunī" about the catechism, and she—stating that she has never had the chance to hear this teaching directly from the Buddha—gives an explanation of her own. She frames the questions for the numbers one, two, three, and nine in exactly the same way as the Buddha does in AN 10:27:

> "Rightly disenchanted, rightly dispassioned, rightly released, rightly seeing the total end, rightly breaking through with regard to *x* thing(s), a monk is one who puts an end to stress. With regard to which *x* thing(s)?"

Her answers to these questions are thus the same as his. However, for the numbers four, five, six, seven, eight, and ten, she frames the questions differently:

> "With a mind rightly developed, rightly seeing the total end, rightly breaking through with regard to *x* thing(s), a monk is one who puts an end to stress. With regard to which *x* thing(s)?"

In terms of the four noble truths, this framework calls for answers that fit under the truth of the path—as something to be developed—and these

are the answers the Kajaṅgalā bhikkhkunī provides:

> Four: the four establishings of mindfulness.
> Five: the five faculties.
> Six: the six properties leading to escape.
> Seven: the seven factors for awakening.
> Eight: the noble eightfold path.
> Ten: the ten skillful action-paths.

Of these answers, only the sixth set is not explained in this book. DN 33 explains it as follows:

> "This is the escape from ill will, i.e., the good-will awareness release... This is the escape from harmfulness, i.e., the compassion awareness release... This is the escape from resentment, i.e., the empathetic-joy awareness release... This is the escape from passion, i.e., the equanimity awareness release... This is the escape from themes [of concentration], i.e., the themeless awareness release... This is the escape from the arrow of uncertainty & perplexity, i.e., the destruction of the conceit 'I am.'"

As for the five faculties, they are listed in the footnote to §112.

After learning the Kajaṅgalā bhikkhkunī's explanation of the catechism, the householders of Kajaṅgalā go to the Buddha and report what she said. The Buddha praises her discernment, and states that he would have given the same explanation as she.

Thus in all three versions of the catechism, the answers are given in terms that derive from appropriate attention. And despite their differences, the answers are all "right." Their differences can be attributed to the fact that some of the individual questions are framed in different ways, with the special difference being that in Khp 4, the questions are purely numerical, providing no framework for understanding, whereas in AN 10:27 and AN 10:28, the questions do provide such a framework, at least in rudimentary terms. And it can be argued that that element of understanding could also function as a memory aid, in that something you understand is easier to memorize than something you don't.

All three versions of the catechism are obviously useful for passing information on to future generations, in that they present some of the

Buddha's most central teachings in a short, easy to memorize form. But that is not their only function. Given that mindfulness—the ability to keep something in mind—is a crucial factor of the path, these versions of the catechism are also useful as teachings to be kept in mind while practicing. This point is supported by the fact that many of the answers to the catechism, in its various versions, are included as topics of contemplation in The Greater Establishing of Mindfulness Discourse (DN 22—§33): the three types of feeling, the four noble truths, the four establishings of mindfulness, the five clinging-aggregates, the six internal sense media, the seven factors for awakening, and the noble eightfold path.

Appendix Three

Eternalism & Annihilationism

There are two passages in the discourses where the Buddha puts aside a question because answering it would involve "circling around" or "being in company with" proponents of either eternalism or annihilationism [§162, §166]. Although he obviously regards these two viewpoints as extreme forms of wrong view, nowhere does he give a formal definition of what they are. Instead, he cites various examples of these views at scattered places in the discourses. Thus the best way to get a sense of what these viewpoints entail is to start by gathering the examples that the Canon explicitly identifies as eternalism and annihilationism into one place.

Examples of eternalism:

"'The self & the cosmos are barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar. And even though beings roam, wander, fall [die], & reappear, there is just that which will be like that as long as eternity.'" — *DN 1*

"'This self is the same as the cosmos. This I will be after death, constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change.'" — *SN 22:81*

Examples of partial eternalism:

"'We were created by Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. He is constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change, and will stay just like that as long as eternity. But we who have been created by him—inconstant, impermanent, short-lived, subject to falling—have come to this world.'" — *DN 1*

“Those honorable devas who are not corrupted by play don’t spend an excessive amount of time indulging in the delights of laughter & play. Because they don’t spend an excessive amount of time indulging in the delights of laughter & play, their mindfulness doesn’t become muddled. Because of unmuddled mindfulness, they don’t fall from that company. They are constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change, and will stay just like that as long as eternity. But those of us who were corrupted by play spent an excessive amount of time indulging in the delights of laughter & play. Because we spent an excessive amount of time indulging in the delights of laughter & play, our mindfulness became muddled. Because of muddled mindfulness, we fell from that company and—inconstant, impermanent, short-lived, subject to falling—have come to this world.’” — *DN 1*

“Those honorable devas who are not corrupted in mind don’t spend an excessive amount of time staring at one another with lust. Because they don’t spend an excessive amount of time staring at one another with lust, their minds don’t become corrupted toward one another. Because they are uncorrupted in mind toward one another, they don’t grow exhausted in body or exhausted in mind. They don’t fall from that company. They are constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change, and will stay just like that as long as eternity. But those of us who were corrupted in mind spent an excessive amount of time staring at one another with lust. Because we spent an excessive amount of time staring at one another with lust, our minds became corrupted toward one another. Because we were corrupted in mind toward one another, we grew exhausted in body & exhausted in mind. We fell from that company and—inconstant, impermanent, short-lived, subject to falling—have come to this world.’” — *DN 1*

“‘That which is called “eye” & “ear” & “nose” & “tongue” & “body”: That self is inconstant, impermanent, non-eternal, subject to change. But that which is called “mind” or “intellect” or “consciousness”: That self is constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change, and will stay just like that as long as eternity.’” — *DN 1*

Examples of annihilationism:

"There are, monks, some contemplatives & brahmans who are annihilationists, and who on [one of] seven grounds declare the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being *[sant satta:* see Appendix Four]....
"'When the self that is possessed of form, made of the four great elements, engendered by mother & father, is—with the breakup of the body—annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death, it's to this extent that the self is completely exterminated.' ...
"'There is another self—divine, possessed of form, on the sensual level, feeding on material food.... When this self—with the breakup of the body—is annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death, it's to this extent that the self is completely exterminated.'...
"'There is another self—divine, possessed of form, mind-made, complete in all its limbs, not destitute of any faculties.... When this self—with the breakup of the body—is annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death, it's to this extent that the self is completely exterminated.'...
"'There is another self where—with the complete transcending of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, (perceiving,) 'Infinite space'—one enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space.... When this self—with the breakup of the body—is annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death, it's to this extent that the self is completely exterminated.'...
"'There is another self where—with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) 'Infinite consciousness'—one enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness.... When this self—with the breakup of the body—is annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death, it's to this extent that the self is completely exterminated.'...
"'There is another self where—with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) 'There is nothing'—one enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness.... When this self—with the breakup of the body—is

annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death, it's to this extent that the self is completely exterminated.'...
"'There is another self where—with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness—one enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.... When this self—with the breakup of the body—is annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death, it's to this extent that the self is completely exterminated.' — *DN 1*

[King Ajātasattu:] "Ajita Kesakambalin said to me, 'Great king, there is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no contemplatives or brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world and the next after having directly known and realized it for themselves. A person is a composite of four primary elements. At death, the earth [in the body] returns to and merges with the [external] earth-substance. The fire returns to and merges with the fire-substance. The liquid returns to and merges with the liquid-substance. The wind returns to and merges with the wind-substance. The sense-faculties scatter into space. Four men, with the bier as the fifth, carry the corpse. Its eulogies are sounded only as far as the charnel ground. The bones turn pigeon-colored. The offerings end in ashes. Generosity is taught by idiots. The words of those who speak of existence [after death] are false, vain, empty chatter. With the breakup of the body, the wise & the foolish alike are annihilated, destroyed, & do not exist after death.'" — *DN 2*

"'I would not be, neither would there be what is mine. I will not be, neither will there be what is mine.'" — *SN 22:81*

To generalize from these examples, eternalism is a view that both the self and the cosmos are eternal and unchanging, existing throughout time. Partial eternalism is a view that some beings are eternal and unchanging whereas others are not, or that some parts of the self are eternal and unchanging whereas others are not. Annihilationism is a view

that a person—regardless of whether it is defined as a "self"—will be annihilated at death.

However, the views that the Buddha rejects because they encircle either eternalism or annihilationism do not constitute the full-blown forms of these views. Instead, they are forms of objectification that simply tend in their direction.

> "Kassapa, the statement, 'With the one who acts being the same as the one who experiences, existing from the beginning, pleasure & pain are self-made': This circles around eternalism. And the statement, 'With the one who acts being one thing, and the one who experiences being another, existing as the one struck by the feeling': This circles around annihilationism." — *SN 12:17*

> "Ānanda, if I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is a self—were to answer that there is a self, that would be in company with those contemplatives & brahmans who are exponents of eternalism. If I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is no self—were to answer that there is no self, that would be in company with those contemplatives & brahmans who are exponents of annihilationism." — *SN 44:10*

In the first case, the assumption that the self exists long enough to experience the results of the acts of which it is the agent is enough to circle around eternalism. The assumption that the agent doesn't exist long enough to experience the results of its actions is enough to circle around annihilationism.

In the second case, the assumption that there is any kind of self at all is enough to put oneself in the same company as eternalists. The assumption that there is no self—this would come close to the annihilationist view given in DN 2—is enough to put oneself in the same company as annihilationists.

Even though these assumptions do not constitute full-blown eternalism or annihilationism, they are similar to eternalism and annihilationism in that they place importance on questions of what does or does not underlie the phenomena of experience, lasting from one moment to the next. Thus they encourage the perceptions of objectification that get in the way of seeing the phenomena of experience

directly as they occur in terms of dependent co-arising. At the same time —as Iti 49 shows—the ways of thinking exemplified by assumptions tending either toward eternalism or annihilationism provide food for craving for becoming and craving for non-becoming, both of which are causes for continued becoming and its inherent suffering and stress.

> "Overcome by two viewpoints, some human & divine beings adhere, other human & divine beings slip right past, while those with vision see.
> "And how do some adhere? Human & divine beings delight in becoming, enjoy becoming, are satisfied with becoming. When the Dhamma is being taught for the sake of the cessation of becoming, their minds do not take to it, are not calmed by it, do not settle on it, or become resolved on it. This is how some adhere.
> "And how do some slip right past? Some, feeling horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with that very becoming, delight in non-becoming: 'When this self, with the breakup of the body, after death, is annihilated, destroyed, and does not exist after death, that is peaceful, that is exquisite, that is sufficiency!' This is how some slip right past.
> "And how do those with vision see? There is the case where a monk sees what's come to be as what's come to be. Seeing this, he practices for disenchantment with what's come to be, dispassion for what's come to be, and the cessation of what's come to be. This is how those with vision see. — *Iti 49*

As the Buddha states in the refrain to DN 1 [§184], he rejects eternalism and annihilationism because "he discerns that these standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond. And he discerns what is higher than this. And yet discerning that, he does not grasp at that act of discerning. And as he is not grasping at it, unbinding *(nibbuti)* is experienced right within." A similar statement could be made about assumptions that circle around these two extreme forms of wrong view: When they are abandoned, when the mind no longer thinks in terms of the questions on which they are based—Am I? Am I not? What am I?—one is in a better position to develop the vision that allows one to see simply in terms of what has come to be, as dependently co-arisen events,

and to practice in a way that leads through dispassion and cessation to release.

Appendix Four

On the meaning of 'tathāgata' in the tetralemma

The primary use of the word *tathāgata* in the discourses is as an epithet of the Buddha. Iti 112 gives an extended discussion of why this epithet is appropriate to him:

> *This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:*
> "The cosmos [§159] has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. From the cosmos, the Tathāgata is disjoined. The origination of the cosmos has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. The origination of the cosmos has, by the Tathāgata, been abandoned. The cessation of the cosmos has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. The cessation of the cosmos has, by the Tathāgata, been realized. The path leading to the cessation of the cosmos has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. The path leading to the cessation of the cosmos has, by the Tathāgata, been developed.
> "Whatever in this cosmos—with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, its generations with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & common people—is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect, that has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata [§46]. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.
> "From the night the Tathāgata fully awakens to the unsurpassed Right Self-awakening until the night he is totally unbound in the unbinding property with no fuel remaining, whatever the Tathāgata has said, spoken, explained is just so *(tatha)* and not otherwise. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.
> "The Tathāgata is one who does in line with *(tathā)* what he teaches, one who teaches in line with what he does. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

> "In this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, its generations with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & common people, the Tathāgata is the unconquered conqueror, all-seeing, the wielder of power [these are epithets usually associated with the Great Brahmā]. Thus he is called the Tathāgata." *This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said.* — *Iti 112*

Many of the attributes listed in this discourse apply solely to the Buddha, but a few passages in the discourses—at MN 22 (see below), MN 72 [§190], and SN 22:85 [§183]—use the term *tathāgata* to denote any person fully released, whether a Buddha or an arahant disciple. In either case, the word, as used in the discourses, has a high and exalted meaning.

In general, the Commentary follows this understanding of the term *tathāgata* in its explanations of the discourses. In fact, whenever the term first appears in each of the major nikāyas, the Commentary to that nikāya expands on the list given in Iti 112 to provide even more reasons for why the Buddha is termed the Tathāgata, and why this is a term of exalted status. However, when treating the tetralemma—the four unacceptable ways of describing the Tathāgata after death—the Commentary gives two different definitions for the term *tathāgata*. When discussing the tetralemma in SN 44:1 [§191], it defines *tathāgata* in the standard way, as meaning the Buddha ("the all-knowing Tathāgata"); but in five places—when discussing the tetralemma as it appears in DN 29 [§185], MN 63 [§176], SN 16:12, SN 22:85 [§193], and AN 7:51 [§178]—it defines *tathāgata* as *satta,* or being. According to this latter explanation, the question of the existence, non-existence, etc., of *any* being after death is one that the Buddha would put aside.

The Commentary does not define the term *tathāgata* in this way in any other context, provides no reason for why it does so in these locations, and makes no note of the fact that it defines the term differently even though the context—the tetralemma—is the same. And as the Commentary to SN 44:1 points out, it is precisely because the Tathāgata cannot be classified as a being that the four alternatives in the tetralemma do not apply to him:

> "Deep": Deep through the depth of his disposition & through the depth of his qualities. Given that the all-knowing Tathāgata is so

> deep in his qualities, and through the non-existence of that in dependence on which there is the description, "The Tathāgata is classed as a being," for one who sees the non-existence of that description, the statement, "The Tathāgata, classed as a being, exists after death," isn't fitting, doesn't apply. The statement, "The Tathāgata doesn't exist after death," etc., isn't fitting, doesn't apply.
> — *Commentary to SN 44:1*

For these reasons, many scholars have called into question the Commentary's definition of *tathāgata* as *satta* in its other explanations of the tetralemma. Recently, however, a justification for the Commentary's usage has been proposed: The tetralemma actually functions in two contexts, with the term *tathāgata* carrying different meanings in each. When the tetralemma appears as part of the ten undeclared questions, it concerns the post-mortem fate of any being; when it appears on its own, it concerns the post-mortem fate of a fully awakened person.

To evaluate this proposal, we have to address three questions:

1) *Does the Commentary itself observe this distinction between the two contexts?*
2) *Is there any evidence that the Canon recognizes a distinction between the meaning of the tetralemmas in the two contexts?*
3) *Is there any reason to accept the Commentary's proposal that the Buddha would have put aside the question of whether an ordinary being exists, doesn't exist, both, or neither after death?*

1) The answer to the first question is a simple No. The Commentary to DN 29 [§185] and to SN 16:12 both equate *tathāgata* with *satta,* and yet the tetralemma discussed in those discourses appears on its own, and not in the context of the ten undeclared questions.

2) As for whether the Canon itself recognizes a distinction between the meaning of the tetralemmas in the two contexts, the major arguments for saying Yes are these:

a) In MN 72 [§183], Vacchagotta the wanderer asks why the Buddha doesn't take a stand on any of the ten undeclared questions, and the Buddha responds by saying that each of these ten positions is "a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a

fetter of views. It is accompanied by suffering, distress, despair, & fever, and it does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation; to calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding." In other words, he gives the basic list of pragmatic reasons for not taking a stand on these views. This answer apparently satisfies Vacchagotta. Later in the same discourse [§190], however, Vacchagotta questions the Buddha about the post-mortem fate of a monk whose mind is released. This, according to the argument, shows that when Vacchagotta had asked the Buddha about the tetralemma earlier in the discourse, he intended the term *tathāgata* to mean any being in general, for if he had intended it to mean an awakened being in that context, he wouldn't have repeated his question about the fate of the monk whose mind was released.

b) The Canon, when explaining the reasons for rejecting the tetralemma in the context of the ten undeclared questions, uses what we have identified as the basic list of pragmatic reasons, but when explaining the reasons for rejecting the tetralemma on its own, it never uses this list, but instead uses other sets of reasons: that the questions derive from unskillful mind states (what we have identified as part of the strong list pragmatic reasons), or that the terms of the questions simply do not apply (the argument based on the meaninglessness of the questions). At the same time, the fact that the questions of the tetralemma derive from unskillful mind states shows that, from the Buddhist point of view, they are meaningless. Thus the reasons for putting aside the questions of the tetralemma on their own are of a different order: The argument from meaninglessness is always used, and the argument from pragmatic reasons, never.

c) The tetralemma in the context of the ten undeclared questions is part of a general questionnaire of issues discussed among the many competing philosophical groups of the time. Because some of those groups denied the existence of awakened beings, this would not have been a topic they would have addressed. Also, there is no evidence that any other schools used the term *tathāgata* to mean an awakened being in their teachings, and so that meaning would not have been part of the general questionnaire.

When the tetralemma is addressed on its own, however, it is always in the context where a person has just heard the Buddha's teachings, and so

it deals with the post-mortem fate of the tathāgata as understood in those teachings: i.e., as a fully awakened being.

In response to these arguments, we can cite the following points:

a) As we noted in Chapter Eight, the pragmatic reasons for rejecting the ten undeclared questions leave open the issue of whether or not they could be answered. Thus, in MN 72, when Vacchagotta hears these reasons, he could easily assume that the Buddha might have had private answers to these questions, but for pragmatic reasons refused to divulge them publicly. After the Buddha again brings up the topic of the released mind, Vacchagotta might have seen his chance to gain access to those private answers. What confuses him is the new set of reasons that the Buddha gives for not answering the tetralemma: that the various alternatives are meaningless and so do not apply. Thus the argument in point (a), above, is inconclusive.

b) Without going into the issue of whether the reasons in the strong list should be classed as pragmatic or dealing with meaninglessness, we can simply note that DN 29 [§185] and SN 16:12, when discussing the tetralemma on its own, *do* use the basic list of pragmatic reasons for explaining why the Buddha puts these questions aside. In fact, these are the only reasons these discourses list. This in itself is enough to disprove the argument in point (b), that the Canon never uses the basic list of pragmatic reasons when discussing the tetralemma on its own.

c) The lack of evidence for how other philosophical groups addressed the questionnaire of ten questions to one another, and the lack of evidence for how they used the word *tathāgata* among themselves, cuts both ways. When reading the discourses, we must remember that we are reading how other sectarians addressed the questionnaire to the Buddha or to his followers, and it might be that those sectarians phrased their questions in terms that the Buddhists would have found familiar. Either that, or the Buddhists—when recording their conversations with other sectarians—did so using their own Buddhist terms. Whichever is the case, SN 44:2 [§192] portrays other sectarians addressing a Buddhist monk and using the term *tathāgata* in the sense of a person who has reached the highest goal:

> On that occasion, Ven. Anurādha was staying not far from the Blessed One in a wilderness hut. Then a large number of wandering sectarians went to him and... said, "Friend Anurādha, the Tathāgata —the supreme person, the superlative person, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described with [one of] these four positions: After death the Tathāgata exists; after death he does not exist; after death he both exists & does not exist; after death he neither exists nor does not exist."

Although it is true that we have no evidence that other philosophical schools used the word *tathāgata* to mean an awakened being when talking among themselves, we also have no evidence of their using it to mean *satta* when talking among themselves. In fact, there is good reason to think that they would *not* have used it to mean *satta,* for if it had such an ordinary meaning among the sects of the time, why would the Buddha have adopted it as his primary epithet to express his exalted status and that of his fully awakened students?

And as for groups that did not believe in awakening—and these tended to believe that death was annihilation—they could have easily answered the questionnaire sarcastically by saying that regardless of how "awakened" you were, you were no different from anyone else: Death would be the end of you.

Thus there is no conclusive evidence that the Canon recognized a distinction between the meaning of the tetralemma in the context of the ten undeclared issues and that of the tetralemma when discussed on its own. In fact, the evidence strongly suggests that this was not the case.

3) As for the question of whether there is any basis in the Canon for assuming that the Buddha would have put aside the question of the existence, non-existence, etc., of an ordinary being after death: The evidence clearly indicates that the Buddha would have treated this question as one deserving an analytical response. In other words, he would have given an answer after introducing an extra variable or two.

The variable he would have introduced here would have been his definition of "being" *(satta)* as passion, delight, obsession, or craving for any of the aggregates [§199-§200]. In this sense, a "being" in the Buddha's terms is defined—measured—as an ongoing psychological

process of attachment and obsession. Having given a definition in this way, he can then talk of the object of the definition as existing, not existing, both, or neither.

But before addressing the issue of that being's existence after death, we have to add an important variable, noting that the Buddha's definition of a being as a *process* differs from that of a being as a *discrete metaphysical entity*. This latter sort of definition is apparently what the Buddha meant by the phrase "existing being *(sant satta)"* in the following passage.

> "And when the devas, together with their Indras, Brahmās, & Pajāpatīs, search for the monk whose mind is thus released, they cannot find that 'The consciousness of the Tathāgata is dependent on this.' Why is that? The Tathāgata is untraceable even in the here & now. [§192-§193]
> "Speaking in this way, teaching in this way, I have been erroneously, vainly, falsely, unfactually misrepresented by some contemplatives & brahmans (who say,) 'Gotama the contemplative is one who misleads. He declares the annihilation, destruction, extermination of the existing being *[sant satta].'* But as I am not that, as I do not say that, so I have been erroneously, vainly, falsely, unfactually misrepresented by those venerable contemplatives & brahmans (who say,) 'Gotama the contemplative is one who misleads. He declares the annihilation, destruction, extermination of the existing being.'" — *MN 22*

Having introduced these two ways of talking about a being—as a metaphysical entity, which he does not adopt; and as a psychological process of self-definition through attachment and obsession, which he does—the Buddha would then be able to give an analytical answer to the question of whether such a being exists after death. From the perspective of mundane right view, the being as psychological process does exist after death as long as the process is supported by craving. And this, in fact, is how the Buddha often describes what beings do after death, most notably in the standard description of the "divine eye" given repeatedly throughout the discourses:

> "When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, &

attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the passing away & reappearance of beings. I saw—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with action: 'These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.'" — *MN 19*

"But, Master Gotama, at the moment a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, what do you designate as its clinging/sustenance then?"
"Vaccha, when a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, I designate it as wind-sustained, for the wind is its clinging/sustenance at that time."
"And at the moment when a being sets this body aside and is not yet reborn in another body, what do you designate as its clinging/sustenance then?"
"Vaccha, when a being sets this body aside and is not yet reborn in another body, I designate it as craving-sustained, for craving is its clinging/sustenance at that time." — *SN 44:9*

However, when the mind has no more attachments and obsessions, then—as noted by the passage from MN 22—there is no longer any basis for locating or defining the person fully released.

"But if one doesn't stay obsessed with form, monk, that's not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified.
"If one doesn't stay obsessed with feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, that's not what one is measured by.

Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified." — *SN 22:36*

"Having shed classifications,
gone beyond conceit,
he has here
cut
through craving
for name
& form:
This one—
his bonds cut through,
free
from trouble,
from longing—
though they search they can't find him,
human & heavenly beings,
here & beyond,
in heaven
or any abode. — *SN 1:20*

When one cannot be defined or located, one cannot be described either in this life or after death.

Just as the destination of a glowing fire
struck with a [blacksmith's] iron hammer,
gradually growing calm,
isn't known:

Even so, there's no destination to describe
for those who are rightly released
—having crossed over the flood
of sensuality's bond—
for those who've attained
unwavering ease. — *Ud 8:10*

"I designate the rebirth of one who has clinging/sustenance, Vaccha, and not of one without clinging/sustenance. Just as a fire burns with clinging/sustenance and not without

clinging/sustenance, even so I designate the rebirth of one who has clinging/sustenance and not of one without clinging/sustenance." — *SN 44:9*

"And so, Anurādha—when you can't pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, 'Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme person, the superlative person, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: After death the Tathāgata exists; after death he does not exist; after death he both exists & does not exist; after death he neither exists nor does not exist'?"
"No, lord."
"Very good, Anurādha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress." — *SN 44:2*

Thus the Buddha would discuss the post-mortem fate of the being-as-process, because such a being could be defined; but he would not discuss the post-mortem fate of the awakened person, because such a person cannot be defined. In other words, questions about the Tathāgata's post-mortem fate are in a category apart precisely because he/she *cannot* be defined as a *satta.* For these reasons, it appears that the word *tathāgata*—as used in the tetralemma wherever it is found in the discourses—has only one meaning: a person so fully released that he/she cannot be defined. And the Commentary's equation of *tathāgata* with *satta* is clearly mistaken.

4) This, of course, leads to a further question: Why did the Commentary propose this equation to begin with? This is a matter of conjecture, but the following passage from the Commentary to SN 22:85 [§193] helps to throw some light on the matter. Here the Commentary is explaining what is wrong with Ven. Yamaka's original position that "A monk with no more fermentations, with the breakup of the body, is annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death."

If this thought had occurred to him, "Fabrications both arise & cease. There is the non-occurrence of the mere occurrence of fabrications," that would not be called a view-standpoint *(diṭṭhigata).* It would be knowledge in accordance with the Teaching.

> But because the thought occurred to him, "A being is annihilated, is destroyed," what is called a view-standpoint was born....

The Commentary then goes on to explain Ven. Yamaka's answer after he has realized his mistake:

> "That which is stressful has ceased": What is stressful, only that has ceased. There is no being aside from that to cease. — *Commentary to SN 22:85*

In making this explanation, the Commentary is calling on the tradition that developed after the Abhidhamma (and is discussed above in the Chapter Nine) that there is no self *(attā)* or being *(satta)* in the ultimate sense of the term, that the terms *self* and *being* are simply conventional designations for what, in ultimate terms, is simply an occurrence of fabrications in the form of the five aggregates.

However, in taking this stand the Commentary is unwittingly providing an analytical answer to the tetralemma by adding the variables of conventional *vs.* ultimate existence: Yes, a being with craving and clinging exists after death in the conventional sense, but No, it does not exist in the ultimate sense. In other words, the tathāgata (defined as *satta)* both exists and does not exist after death.

Thus, because both the Canon and the Commentary give (different) analytical answers to the question of an ordinary being's existence after death, we can safely stick with the conclusion given above, that *tathāgata* has only one meaning wherever it occurs in the tetralemma or in the Canon as a whole: a person so fully released that he/she cannot be defined either in this life or after death.

Glossary

Abhidhamma: The third division of the Pāli Canon, composed of texts that elaborate on lists of terms and categories drawn from the discourses.

Arahant: A "worthy one" or "pure one;" a person whose mind is free of defilement and thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

Asura: A member of a race of heavenly beings that—much like the Titans in Greek mythology—fought with the devas for control of heaven and lost.

Āsava: Fermentation; effluent. Four qualities—sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance—that "flow out" of the mind and create the flood *(ogha)* of the round of death & rebirth.

Bhava: Becoming. A sense of identity within a particular world of experience. The three levels of becoming are on the level of sensuality, form, and formlessness.

Bodhisatta: "A being (striving) for Awakening;" the term used to describe the Buddha before he actually became Buddha, from his first aspiration to Buddhahood until the time of his full Awakening. Sanskrit form: *Bodhisattva.*

Brahmā: An inhabitant of the higher heavenly realms of form or formlessness.

Brahman: A member of the priestly caste, which claimed to be the highest caste in India, based on birth. In a specifically Buddhist usage, "brahman" can also mean an arahant, conveying the point that excellence is based not on birth or race, but on the qualities attained in the mind.

Deva (devatā): Literally, "shining one." A being on the subtle level of form, living either in terrestrial or heavenly realms.

Dhamma: (1) Event; action; (2) a phenomenon in and of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) nibbāna (although there are passages describing nibbāna as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: *Dharma.*

Gotama: The Buddha's clan name.

Indra: King of a deva realm. Sakka is the indra of the heaven of the Thirty-three, one of the sensual heavenly realms.

Jhāna: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion.

Kamma: (1) Intentional action; (2) the results of intentional actions. Sanskrit form: *Karma.*

Khandha: Aggregate; physical and mental phenomena as they are directly experienced; the raw material for a sense of self: *rūpa*—physical form; *vedanā*—feelings of pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain; *saññā*—perception, mental label; *saṅkhāra*—fabrication, thought construct; and *viññāṇa*—sensory consciousness, the act of taking note of sense data and ideas as they occur. Sanskrit form: *Skandha.*

Māra: The personification of temptation and all forces, within and without, that create obstacles to release from the round of death and rebirth.

Nāga: A term commonly used to refer to strong, stately, and heroic animals, such as elephants and magical serpents. In Buddhism, it is also used to refer to those who have attained the goal.

Nibbāna: Literally, the "unbinding" of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. Sanskrit form: *Nirvāṇa.*

Pajāpati: A high-ranking deva, second in command to the indra of his particular deva realm.

Pāli: The language of the oldest extant Canon of the Buddha's teachings.

Papañca: Objectification. Other possible translations for this term include complication, differentiaion, elaboration, and proliferation.

Pāṭimokkha: The basic code of monastic discipline, composed of 227 rules for monks and 311 for nuns.

Sakyan: An inhabitant of the Sakyan republic, the Buddha's home territory.

Saṁyojana: Fetter. The ten fetters that bind the mind to the round of death and rebirth are (1) identity views, (2) uncertainty, (3) grasping at habits and practices, (4) sensual passion, (5) irritation, (6) passion for form, (7) passion for formlessness, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness, and (10) ignorance.

Saṅgha: 1) On the conventional *(sammati)* level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns; 2) on the ideal *(ariya)* level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream-entry.

Tathāgata: Literally, one who has "become authentic *(tatha-āgata)"* or who is "truly gone *(tathā-gata)":* an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

Uposatha: Observance day, coinciding with the full moon, new moon, and half moons. Lay Buddhists often observe the eight precepts on this day. Monks recite the Pāṭimokkha, the monastic code, on the full moon and new moon uposathas.

Vinaya: The monastic discipline, whose rules and traditions comprise six volumes in printed text. The Buddha's own term for the religion he taught was, "This Dhamma-Vinaya."

Yakkha: Spirit. A lower level of deva—sometimes friendly to human beings, sometimes not—often dwelling in trees or other wild places.