# DN 1 — DN 1 The Brahmā Net | Brahmajāla Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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## Text

The Brahmā Net

Brahmajāla Sutta (DN 1)

Introduction

This sutta—the first of the entire Sutta Piṭaka—introduces the Buddha as a practitioner and as a teacher. Because its portrait focuses on the Dhamma qualities that he exemplifies, it acts as an introduction to the Dhamma he teaches as well.

The portrait falls into four sections, each presenting an aspect of the Buddha’s accomplishments:

his attitude toward praise and criticism,

his virtue,

his discernment,

his release.

Praise & criticism. In the first section of the sutta, the Buddha meets with the monks after a day and night in which he and the monks have had to listen to two wanderers of other sects arguing as to whether the Buddha should be criticized or praised. He counsels the monks not to let their minds be affected by such discussions, his reasoning being that only if the mind is unaffected can it see clearly what is true or false in the words of criticism or praise—and only then can it respond appropriately. He goes on to say that once the monks have clearly evaluated what is said, they can explain what is false in the criticism and true in the praise. Of course, the converse is also possible—that the criticism could be true or the praise false—and there are other passages in the Canon, such as Dhp 76–77, that underline the importance of appreciating and benefitting from criticism when it points out genuine faults. But here, given that the remainder of the sutta is devoted to praise of the Buddha, the emphasis is on the truth of the praise. The main question, both in this section and in the remainder of the sutta, is what sort of praise does the Buddha justice.

It's also worth noting that here, as in the rest of the Sutta Piṭaka, the Buddha doesn't respond to praise with a show of false modesty (see, for instance, MN 36 and Sn 3:7). The proper response to praise is either to remain silent or, when it would be helpful as a teaching strategy, to note where the praise is true.

Virtue. The many virtues attributed to the Buddha in the second section of the sutta are attributed in other suttas in the Dīgha Nikāya to the ideal members of his monastic Saṅgha as well. Although the list is long, it comes nowhere near to covering all the rules that the Buddha formulated for his monks. Instead, it focuses on the rules that would be most apparent to Buddhist lay followers and to followers of other religions. In the Vinaya, the section of the Canon dealing with monastic rules, the Buddha's reasons for formulating the rules fall into three main categories: to inspire faith in others, to help the monks and nuns cleanse their minds of defilement, and to foster harmony within the monastic communities. In the context of this sutta, the list of virtues seems focused primarily on rules falling into the first category, but the discussions of the same list in other suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya show that they fall into the second category as well.

A special feature of the list is the amount of space it devotes to types of wrong livelihood that the Buddha and his monks avoid. The detailed listing given here is much more extensive than even the Vinaya's discussion of the topic.

Discernment. The longest section of the sutta is devoted to the Buddha's analysis of 62 views and his reasons for rejecting them. Rather than saying that all views lead to the same goal, the Buddha makes clear that although all views inspire action, the actions they

inspire lead to many different destinations. This point is so important that the compilers of the Dīgha Nikāya not only chose this sutta to open the collection, but also followed it with another sutta focused on the same theme. The compilers of the Majjhima Nikāya also opened their collection with two suttas that clearly point out what the teaching is not, at the same time using their explanation of why it's not that, to demonstrate what it is. This teaching strategy is in line with the Buddha's statement in MN 117, that the role of right view begins by distinguishing right view from wrong.

The 62 views that the Buddha analyzes fall loosely into two main groups: theories of the past and theories of the future. I say "loosely" because some of the theories, even though they are listed in one of these two groups, don't clearly fall into either. Theories of the past that clearly belong to the first group deal with the question of whether the soul and cosmos are eternal, partially eternal, or arose fortuitously out of nothing. However, this group also includes theories addressing the question of whether the cosmos is finite or infinite, along with a series of agnostic positions—called "eel-wriggling"—where their proponents, through fear or stupidity, refuse to take a position on any issue. Theories of the future that clearly belong to the second group deal with the question of whether the self survives death and, if so, what shape it takes in its survival. However, this group also includes theories of how the self attains unbinding (nibbāna) in the here-and-now.

Taken on their own, these theories clear up four important misunderstandings about early Buddhism and the context in which it was taught. To begin with, the existence of theories denying past lifetimes on the one hand (17–18) and future lives on the other (51–57) disproves the common misunderstanding that everyone in the Buddha's time believed in rebirth, and that the Buddha adopted the idea of rebirth by unthinkingly picking it up from this culture. The fact that the topic was debated showed that the possibility of no rebirth was in the air, and that the Buddha's choice to teach rebirth was conscious and deliberate.

Second, the term "unbinding" in these theories is defined as the peace found in the pleasures of the senses and the four jhānas (states of mental absorption). So, obviously, it carries no connotations of extinction. This lends support to the point that the Buddha's use of the word unbinding for his goal also did not mean extinction, a point further supported by the fact that he refused to define the arahant after death as existing, not existing, both, or neither. Because, in the Buddha's perspective, beings are defined by their attachments (SN 23:2), and because arahants have no attachments, there is no way that they can be defined or described in any way at all.

Third, the way "self" (attā) is defined in the annihilationist views (51–57) shows that the concept of self in the Buddha's time did not—contrary to what is often believed—always have to mean an eternally existing self. In each of these views, the self is defined in such a way that it will be annihilated at death.

Fourth, 20 of the views (1–3, 5–7, 9–11, 17, 52–57, and 59–62) are based on meditative experiences: jhāna, the formless states, and knowledge of previous lives that can be gained based on jhāna. This fact corrects two misunderstandings: one, that the practice of jhāna began with the Buddha; and two, that any insight coming from a concentrated mind

can be trusted to be true. If the Buddha were the first to have discovered jhāna, none of these cases would have occurred in time for the Buddha to refute them. If all insights coming from concentration were reliable, no one would misinterpret what their meditative experiences meant.

A feature common to almost all of the 62 theories is that they are phrased in terms of self and cosmos—in other words, in the same terms as what the Buddha describes as "becoming" (bhava): the act of taking on an identity in a particular world of experience (see The Paradox of Becoming). Because the craving that leads to further becoming is the cause of suffering and stress, the Buddha does not attempt to refute these theories by taking a different position framed in the same terms. Instead, he approaches and rejects these theories from another framework entirely: that of kamma and dependent co-arising (paṭicca samuppāda).

Within this framework, the question becomes not "Can these views be reasonably defended?" It becomes, "Is it skillful kamma to hold to these views?" This falls in line with Vajjiya Māhita's statement in AN 10:94 where, in defending the Buddha against some wanderers who accuse the Buddha of being a nihilist who doesn't teach anything, he says "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." At the end of that sutta, the Buddha affirms that Vajjiya has defended him well. But of course, the teaching doesn't end there. In AN 2:19 the Buddha exhorts the monks to abandon what is unskillful and to develop what is skillful. So the question comes down to: Should these views, as a type of mental kamma, be abandoned or developed?

This is why the Buddha's analysis of views here in DN 1 focuses less on the content of the views and more on the kamma of holding to them: the actions that lead to them, and the kammic destination that holding them can lead to. The verdict in all 62 cases is that the views should be abandoned. The Buddha's analysis of the kamma of these views in this section of the sutta is an example, then, of right view in action: how to use the teachings on kamma and dependent co-arising to let go of actions leading to suffering. Taken together with the following section, on the Buddha's release, this section provides a clear contrast to the 62 views by showing the excellent kammic consequences of adopting the Buddha's general approach to views as a form of kamma.

His approach is obviously inspired by the three knowledges he gained on the night of his awakening:

(a) knowledge of previous lives;

(b) knowledge of the death and rebirth of beings based on their actions (kamma), which in turn are based on their views; and

(c) release from rebirth that comes from adopting right view, i.e., viewing action in terms of the four noble truths.

a. From the first knowledge: As the Buddha points out, views are based on previous actions and experiences, and in many instances—cited explicitly in the section on views dealing with the past, and implicitly in the views on annihilation and nibbāna here-and-now—these actions and experiences can be traced to previous lives and/or to a misinterpretation of experiences gained through meditation. (See MN 136 on other misunderstandings that can come from misinterpreting past-life memories gained in concentration.)

b. From the second knowledge: The act of holding to a view is an act of clinging ("agitation & vacillation" in the words of the sutta) that will inspire actions leading to a particular realm in the round of rebirth. It's worth noting that although the Buddha goes into great detail on the actions giving rise to some of the 62 views, he gives only a brief, general reference to his knowledge of the destination to which all the views lead. However, the importance of this latter knowledge is emphasized by the fact that it forms a refrain repeated again and again throughout this section of the sutta. The main point of the refrain is that right view, as it overcomes clinging even to itself, leads to a destination that surpasses the destinations to which the 62 views lead.

c. From the third knowledge: Views can be overcome by noting that the act of clinging is based on craving, craving is based on feeling, and feeling is based on contact at the six sense media. This sequence of conditions is drawn from the Buddha's teaching on dependent co-arising, which is an elaborated version of the four noble truths. By replacing ignorance of this sequence with knowledge—knowing the origination, passing away, allure, drawbacks of, and escape from feelings and sensory contact—one gains release from all clingings, even to the results of this knowledge, and from all destinations in the realm of becoming.

Other suttas—such as MN 102 and SN 22:81—take a similar approach to views, focusing on the way in which knowledge of the way in which views are fabricated and clung to can lead the mind to stop clinging to views altogether. Two suttas, however, are especially helpful in expanding on the approach taken here in DN 1: SN 41:3 and AN 10:93.

SN 41:3, in a direct reference to DN 1, notes that the 62 views listed here, as well as other views, all come from self-identity views, which define the self around any of the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness: either identical with the aggregate, possessing the aggregate, in the aggregate, or containing the aggregate. The connection between self-identity views and the 62 views in this sutta can be clearly seen in the topics of the views listed here: Once you assume a self, you get caught up in questions of what it is, the dimensions of the world in which it can find its nourishment, its past, its future after death, and what constitutes its happiness here and now. Even the four cases of "eel-wriggling," or agnosticism listed here can be understood as motivated by the desire to protect the self from the harassment that comes from expounding a view to others.

The antidote to this kind of thinking is not to assume that there is no self—MN 2 counsels against trying to give any answer to such questions as "What am I?" and "Do I exist? Do I not exist?" (see the articles, "The Not-self Strategy" and "The Limits of Description" on this

point). Instead, SN 41:3 recommends a more subtle strategy: learning from people of integrity how not to assume a self in any way around the five aggregates. But it does not explain how this is done. SN 12:15 advises contemplating the origination and passing away of events in the world of the six senses until even the notions of "existence" and "non-existence" don't occur to the mind. At that point, all that seems to arise and pass away is stress, a realization that allows the mind to let go of all fabrications. This is its definition of right view.

The most important aspect of right view, as noted above, is that it reaches a point where it undercuts clinging even to itself and to the release that comes when that level of clinging is abandoned. DN 1 itself doesn't explain how, but AN 10:93 gives a clue. After seeing that all other views, because they are fabricated, are stressful, and that because they are stressful, they don't deserve to be claimed as "me" or "mine," right view then applies the same analysis to itself as a fabricated phenomenon. That's how it finds the full escape that comes from dispassion for every fabrication, even the fabrication of the path.

The fact that clinging to views is overcome through knowledge, and not through the simple decision not to formulate views, is worth emphasizing again and again. As SN 22:81 points out, such an agnostic decision is a fabrication based on ignorance, and so it cannot escape from suffering and stress.

The same point applies to the "eel-wrigglers" mentioned in DN 1. Interestingly enough, one of the issues that eel-wrigglers waffle on is precisely an issue on which the Buddha himself refuses to take a position: the status of an arahant after death. The difference is that the eel-wrigglers' refusal is because of their stupidity and fear; the Buddha's refusal, however, is because of his knowledge that any attempt to answer the question is unskillful kamma not conducive to the end of suffering. What this means, of course, is that refusing to take a position on an issue is not always a case of eel-wriggling, as has sometimes been claimed. It's eel-wriggling only when done out of ignorance, stupidity, or fear.

Release. In the final section of the sutta, the Buddha states the reward of developing discernment into the kamma of views: The Tathāgata—a term for the Buddha and, in some suttas, for his arahant disciples—will never be reborn. Freed from all clinging, he is totally released from suffering and stress.

Connections. DN 1 connects these four aspect of the Buddha's behavior—his attitude toward praise and criticism, his virtue, his discernment, and his release—by saying that ordinary people, when praising the Buddha, focus on nothing more than his virtue; only someone of acute discernment can praise him in a way that does justice to his discernment and—through that—to his release.

Other suttas in the Piṭaka, however, show that, in practice, the connections among these four aspects go much deeper than that.

For instance, there is a direct relationship between the Buddha's discernment and his attitude toward criticism and praise. As Sn 4:8 points out, India in the Buddha's time had a

tradition where proponents of different philosophies would engage in public debates. The sutta further says, though, that the actual purpose of such debates wasn't to arrive at the truth. It was to gain praise. This was why the Buddha counseled his students not to engage in such debates. However, as DN 1 shows, the true purpose of developing knowledge about the kamma of views isn't to gain praise from the public. It's to gain release from suffering and stress. Similarly, the purpose of discussion—and this applies to the type of debates that the Buddha would engage in—is to lead to the liberation of the mind (AN 3:68).

There is also a direct relationship between the Buddha's attitude toward praise and criticism on the one hand, and his release on the other. Praise and criticism are "worldly conditions" (AN 8:6–8). As Sn 2:4 states, one of the fruits of arahantship is that the mind, when touched by worldly conditions, isn't shaken.

Finally, there is the relationship between the Buddha's virtue and his discernment. As DN 4 points out, virtue purifies discernment, and discernment purifies virtue, in the same way that the right hand washes the left hand, and the left hand washes the right. This relationship, too, is echoed in the Buddha's standards for debate: A person was worthy of talking to, he said, only if that person conducted the discussion in a fair, truthful, and ethical way (AN 3:68).

The connections among the four aspects of the Buddha's accomplishments mentioned here are only a few of the many possible ones that could be cited from the other suttas in the Piṭaka. However, they are enough to show that the Brahmajāla, though long, is only an introduction to the virtues of the Buddha and the riches of the Dhamma he taught. In particular, it has to be augmented by the following sutta, DN 2, to give a sense of the Buddha's skill in the practice of concentration. Still, because the Brahmajāla raises such important issues, helping to make clear what kind of teacher the Buddha was and was not, what the Dhamma is and what it is not—along with the fact that the final release attained and taught by the Buddha lies beyond all this—it's easy to see why it was such a strong candidate to be placed first in the Sutta Piṭaka as a gateway to the entire collection.

[ I ]

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was traveling on the highway between Rājagaha & Nālanda with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately 500 monks.

And Suppiya the wanderer was traveling on the highway between Rājagaha & Nālanda with his apprentice, Brahmadatta the young brahman.

Along the way, Suppiya the wanderer spoke in many ways in dispraise of the Buddha, in dispraise of the Dhamma, in dispraise of the Saṅgha. But Suppiya the wanderer's apprentice, Brahmadatta the young brahman, spoke in many ways in praise of the Buddha, in praise of the Dhamma, in praise of the Saṅgha. Thus both of these, mentor & apprentice, speaking in direct contradiction to each other, followed right behind the Blessed One and the Saṅgha of monks.

Then the Blessed One, together with the Saṅgha of monks, entered the royal resthouse at Mango Stone to spend the night. And Suppiya the wanderer, together with his apprentice, Brahmadatta the young brahman, entered the royal resthouse at Mango Stone to spend the night. There, too, Suppiya the wanderer spoke in many ways in dispraise of the Buddha, in dispraise of the Dhamma, in dispraise of the Saṅgha. But Suppiya the wanderer's apprentice, Brahmadatta the young brahman, spoke in many ways in praise of the Buddha, in praise of the Dhamma, in praise of the Saṅgha. Thus both of these, mentor & apprentice, speaking in direct contradiction to each other, followed right behind the Blessed One and the Saṅgha of monks.

Then, among a large number of monks who had arisen in the last watch of the night and were sitting gathered together in a pavilion, this discussion arose: "Isn't it amazing! Isn't it astounding!—how the Blessed One, the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, has truly experienced the differing convictions of beings. For this Suppiya the wanderer speaks in many ways in dispraise of the Buddha, in dispraise of the Dhamma, in dispraise of the Saṅgha. But Suppiya the wanderer's apprentice, Brahmadatta the young brahman, speaks in many ways in praise of the Buddha, in praise of the Dhamma, in praise of the Saṅgha. Thus both of these, mentor & apprentice, speaking in direct contradiction to each other, follow right behind the Blessed One and the Saṅgha of monks."

Then the Blessed One, knowing this discussion of the monks, went to the pavilion and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he addressed the monks: "For what topic of conversation are you sitting gathered together here? What is the topic of your conversation that has been interrupted midway?"

When this was said, the monks said to the Blessed One, "Just now, lord, among us—as we had arisen in the last watch of the night and were sitting gathered together in (this) pavilion—this discussion arose: 'Isn't it amazing! Isn't it astounding!—how the Blessed One, the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, has truly experienced the differing convictions of beings. For this Suppiya the wanderer speaks in many ways in dispraise of the Buddha, in dispraise of the Dhamma, in dispraise of the Saṅgha. But Suppiya the wanderer's apprentice, Brahmadatta the young brahman, speaks in many ways in praise of the Buddha, in praise of the Dhamma, in praise of the Saṅgha. Thus both of these, mentor & apprentice, speaking in direct contradiction to each other, follow right behind the Blessed One and the Saṅgha of monks.' This was the topic of our conversation that was interrupted midway when the Blessed One arrived."

"Monks, if others were to speak in dispraise of me, in dispraise of the Dhamma, or in dispraise of the Saṅgha, neither hatred nor antagonism nor displeasure of mind would be proper. If others were to speak in dispraise of me, in dispraise of the Dhamma, or in dispraise of the Saṅgha, and at that you would be upset and angered, that would be an obstruction for you yourselves. If others were to speak in dispraise of me, in dispraise of the Dhamma, or in dispraise of the Saṅgha, and at that you would be upset and angered, would you know what of those others was well-said or poorly said?"

“No, lord.”

“If others were to speak in dispraise of me, in dispraise of the Dhamma, or in dispraise of the Saṅgha, you should unravel and explicate what is unfactual as unfactual: ‘This is unfactual, this is inaccurate, there is nothing of that in us, and that is not to be found in us.’

“If others were to speak in praise of me, in praise of the Dhamma, or in praise of the Saṅgha, neither joy nor gladness nor exhilaration of mind would be proper. If others were to speak in praise of me, in praise of the Dhamma, or in praise of the Saṅgha, and at that you would be joyful, glad, & exhilarated, that would be an obstruction for you yourselves. If others were to speak in praise of me, in praise of the Dhamma, or in praise of the Saṅgha, and at that you would be joyful, glad, & exhilarated, would you know what of those others was well-said or poorly said?”

“No, lord.”

“If others were to speak in praise of me, in praise of the Dhamma, or in praise of the Saṅgha, you should unravel and explicate what is factual as factual: ‘This is factual, this is accurate, there is that in us, and that is to be found in us.’

“It would be of minor matters, lower matters, matters of virtue, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak. And which are the minor matters, lower matters, matters of virtue, of which a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak?

The Lesser Section on Virtue

“‘Abandoning the taking of life, the contemplative Gotama 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.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Abandoning the taking of what is not given, the contemplative Gotama abstains from taking what is not given. He takes only what is given, accepts only what is given, lives not by stealth but by means of a self that has become pure.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Abandoning uncelibacy, the contemplative Gotama lives a celibate life, aloof, refraining from the sexual act that is the villager’s way.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Abandoning false speech, the contemplative Gotama abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Abandoning divisive speech, the contemplative Gotama 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.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Abandoning abusive speech, the contemplative Gotama 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.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal [attha], the Dhamma, & the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with what is profitable [attha].’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘The contemplative Gotama abstains from damaging seed & plant life.’…

“Or: ‘The contemplative Gotama eats only once a day, refraining from the evening meal and from food at the wrong time of day.’…

“Or: ‘The contemplative Gotama abstains from dancing, singing, instrumental music, and from watching shows.’…

“Or: ‘The contemplative Gotama abstains from wearing garlands and from beautifying himself with scents & cosmetics.’…

“Or: ‘The contemplative Gotama abstains from high and luxurious beds & seats.’…

“Or: ‘The contemplative Gotama abstains from accepting gold & money.’…

“Or: ‘The contemplative Gotama abstains from accepting uncooked grain… raw meat… women & girls… male & female slaves… goats & sheep… fowl & pigs… elephants, cattle, steeds, & mares… fields & property.’…

“Or: ‘The contemplative Gotama abstains from running messages… from buying & selling… from dealing with false scales, false metals, & false measures… from bribery, deception, & fraud.’…

“Or: ‘The contemplative Gotama abstains from mutilating, executing, imprisoning, highway robbery, plunder, & violence.’

“It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

The Intermediate Section on Virtue

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to damaging seed & plant life such as these—plants propagated from roots, stems, joints, buddings, & seeds—the contemplative Gotama abstains from damaging seed and plant life such as these.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to consuming stored-up goods such as these—stored-up food, stored-up drinks, stored-up clothing, stored-up vehicles, stored-up bedding, stored-up scents, & stored-up meat—the contemplative Gotama abstains from consuming stored-up goods such as these.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to watching shows such as these—dancing, singing, instrumental music, plays, ballad recitations, hand-clapping, cymbals & drums, magic-lantern scenes, acrobatic and conjuring tricks, elephant fights, horse fights, buffalo fights, bull fights, goat fights, ram fights, cock fights, quail fights; fighting with staves, boxing, wrestling, war-games, roll calls, battle arrays, & regimental reviews—the contemplative Gotama abstains from watching shows such as these.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to heedless & idle games such as these—eight-row chess, ten-row chess, chess in the air, hopscotch, spillikins, dice, stick games, hand-pictures, ball-games, blowing through toy pipes, playing with toy plows, turning somersaults, playing with toy windmills, toy measures, toy chariots, toy bows, guessing letters drawn in the air, guessing thoughts, mimicking deformities—the contemplative Gotama abstains from heedless & idle games such as these.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to high & luxurious furnishings such as these—over-sized couches, couches adorned with carved animals, long-haired coverlets, multi-colored patchwork coverlets, white woolen coverlets, woolen coverlets embroidered with flowers or animal figures, stuffed quilts, coverlets with fringe, silk coverlets embroidered with gems; large woolen carpets; elephant, horse, and chariot rugs, antelope-hide rugs, deer-hide rugs; couches with canopies, couches with red cushions for the head & feet—the contemplative Gotama abstains from using high and luxurious furnishings such as these.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to scents, cosmetics, and means of beautification such as these—rubbing powders into the body, massaging with oils, bathing in perfumed water, kneading the limbs, using mirrors, ointments, garlands, scents, creams, face-powders, mascara, bracelets, head-bands, decorated walking sticks, ornamented water-bottles, swords, fancy sunshades, decorated sandals, turbans, gems, yak-tail whisks, long-fringed white robes—the contemplative Gotama abstains from using scents, cosmetics, and means of beautification such as these.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to talking about “animal” topics such as these—talking about kings, robbers, ministers of state; armies, alarms, and battles; food and drink; clothing, furniture, garlands, and scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women and heroes; the gossip of the street and the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity [philosophical discussions of the past and future], the creation of the world & of the sea, and talk of whether things exist or not—the contemplative Gotama abstains from talking about “animal” topics such as these.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to debates such as these—“You understand this doctrine & discipline? I’m the one who understands this doctrine & discipline. How could you understand this doctrine & discipline? You’re practicing wrongly. I’m practicing rightly. I’m being consistent. You’re not. What should be said first you said last. What should be said last you said first. What you took so long to think out has been refuted. Your doctrine has been overthrown. You’re defeated. Go and try to salvage your doctrine or extricate yourself if you can!”—the contemplative Gotama abstains from debates such as these.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to running messages & errands for people such as these—kings, ministers of state, noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or youths (who say), “Go here. Go there. Take this there. Fetch that here”—the contemplative Gotama abstains from running messages & errands for people such as these.’ It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, engage in scheming, persuading, hinting, belittling, & pursuing gain with gain, the contemplative Gotama abstains from forms of scheming & persuading [improper ways of trying to gain material support from donors] such as these.’

“It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

The Great Section on Virtue

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as:

reading marks on the limbs [e.g., palmistry];

reading omens & signs;

interpreting celestial events [falling stars, comets];

interpreting dreams;

reading features of the body [e.g., phrenology];

reading marks on cloth gnawed by mice;

offering fire oblations, oblations from a ladle, oblations of husks, rice powder, rice grains, ghee, & oil;

offering oblations from the mouth;

offering blood-sacrifices;

making predictions based on the fingertips;

geomancy;

making predictions for state officials;

laying demons in a cemetery;

placing spells on spirits;

earth-skills [divining water and gems?];

snake-skills, poison-skills, scorpion-skills, rat-skills, bird-skills, crow-skills;

predicting life spans;

giving protective charms;

casting horoscopes—

the contemplative Gotama abstains from wrong livelihood, from “animal” arts such as these.’

“Or: ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as: determining lucky & unlucky

gems, staffs, garments, swords, arrows, bows, & other weapons; women, men, boys, girls, male slaves, female slaves; elephants, horses, buffaloes, bulls, cows, goats, rams, fowl, quails, lizards, rabbits, tortoises, & other animals—the contemplative Gotama abstains from wrong livelihood, from "animal" arts such as these.'

"Or: 'Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such "animal" arts as (forecasting):

the rulers will march forth;

the rulers will not march forth;

our rulers will attack, and their rulers will retreat;

their rulers will attack, and our rulers will retreat;

there will be triumph for our rulers and defeat for their rulers;

there will be triumph for their rulers and defeat for our rulers;

thus there will be triumph for this one, defeat for that one—

the contemplative Gotama abstains from wrong livelihood, from "animal" arts such as these.'

"Or: 'Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such "animal" arts as (forecasting):

there will be a lunar eclipse;

there will be a solar eclipse;

there will be an occultation of [a conjunction of the moon or a planet with] an asterism;

the sun & moon will be favorable;

the sun & moon will be unfavorable;

the asterisms will be favorable;

the asterisms will be unfavorable;

there will be a meteor shower;

there will be a flickering light on the horizon [an aurora?];

there will be an earthquake;

there will be thunder coming from dry clouds;

there will be a rising, a setting, a darkening, a brightening of the sun, moon, & asterisms;

such will be the result of the lunar eclipse… the rising, setting, darkening, brightening of the sun, moon, & asterisms—

the contemplative Gotama abstains from wrong livelihood, from "animal" arts such as these.'

"Or: 'Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such "animal" arts as (forecasting):

there will be abundant rain; there will be a drought;

there will be plenty; there will be famine;

there will be rest and security; there will be danger;

there will be disease; there will be freedom from disease;

or they earn their living by accounting, counting, calculation, composing poetry, or teaching hedonistic arts & doctrines [lokāyata]—

the contemplative Gotama abstains from wrong livelihood, from "animal" arts such as these.'

"Or: 'Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such "animal" arts as:

calculating auspicious dates for marriages—both those in which the bride is brought home and those in which she is sent out; calculating auspicious dates for betrothals and divorces; for collecting debts or making investments and loans; reciting charms to make people attractive or unattractive; curing women who have undergone miscarriages or abortions;

reciting spells to bind a man's tongue, to paralyze his jaws, to make him lose control over his hands, or to bring on deafness;

getting oracular answers to questions addressed to a spirit in a mirror, in a young girl, or to a spirit medium;

worshipping the sun, worshipping the Great Brahmā, bringing forth flames from the mouth, invoking the goddess of luck—

the contemplative Gotama abstains from wrong livelihood, from "animal" arts such as these.'

“Or:  ‘Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as:

promising gifts to deities in return for favors; fulfilling such promises;

demonology;

reciting spells in earth houses [see earth skills, above];

inducing virility and impotence;

preparing sites for construction;

consecrating sites for construction;

giving ceremonial mouthwashes & ceremonial baths;

offering sacrificial fires;

administering emetics, purges, purges from above, purges from below, head-purges; ear-oil, eye-drops, treatments through the nose, ointments, and counter-ointments; practicing eye-surgery [or: extractive surgery], general surgery, pediatrics; administering root-medicines and binding medicinal herbs—

the contemplative Gotama abstains from wrong livelihood, from “animal” arts such as these.’

“It’s of this, monks, that a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

“These are the minor matters, lower matters, matters of virtue, of which a run-of-the-mill person, when praising the Tathāgata, would speak.

View Standpoints

“There are, monks, other dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak. And what are those dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak?

Theorists about the Past

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, who hold views about the past, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the past on 18 grounds. And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans theorists about the past who hold views about the past, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the past on 18 grounds?

Eternalism

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of eternalism, who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos1 on four grounds. And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans adherents of eternalism who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos on four grounds?

1. “There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touches an awareness-concentration such that in his concentrated mind—purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement2—he remembers many past lives, i.e., one birth, two… five, ten… fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, many hundreds, many thousands, many hundred thousands:3 ‘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 eternal, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar. And although beings transmigrate, wander on, die, & reappear, there still is that which is for eternity. Why is that? Because I—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touch an awareness-concentration such that in my concentrated mind—purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement—I remember many past lives, i.e., one birth, two… five, ten… fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, many hundreds, many thousands, many hundred thousands: ‘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 recollect my manifold past lives in their modes & details. By means of this I know how the self & the cosmos are eternal, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar. And although beings transmigrate, wander on, die, & reappear, there still is that which is for eternity.’

“This is the first basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are adherents of eternalism who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos.

2. “As for the second: With reference to what, coming from what, are honorable contemplatives & brahmans adherents of eternalism who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos?

“There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touches an awareness-concentration such that in his concentrated mind—purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement—he remembers many past lives, i.e., one eon of cosmic contraction & expansion, two eons… three… four… five… six… seven… eight… nine… ten eons of cosmic contraction & expansion….

“He says: ‘The self & the cosmos are eternal, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar. And although beings transmigrate, wander on, die, & reappear, there is still that which is for eternity. Why is that? Because I—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touch an awareness-concentration such that in my concentrated mind—purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement—I remember many past lives… By means of this I know how the self & the cosmos are eternal, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar. And although beings transmigrate, wander on, die, & reappear, there still is that which is for eternity.’

“This is the second basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are adherents of eternalism who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos.

3. “As for the third: With reference to what, coming from what, are honorable contemplatives & brahmans adherents of eternalism who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos?

“There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touches an awareness-concentration such that in his concentrated mind—purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement—he remembers many past lives, i.e., ten eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, twenty… thirty… forty eons of cosmic contraction & expansion….

“He says: ‘The self & the cosmos are eternal, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar. And although beings transmigrate, wander on, die, & reappear, there is still that which is for eternity. Why is that? Because I—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touch an awareness-concentration such that in my concentrated mind—purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement—I remember many past lives… By means of this I know how the self & the cosmos are eternal, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar. And although beings transmigrate, wander on, die, & reappear, there still is that which is for eternity.’

“This is the third basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are adherents of eternalism who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos.

4. “As for the fourth: With reference to what, coming from what, are honorable contemplatives & brahmans adherents of eternalism who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos?

“There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is a logician,4 an inquirer. He states his own improvisation, 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 transmigrate, wander on, die, & reappear, there still is that which is for eternity.’

“This is the fourth basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are adherents of eternalism, who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of eternalism, who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos on four grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of eternalism, who proclaim an eternal self & cosmos, they all do so on one or another of these four grounds. There is nothing outside of this.5

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.6

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

[ II ]

Partial Eternalism

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans who are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists, who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos on four grounds.7 And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos on four grounds?

5. “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 merit8—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 & Ruler, Father of All That Have Been & Shall Be.9 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 & 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—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touches an awareness-concentration such that in his concentrated mind he recollects that former life, but nothing prior to 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 remain just like that for eternity. But we who have been created by him—inconstant, impermanent, short-lived, subject to falling—have come to this world.’

“This is the first basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos.

6. “As for the second: With reference to what, coming from what, are contemplatives & brahmans partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos?

“There are, monks, devas called Corrupted by Play.10 They spend an excessive amount of time indulging in the delights of laughter & play. Because they spend an excessive amount of time indulging in the delights of laughter & play, their mindfulness becomes muddled. Because of muddled mindfulness, 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—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touches an awareness-concentration such that in his concentrated mind he recollects that former life, but nothing prior to that. He says, ‘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 remain just like that for 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.’

“This is the second basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos.

7. “As for the third: With reference to what, coming from what, are contemplatives & brahmans partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos?

“There are, monks, devas called Corrupted by Mind. They spend an excessive amount of time staring at one another.11 Because they spend an excessive amount of time staring at one another, their minds become corrupted toward one another. Because they are corrupted in mind toward one another, they grow exhausted in body & exhausted in mind. 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—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touches an awareness-concentration such that in his concentrated mind he recollects that former life, but nothing prior to that. He says, ‘Those honorable devas who

are not corrupted in mind don't spend an excessive amount of time staring at one another. Because they don't spend an excessive amount of time staring at one another, 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 remain just like that for eternity. But those of us who were corrupted in mind spent an excessive amount of time staring at one another. Because we spent an excessive amount of time staring at one another, 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.'

"This is the third basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos.

8. "As for the fourth: With reference to what, coming from what, are contemplatives & brahmans partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos?

"There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is a logician, an inquirer. He states his own improvisation, 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 remain just like that for eternity.'12

"This is the fourth basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos.

"These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists, who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos on four grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists, who proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos, they all do so on one or another of these four grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

"With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that 'These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.' That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

Finite or Infinite Cosmos

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans who are finite-ists or infinite-ists, who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos on four grounds.13 And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans finite-ists or infinite-ists who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos on four grounds?

9. “There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touches an awareness-concentration such that 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 an awareness-concentration such that I remain with the perception of “finite” with regard to the cosmos. By means of that, I know that the cosmos is finite, encircled.’

“This is the first basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are finite-ists or infinite-ists who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos.

10. “As for the second: With reference to what, coming from what, are honorable contemplatives & brahmans finite-ists or infinite-ists who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos?

“There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman… touches an awareness-concentration such that 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: That is a falsehood on their part. This cosmos is infinite, unencircled. Why is that? Because I… have touched an awareness-concentration such that I remain with the perception of “infinite” with regard to the cosmos. By means of that, I know that the cosmos is infinite, unencircled.’

“This is the second basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are finite-ists or infinite-ists who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos.

11. “As for the third: With reference to what, coming from what, are honorable contemplatives & brahmans finite-ists or infinite-ists who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos?

“There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman… touches an awareness-concentration such that 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: That is a falsehood on their part. Those contemplatives & brahmans who say that this cosmos is infinite, unencircled: That is a falsehood on their part, too. This cosmos is finite & infinite. Why is that? Because I... have attained an awareness-concentration such that 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.'

"This is the third basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are finite-ists or infinite-ists who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos.

12. "As for the fourth: With reference to what, coming from what, are honorable contemplatives & brahmans finite-ists or infinite-ists who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos?

"There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is a logician, an inquirer. He states his own improvisation, 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: That is a falsehood on their part. Those contemplatives & brahmans who say that this cosmos is infinite, unencircled: That is a falsehood on their part, too. Those contemplatives & brahmans who say that this cosmos is finite & infinite: That is a falsehood on their part, too. The cosmos is neither finite nor infinite.'

"This is the fourth basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are finite-ists or infinite-ists who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos.

"These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are finite-ists or infinite-ists who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos on four grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are finite-ists or infinite-ists, who proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos, they all do so on one or another of these four grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

"With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that 'These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.' That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

"These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

Eel-wriggling

“There are, monks, some contemplatives & brahmans who, being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling, on four grounds. And with reference to what, coming from what, do these honorable contemplatives & brahmans, when being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling, on four grounds?

13.“There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘This is skillful,’ or that ‘This is unskillful.’ The thought occurs to him: ‘I don’t discern as it has come to be that “This is skillful,” or that “This is unskillful.” If I—not discerning as it has come to be that “This is skillful,” not discerning as it has come to be that “This is unskillful”—were to declare that “This is skillful,” or that “This is unskillful”: That would be a falsehood on my part. Whatever would be a falsehood on my part 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.’14 Being asked questions regarding this or that, he resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-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.’

“This is the first basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans, when being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling.

“As for the second: With reference to what, coming from what, do honorable contemplatives & brahmans, when being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling?

14. “There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘This is skillful,’ or that ‘This is unskillful.’ The thought occurs to him: ‘I don’t discern as it has come to be that “This is skillful,” or that “This is unskillful.” If I—not discerning as it has come to be that “This is skillful,” not discerning as it has come to be that “This is unskillful”—were to declare that “This is skillful,” or that “This is unskillful”: That would be a desire on my part, a passion, an aversion, or an irritation on my part. Whatever would be a desire or passion or aversion or irritation on my part would be a clinging on my part. Whatever would be a clinging on my part would be a distress for me. Whatever would be a distress for me would be an obstacle for me.’ So, out of fear of clinging, a loathing for clinging, 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-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.’

“This is the second basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans, when being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling.

15. “As for the third: With reference to what, coming from what, do honorable contemplatives & brahmans, when being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling?

“There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘This is skillful,’ or that ‘This is unskillful.’ The thought occurs to him: ‘I don’t discern as it has come to be that “This is skillful,” or that “This is unskillful.” If I—not discerning as it has come to be that “This is skillful,” not discerning as it has come to be that “This is unskillful”—were to declare that “This is skillful,” or that “This is unskillful”: There are contemplatives & brahmans who are pundits, subtle, masters of debate. Like hair-splitting marksmen, they prowl about, shooting [philosophical] standpoints to pieces, as it were, with their dialectic. They might cross-question me there, press me for reasons, rebuke me. When they would cross-question me there, press me for reasons, rebuke me, I might not be able to stand my ground against them. The fact that I would not stand my ground would be a distress for me. Whatever would be a distress for me would be an obstacle for me.’ So, out of a fear for interrogation, a loathing for interrogation, 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-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.’

“This is the third basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans, when being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling.

16. “As for the fourth: With reference to what, coming from what, do honorable contemplatives & brahmans, when being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling?

“There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is dull & exceedingly stupid. Out of dullness & exceeding stupidity, he—being asked questions regarding this or that—resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling: “If you ask me if there exists another world [after death],15 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 wander on16… if there aren’t… both are & aren’t… neither are nor aren’t… if the Tathāgata exists after death… doesn’t exist after death… both exists & doesn’t exist after death… neither exists nor doesn’t exist after death,17 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.’

“This is the fourth basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans, when being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who, being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling. And whatever contemplatives &

brahmans who, being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling, they all do so on one or another of these four grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

"With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that 'These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.' That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

"These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

Fortuitous-arising

"There are, monks, some contemplatives & brahmans who are fortuitous-arising-ists, who proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos on two grounds.18 And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans fortuitous-arising-ists who proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos on two grounds?

17. "There are, monks, devas called Non-percipient Beings.19 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—through ardency, through exertion, through commitment, through heedfulness, through right attention—touches an awareness-concentration such that he recollects the arising of perception, but nothing prior to that. He says, 'The self & the cosmos are fortuitously arisen. Why is that? Because before I wasn't; now I am. Not having been, I sprang into being.'

"This is the first basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are fortuitous-arising-ists who proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos.

18. "As for the second: With reference to what, coming from what, are honorable contemplatives & brahmans fortuitous-arising-ists who proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos?

"There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is a logician, an inquirer. He states his own improvisation, hammered out by logic, deduced from his inquiries: 'The self & the cosmos are fortuitously arisen.'

“This is the second basis—with reference to which, coming from which—some contemplatives & brahmans are fortuitous-arising-ists, who proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are fortuitous-arising-ists, who proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos on two grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are fortuitous-arising-ists, who proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos, they all do so on one or another of these two grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, who hold views about the past, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the past on 18 grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, who hold views about the past, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the past, they all do so on one or another of these 18 grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

Theorists about the Future

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the future, who hold views about the future, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the future on 44

grounds. And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans theorists about the past who hold views about the future, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the future on 44 grounds?

Percipient After-death

“There are, monks, some contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a percipient after-death, who proclaim a percipient self20 after death on 16 grounds. And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans adherents of a percipient after-death, who proclaim a percipient self after death on 16 grounds?

“They proclaim that the self after death is undiseased,21 percipient, &:

19. possessed of form,

20. formless,

21. possessed of form & formless,

22. neither possessed of form nor formless,

23. finite,

24. infinite,

25. both finite & infinite,

26. neither finite nor infinite,

27. percipient of singleness,

28. percipient of multiplicity,

29. percipient of what is limited,

30. percipient of what is limitless,

31. exclusively pleasant,22

32. exclusively pained,

33. both pleasant & pained,

34. neither pleasant nor pained.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a percipient after-death, who proclaim a percipient self after death on 16 grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a percipient after-death, who proclaim a percipient self after death, they all do so on one or another of these 16 grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

Non-percipient After-death

“There are, monks, some contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a non-percipient after-death, who proclaim a non-percipient self after death on eight grounds. And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans adherents of a non-percipient after-death who proclaim a non-percipient self after death on eight grounds?

“They proclaim that the self after death is undiseased, non-percipient, &:

35. possessed of form,

36. formless,

37. possessed of form & formless,

38. neither possessed of form nor formless,

39. finite,

40. infinite,

41. both finite & infinite,

42. neither finite nor infinite.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a non-percipient after-death, who proclaim a non-percipient self after death on eight grounds. And

whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a non-percipient after-death, who proclaim a non-percipient self after death, they all do so on one or another of these eight grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

Neither Percipient nor Non-percipient After-death

“There are, monks, some contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a neither percipient nor non-percipient after-death, who proclaim a neither percipient nor non-percipient self after death on eight grounds. And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans adherents of a neither percipient nor non-percipient after-death who proclaim a neither percipient nor non-percipient self after death on eight grounds?

“They proclaim that the self after death is undiseased, neither percipient nor non-percipient, &:

43. possessed of form,

44. formless,

45. possessed of form & formless,

46. neither possessed of form nor formless,

47. finite,

48. infinite,

49. both finite & infinite,

50. neither finite nor infinite.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a neither percipient nor non-percipient after-death, who proclaim a neither percipient nor

non-percipient self after death on eight grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a neither percipient nor non-percipient after-death, who proclaim a neither percipient nor non-percipient self after death, they all do so on one or another of these eight grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

"With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that 'These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.' That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

"These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

Annihilationism

"There are, monks, some contemplatives & brahmans who are annihilationists,23 who proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being [sant satta]24 on seven grounds. And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans annihilationists who proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being on seven grounds?

51. "There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is of this opinion, this view: 'When the self that is possessed of form, made of the four great elements,25 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.' This is how some proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being.

52. "Another says to him, 'There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don't say that there's not. But it's not to that extent that the self is completely exterminated. There is another self—divine, possessed of form, on the sensual level, feeding on material food. You don't know or see that, but I know it, I see it. 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.' This is how some proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being.

53. "Another says to him, 'There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don't say that there's not. But it's not to that extent that the self is completely exterminated. There is another self—divine, possessed of form,26 mind-made, complete in all its limbs, not destitute of any faculties. You don't know or see that, but I know it, I see it. 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.' This is how some proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being.

54. "Another says to him, 'There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don't say that there's not. But it's not to that 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.27 You don't know or see that, but I know it, I see it. 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.'

55. "Another says to him, 'There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don't say that there's not. But it's not to that 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. You don't know or see that, but I know it, I see it. 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.' This is how some proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being.

56. "Another says to him, 'There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don't say that there's not. But it's not to that 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.28 You don't know or see that, but I know it, I see it. 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.' This is how some proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being.

57. "Another says to him, 'There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don't say that there's not. But it's not to that 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. You don't know or see that, but I know it, I see it. 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.' This is how some proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being.

"These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are annihilationists, who proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being on seven grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are annihilationists who proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being, they all do so on one or another of these seven grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

The Self’s Unbinding in the Here-&-Now

“There are, monks, some contemplatives & brahmans who are proponents of unbinding [nibbāna] in the here-&-now, who proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being [sant satta]29 on five grounds. And with reference to what, coming from what, are these honorable contemplatives & brahmans proponents of unbinding in the here-&-now who proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being on five grounds?

58. “There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is of this opinion, this view: ‘When the self goes about endowed & provided with the five strings of sensuality, it’s to this extent that the self attains the highest here-&-now unbinding.’30 This is how some proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being.

59. “Another says to him, ‘There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don’t say that there’s not. But it’s not to that extent that one attains the highest here-&-now unbinding. Why is that? Because sensuality is inconstant, stressful, subject to change. From its condition of being subject to change & becoming otherwise arises sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. But when this self—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation,31 it’s to that extent that this self attains the highest here-&-now unbinding.’ This is how some proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being.

60. “Another says to him, ‘There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don’t say that there’s not. But it’s not to that extent that one attains the highest here-&-now unbinding. Why is that? Because precisely what’s thought or evaluated there: That’s declared to be gross. But when this self—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, it’s to that extent that this self attains the highest here-&-now unbinding.’ This is how some proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being.

61. “Another says to him, ‘There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don’t say that there’s not. But it’s not to that extent that one attains the highest here-&-now unbinding. Why is that? Because precisely the state of mental exhilaration immersed in rapture there: That’s declared to be gross. But when this self, with the fading of rapture, remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and, sensing pleasure with the body, enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding,’ it’s to that extent that this self attains the highest here-&-now unbinding.’ This is how some proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being.

62. “Another says to him, ‘There is, my good man, that self of which you speak. I don’t say that there’s not. But it’s not to that extent that one attains the highest here-&-now unbinding. Why is that? Because precisely the mental concern with “pleasure” there: That’s declared to be gross. But when this self, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain, it’s to that extent that this self attains the highest here-&-now unbinding.’ This is how some proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are proponents of unbinding in the here-&-now, who proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being on five grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are proponents of unbinding in the here-&-now, who proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being, they all do so on one or another of these five grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the future, who hold views about the future, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the future on 44 grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the future, who hold views about the future, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the future, they all do so on one or another of these 44 grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

“These, monks, are the contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, theorists about the future, & theorists about the past & the future, who hold views about the past & the future, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the past & the future on 62 grounds. And whatever contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, theorists about the future, & theorists about the past & the future, who hold views about the past & the future, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the past & the future, they all do so on one or another of these 62 grounds. There is nothing outside of this.

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. 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 escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released.

“These, monks, are the dhammas—deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise—that the Tathāgata proclaims, having directly known & realized them for himself, and that those who, rightly speaking in praise of the Tathāgata in line with what is factual, would speak.

Agitation & Vacillation

“There,32 where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of eternalism proclaim an eternal self & cosmos on four grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos on four grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are finite-ists or infinite-ists proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos on four grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who, being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling on four grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are fortuitous-arising-ists proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos on two grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past hold views about the past, approve of various beliefs with reference to the past on 18 grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a percipient after-death proclaim a percipient self after death on 16 grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a non-percipient after-death proclaim a non-percipient self after death on eight grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a neither percipient nor non-percipient after-death, proclaim a neither percipient nor non-percipient self after death on eight grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are annihilationists proclaim the annihilation, destruction,  & non-becoming of an existing being on seven grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are proponents of unbinding in the here-&-now proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being on five grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the future hold views about the future, approve of various beliefs with reference to the future on 44 grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, theorists about the future,  & theorists about the past & the future hold views about the past & the future, approve of various beliefs with reference to the past & the future on 62 grounds, that is just an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving.

Conditioned by Contact

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of eternalism proclaim an eternal self & cosmos on four grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos on four grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are finite-ists or infinite-ists proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos on four grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who, being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling on four grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are fortuitous-arising-ists proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos on two grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past hold views about the past, approve of various beliefs with reference to the past on 18 grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a percipient after-death proclaim a percipient self after death on 16 grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a non-percipient after-death proclaim a non-percipient self after death on eight grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a neither percipient nor non-percipient after-death, proclaim a neither percipient nor non-percipient self after death on eight grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are annihilationists proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being on seven grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are proponents of unbinding in the here-&-now proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being on five grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the future hold views about the future, approve of various beliefs with reference to the future on 44 grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, theorists about the future, & theorists about the past & the future hold views about the past & the future, approve of various beliefs with reference to the past & the future on 62 grounds, that comes from contact as a requisite condition.

No Other Possibility

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of eternalism proclaim an eternal self & cosmos on four grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn’t possible.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos on four grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn’t possible.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are finite-ists or infinite-ists proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos on four grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn’t possible.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who, being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling on four grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn’t possible.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are fortuitous-arising-ists proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos on two grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn’t possible.

“There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past hold views about the past, approve of various beliefs with reference to the past on 18

grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn't possible.

"There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a percipient after-death proclaim a percipient self after death on 16 grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn't possible.

"There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a non-percipient after-death proclaim a non-percipient self after death on eight grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn't possible.

"There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a neither percipient nor non-percipient after-death, proclaim a neither percipient nor non-percipient self after death on eight grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn't possible.

"There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are annihilationists proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being on seven grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn't possible.

"There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are proponents of unbinding in the here-&-now proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being on five grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn't possible.

"There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the future hold views about the future, approve of various beliefs with reference to the future on 44 grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn't possible.

"There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, theorists about the future, & theorists about the past & the future hold views about the past & the future, approve of various beliefs with reference to the past & the future on 62 grounds: That they would experience that other than through contact isn't possible.

Dependent Co-arising

"There, where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of eternalism proclaim an eternal self & cosmos on four grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are partially eternalists and partially non-eternalists proclaim a partially eternal and partially non-eternal self & cosmos on four grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are finite-ists or infinite-ists proclaim a finite or infinite cosmos on four grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who, being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling on four grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are fortuitous-arising-ists proclaim a fortuitously-arisen self & cosmos on two grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past hold views about the past, approve of various beliefs with reference to the past on 18 grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a percipient after-death proclaim a percipient self after death on 16 grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a non-percipient after-death proclaim a non-percipient self after death on eight grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are adherents of a neither percipient nor non-percipient after-death, proclaim a neither percipient nor non-percipient self after death on eight grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are annihilationists proclaim the annihilation, destruction, & non-becoming of an existing being on seven grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are proponents of unbinding in the here-&-now proclaim the highest here-&-now unbinding of an existing being on five grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the future hold views about the future, approve of various beliefs with reference to the future on 44 grounds,

where any of those contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, theorists about the future, & theorists about the past & the future, who hold views about the past & the future, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the past & the future on 62 grounds:

“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.33

“But when a monk discerns the origination, ending, allure, drawbacks of, & escape from the six sense media, he discerns what is higher than all of this.

The Net

“Any contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, theorists about the future, & theorists about the past & the future, who hold views about the past & the

future, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the past & the future, all come under this net with its 62 interstices. When emerging, they emerge trapped here. When emerging, they emerge encompassed here under this net. Just as if a deft fisherman or fisherman's apprentice were to cover a small body of water with a fine-meshed net: The thought would occur to him, 'Any sizeable creatures in this body of water all come under this net. When emerging, they emerge trapped here. When emerging, they emerge encompassed here under this net.' In this same way, monks, any contemplatives & brahmans who are theorists about the past, theorists about the future, & theorists about the past & the future, who hold views about the past & the future, who approve of various beliefs with reference to the past & the future, all come under this net with its 62 interstices. When emerging, they emerge trapped here. When emerging, they emerge encompassed here under this net.

"The body of the Tathāgata stands with the cord binding it to becoming cut through. As long as his body remains, human beings & devas will see him. But with the break-up of the body and the depletion of life, human beings & devas will see him no more. Just as with the cutting of the stalk of a bunch of mangoes, all the mangoes connected to the stalk follow with it; in the same way, the body of the Tathāgata stands with the cord binding it to becoming34 cut through. As long as his body remains, human beings & devas will see him. But with the break-up of the body and the depletion of life, human beings & devas will see him no more."35

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding. What is the name of this Dhamma discourse?"

"Thus, Ānanda, remember this as 'The Net of Meaning' [or: 'The Net of What is Profitable [attha]'], 'The Net of Dhamma,' 'The Brahmā Net,' 'The Net of Views,' 'The Unexcelled Victory in Battle.'"36

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words. And as this explanation was being spoken, the ten-thousand-fold cosmos shook.

Notes

1. In many suttas—such as DN 9, MN 63, MN 72, and SN 44:7–8—the Buddha and his disciples refuse to take a stand on whether the cosmos is eternal or not. See Skill in Questions, Chapter 8, for a discussion of the reasons for their refusal. As a general principle, the Buddha warns against speculation about the cosmos, saying in AN 4:77 that it's one of four types of conjecture that can lead to madness. What he does say about how long there has been a cosmos (see, for instance, SN 15:3) is that transmigration comes from an inconceivable beginning. As for the length of time the cosmos will last, in SN 12:44 he teaches the path to the end of the cosmos—which he equates with the end of suffering—but it's an end for each person to find individually. In AN 10:95 he refuses to answer the question of whether all or a half or a third of the cosmos will follow that path to release.

As for the self, however, the Buddha regards the view that the self is eternal as a particularly evil form of wrong view. The form this view takes in DN 2 shows that it denies the power, and even the reality, of action.

2. The phrase, "purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement" is not in the Sinhalese edition of the Canon.

3. Compare the number of lifetimes remembered here and in the following cases with the number of lifetimes the Buddha remembered on the night of his awakening: "many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion" (MN 4).

4. Notice that the Buddha doesn't try to judge whether theorists of this sort make proper or improper use of their logic. In both AN 3:66 and MN 95 he states that just because a view is logical doesn't mean that it's skillful or true.

5. This sentence, repeated throughout this sutta, is hard to square with the fact that the Canon itself contains forms of these views that are not listed in this sutta. In the present case, for instance, SN 22:81 lists the following view, not found here, as a form of eternalism: "This self is the same as the cosmos. This I will be after death, constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change." MN 102, for its part, lists views of the self after death not listed in the relevant part of this sutta. It seems more pertinent to the thrust of the sutta to say that, whatever form a view may take on the topics listed here, it has to come under observation given in the refrains that trace all views to feelings and sensory contact. That is the true "net" of the sutta.

6. It is instructive to compare this refrain, which follows each subset of the 62 views, with similar refrains in other suttas that treat views from the same perspective. For instance:

From MN 102: "'With regard to that—fabricated, gross—there is still the cessation of fabrications: There is this.' Knowing that, seeing the escape from it, the Tathāgata has gone beyond it."

From SN 22:81: "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 uninstructed, run-of-the-mill 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 is by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to effluents."

From AN 10:93: [Anāthapiṇḍika is speaking:] "Venerable sirs, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress 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."

On the Buddha's overall attitude toward the truth of views, see the article, "Truths with Consequences."

7. As the following discussion shows, various forms of theism would come under this category.

8. There is an implied criticism of Brahmanism in this sentence: The Great Brahmā, the highest god in their pantheon, has gained his position not because of his greatness but because the merit that would have allowed him to stay in a higher realm was exhausted. See MN 49.

9. See the story of the Great Brahmā in DN 11.

10. These devas are listed in DN 20.

11. These devas, too, are listed in DN 20. The Commentary to this passage states that they stare at one another out of envy and anger, but it could also be the case that they stare out of lust.

12. This is the view propounded by Sāti the Fisherman's Son in MN 38—a view that the Buddha characterizes as evil, probably because it denies the role of kamma in shaping experience. However, see notes 1 and 2 to that sutta.

13. The Buddha consistently refuses to take a stance on the question of whether the cosmos is finite or infinite (see, for example, MN 63). In AN 4:45 he limits himself to saying 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 that the cosmos, its origination, its cessation, and the path to its cessation can be found in this fathom-long body. For his definitions of the word, "cosmos," see SN 35:82 and AN 10:95.

14. In MN 36, the Buddha characterizes his search for awakening as a search for what is skillful. And in AN 3:62 he identifies one of the main responsibilities of a teaching is that it give grounds for deciding what is skillful and what's not.

15. One of the basic tenets of mundane right view is that there is a world after death. See MN 117 and the discussion of the levels of right view in On the Path, Chapter 3.

16. The existence of beings that wander on is one of the tenets of the second knowledge in the Buddha's awakening (see MN 19). SN 23:2 defines a being in terms of its attachments; SN 44:9 describes how a being takes rebirth through craving and clinging.

17. The question as to whether a Tathāgata exists, doesn't exist, both, or neither is one that the Buddha, too, refuses to take a stand on, but his refusal is based on knowledge, not on stupidity. See the discussion in Skill in Questions, Chapter 8 and Appendix 4.

18. The doctrine of fortuitous arising is a simple case of wrong view. Both the cosmos and the sense of self arise because of causes. In the case of the sense of self, these causes can come from previous lifetimes.

19. Mentioned in DN 15.

20. MN 102 contains a fuller description of the discussions among the Buddha's contemporaries as to whether the self is percipient, non-percipient, or neither percipient nor non-percipient after death. The Buddha himself discusses the afterlife, not in terms of what the self is, but of the various types of rebirth—percipient, non-percipient, or neither percipient nor non-percipient, pleasant or unpleasant—that can occur based on one's kamma. As for the arahant after death, Upasīva in Sn 5:6 asks whether the person who has reached the goal doesn't exist or remains for eternity. In response, the Buddha states that when a person does away with all dhammas, no means of speaking apply.

21. Upasīva's question in Sn 5:6 suggests that "undiseased" in this context means that the self would remain in that condition, unchanging, for eternity.

22. In DN 9, the Buddha heaps ridicule on the proponents of this position.

23. Annihilationism is, in many parts of the Canon, paired with eternalism as a particularly evil form of wrong view because it denies the long-term consequences of kamma after death. The positions taken by the theorists described in this section are based on how they define the self. From that definition, they conclude that the self cannot survive death. The Buddha, however—unlike other thinkers of his time—never defines what is reborn, and focuses instead on how rebirth happens. See The Truth of Rebirth.

Also, the positions taken here answer a pair of questions that the Buddha refuses to take a position on: whether the soul (or: life-force, jīva) is the same as the body or something different from the body. See MN 63.

24. Sant satta: a being as a discrete metaphysical entity, as opposed to a being described as a process. See the discussion in Skill in Questions, Appendix 4.

25. The elementary properties of earth (solidity), water (liquidity), wind (energy), and fire (warmth). In other words, this view is the materialist view that identifies the self with the physical body.

26. This apparently corresponds to the sense of the body as experienced from inside, as in any of the four jhānas.

27. This and the following attainments are the formless states that can be attained based on the attainment of the fourth jhāna (MN 140) or the "property of beauty" (SN 14:11, DN 15).

28. As MN 106 points out, this attainment can be reached through the contemplation of not-self in the six sense media.

29. The views in this section are wrong on two counts: (1) They describe unbinding as pertaining to an existing being (see note 23). This is wrong because a "being" is defined by its desires and attachments (see SN 23:2), whereas unbinding is free of desires and attachments. (2) They equate unbinding with experiences that are fabricated, and therefore stressful, whereas unbinding in the Buddhist sense is unfabricated and free of suffering and stress.

30. Māgaṇḍiya puts forth this view in MN 75. MN 13 and MN 45 list some of the dangers that can come from viewing sensual pleasure as a worthwhile goal.

31. The four jhānas described in this section are identical with the description of right concentration. However, because they are accompanied by wrong view, they are not noble right concentration (see MN 117). In other words, until the view is changed, these states of concentration cannot lead to awakening. Some people read this passage as a warning that a person experiencing jhāna may become so enamored of it that he/she will refuse to practice further. However, although the Buddha does note that people attaining jhāna can get stuck there (see AN 4:178), he also notes in MN 14 that unless one has attained at least the pleasure of the first jhāna, one will not be able to overcome attachment to sensuality. And the dangers of attachment to sensuality that he lists in that sutta are far worse than the dangers of being attached to jhāna.

It's strange that none of the formless attainments are listed in this section, as these, too, are often confused with the experience of true unbinding. On this point, see the discussion of the non-duality of consciousness in AN 10:29.

32. I.e., in the act of holding to and proclaiming the view.

33. The sequence of conditions here is drawn from the teachings on dependent co-arising. For two different lists of all the conditions, see DN 15 and SN 12:2.

34. The cord binding it to becoming is craving.

35. SN 22:86 states that the unestablished consciousness of an arahant after death cannot be located. SN 12:64 illustrates this point with the image of a beam of light that is "unestablished"—i.e., that does not land on any object. See also DN 11 and MN 49 on the topic of consciousness without surface.

36. See SN 45:4.

## Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 2; MN 1; MN 2; MN 22; MN 57; MN 109; SN 12:15; SN 22:94; SN 12:48; SN 42:2–3; SN 42:8–9; SN 44:10; AN 4:24; AN 4:77; Sn 4:5; Sn 4:8–9; Ud 1:10