Mil 3.7.8 — 8. Question on Doing Evil Knowingly or Unknowingly

English translation by John Kelly.
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Text

Milinda’s Questions

Analysis of Formless Dhammas Chapter

8. Question on Doing Evil Knowingly or Unknowingly

The king asked: “Venerable Nāgasena, for whom is the greater demerit, one who knowingly does evil, or one who does evil unknowingly?” The elder replied: “Indeed, your majesty, for him who does evil unknowingly is the greater demerit.” “In that case, Venerable Nāgasena, that one who is our prince or king’s chief minister who unknowingly does evil, we should doubly punish him?” “What do you think, your majesty, who would get burned more, one who knowingly picks up a hot iron ball, ablaze and glowing, or one who unknowingly picks it up?” “Indeed, venerable sir, he who unknowingly picks it up would get burned more.” “Indeed, your majesty, in the same way the greater demerit is for him who does evil unknowingly.”

“You are clever, Venerable Nāgasena!”

Question on Doing Evil Knowingly or Unknowingly eighth