

The Meditative Dynamics of the Early Buddhist *Appamāṇas*

Giuliana Martini

Abstract:

With this article I review distinctive aspects of the early Buddhist practice of the appamāṇas, the boundless states of benevolence (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), sympathetic joy (muditā) and equanimity (upekkhā). My concern is specifically the function and potential of the appamāṇas in relation to the unfolding of the spiritual path of the individual. Quite apart from their beneficial relational and social effects, how are they meant to support the path to liberation? Since I focus on the early phases of Buddhist thought, and its position vis-à-vis the contemporary ancient Indian context, I employ the early Buddhist textual material as my main source, generally leaving aside commentaries and later developments. A close reading of the texts indicates that the specifics of appamāṇa meditation in the context of the early Buddhist soteriological scheme are the prescription to develop it in dependence on the factors of awakening (sambojjhaṅgas) and the use of this practice as a platform for insight (vipassanā) and thereby for the realisation of awakening.

Dharma Drum
Buddhist
College, Taiwan

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1. Introduction

In order to explore the distinctive aspects of the early Buddhist practice of the *appamāṇas* vis-à-vis the contemporary ancient Indian context, I will begin my discussion by briefly surveying the impact of *appamāṇa* practice on defusing karmic patterns of reactivity etc., against the background of the

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Buddhist conception of karma and liberation.¹ In discussing the psychological ‘pivot point’ where the *appamāṇas*, karma and liberation meet each other, I also critically examine the conclusion reached by some scholars that the *appamāṇas* provide a self-sufficient soteriological path (2).

Exploring the relationship between the *appamāṇas* and awakening, firstly I take up the correlation between the *appamāṇas* and the factors of awakening. Here the presence or absence of a cultivation of the awakening factors defines rightly or wrongly directed practice of the *appamāṇas*, and therefore sets the appropriate Buddhist context for this practice (3).

Then I explore in more detail how the dynamics of reviewing the meditation based on the *appamāṇas* from an insight perspective can provide a gateway to the highest stage(s) of awakening (4).

I conclude that the normative Buddhist approach to the practice of the *appamāṇas* (in themselves, a tranquillity-based exercise) combines them with a progressive realisation of the three characteristics of impermanence, *dukkha* and not-self, and of the four truths, thus subordinating the *appamāṇas* to realisation of insight knowledge, if they are to be instrumental in a breakthrough to liberation. These conclusions impinge on the position taken by some scholars that early Buddhism knew two different paths to liberation, one consisting only in the cultivation of tranquillity (*samatha*) opposed to one of insight (*vipassanā*), often understood to be predominantly a process of intellectual reasoning and thus distinct from the “mystic” or “cataleptic” approach through tranquillity (5).

2. Karma, liberation, and the *appamāṇas*

One perspective on the *appamāṇas* in regard to wholesome or unwholesome intentions, and thereby to karma and the possibility of liberation from *samsāra*, is to contemplate the dynamics of *appamāṇas* and intentionality from the point of view of the conditioned process of personality building, that is, the five aggregates affected by clinging (*pañcupādāna-kkhandhas*) that are activated in response to sense contact. Here intention (*cetanā*), afflicted by unwholesome tendencies and habits, can easily function as an agent of craving, an automatic goal-oriented drive of reaction to experience, governed by and in turn resulting in sensual

passion, ill will and delusion. The task of the *appamāṇas* in this respect is to re-condition intentions with regard to any mental object, making the response of the mind less and less influenced by defilements that have arisen in relation to objects.

Sustained practice and implementation of the *appamāṇas* – that is, dwelling in and radiating *appamāṇa* perceptions and states of consciousness – provide a training in de-conditioning and re-conditioning perception and consciousness according to ‘positive’ patterns. In the presence of mindfulness, this can substantially help reshape volitional responses to perceptions and it redirects the conceptual identifications prevalent in the mind.

This type of training certainly provides beneficial results, as it increases the sense of personal well-being and ease. From the Buddhist viewpoint, however, before a transformative apprehension of the root causes of unwholesomeness takes place, this is an exercise that can only, at best, determine a limited behavioural change in the mind: positive feelings and positive thinking.² This is not to say that the inherent value of happiness and subjective comfort in the spiritual journey are to be overlooked. These are crucial aspects of the path to liberation. Joy (*pīti*) is indeed one of the awakening factors, and it is a necessary requirement for the arising of the other awakening factors of tranquillity (*passaddhi*) and concentration (*samādhi*). And, most importantly, the experience of non-worldly happiness, aloof from sensuality, naturally leads to loss of interest in the coarser pleasures of the senses (that is, of any object of sense-door experience), a crucial stepping-stone towards deeper spiritual maturation in early Buddhism.³

Cognitively, the practice of the *appamāṇas* relies on transcendence of a sense of individuality, diversification of perception, and of any discursive reification of experience in terms of identification of a subject of experience in opposition to its objects, or in terms of a relation of neediness and attachment to the objects in question (a person, a mental state, etc.) – with the emotional nuances of each individual *appamāṇa* having their own particular characteristics.

The all-pervasive dimension of boundless *appamāṇa* radiation in all directions is illustrated with the image of a trumpeter who makes himself heard in all directions:⁴

... Just as a vigorous trumpeter could make himself heard without difficulty in the four quarters, so too, when the deliverance of mind by benevolence (etc.) is developed in this way, no limiting action remains there, none persists there ... this is the path of communion with Brahṃās.⁵

In terms of meditation theory, a boundless radiation independent from the presence of an object to be aroused and extended in consciousness seems to be particularly effective in refining intentionality towards progressively higher levels of freedom from arising as a conditioned, often automatic response, to experience. The practitioner's inner autonomy is much strengthened, as is his or her insight into the ultimately deluded nature of any fabrication of (a) a subject appropriating its objects and (b) the perceptual field itself. In this way the movement of identification with and appropriation of a self is all the while de-potentiated by genuine cultivation of the *appamāṇas*.

Developing a perception of benevolence and of the other boundless experiences on the basis of a given conceptual object (a friend, a stranger, an enemy) by directing it to single individuals or to group(s) of individuals as prescribed for example by later Theravāda texts⁶ and found in a number of popular modern approaches, seems to be somehow not fully exploring the whole range of this thorough exercise towards independence from 'objects', grasping at and reification of experience prescribed by the early Buddhist *appamāṇas*, a training in inner independence and kindness by means of which, in due course, the end of all conceivings becomes possible.

Such an ultimately 'unprompted' quality of the *appamāṇas* squares with the discourses' method of all-pervasive practice, a method in which the perceptual training seems to be particularly consistent with the soteriological goal and also with the final existential mode of a liberated being, who has escaped from the need for any form of conceptual identification and mental impurity.

Therefore, I would hold (a) that the *appamāṇas* address hindrances to meditation resulting from the meditator's conflict-laden relationship with the world of the senses by helping dissolve the erroneous cognition and personal identification that lie at the basis of such affective reactions, and (b) that cognitive rectification and deflation of sensual desire are natural by-products of the practice.⁷

In this way, the inner joy, receptivity, happiness and equanimity of *appamāṇa* meditation become important spiritual forces that give power to the relinquishment of the whole sensual sphere and eventually to the going beyond future rebirth in a womb. This holds true especially, but by no means exclusively, for *appamāṇas* cultivated at the level of absorption. I return to this in the next section (3) of this article.

To sum up, because of their impact on mental tendencies and intentions – counteracting negativity, enhancing goodness, inducing spiritual joy and withdrawal from the senses, supporting meditation – the *appamāṇas* can effectively impact on karma on a psychodynamic level.

Karma, however, can only be eradicated for good on seeing through the fundamental ignorance that keeps it in motion. In the context of reviewing the results of sustained *appamāṇa* practice, the early discourses hold that through meditative cultivation of these states no limiting actions (karma) remains. To quote a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, the *Karajakāya-sutta*:

He [i.e., a monk] knows thus: ‘Previously this mind of mine was restricted, undeveloped, whereas now this mind of mine is boundless, well developed. Whatever action has been performed in a limiting way, it neither remains there nor persists there (*yaṃ kho pana kiñci pamāṇakataṃ kammaṃ, na taṃ tatrāvasissati na taṃ tatrāvatiṭṭhatī*).’⁸

Similarly worded, the parallel to the *Karajakāya-sutta* in the Chinese *Madhyama-āgama* says:

... ‘Formerly my mind was narrow and not well-developed, now my mind has become boundless and well-developed.’ [When] the mind of that well-taught noble disciple has in this way become boundless and well-developed, if because of [associating with] evil friends [that well-taught noble disciple] formerly dwelt in negligence and performed unwholesome deeds, those [deeds] cannot lead him along, cannot defile [him] and will not further follow [him].⁹

Thus limiting actions through which one would be bound to take birth again in the sense realm are temporarily neutralised. Their results lose their conditioning power because the corresponding mental inclinations have been superseded.¹⁰ In other words, with the attainment

and mastery of liberation of the mind (*cetovimutti*) through benevolence and the other *appamāṇas*, based on absorption, the karmic potential generated by virtue of the absorption attainment will take precedence over sense sphere karma and result in rebirth into the form rather than the sense realm.¹¹

The canonical example found in the discourses to illustrate the all-pervasive dimension of boundless *appamāṇas* radiation with the image of a trumpeter who makes himself heard in all directions illustrates well how the *appamāṇas* leave no scope for the continuity of the effect of limiting actions: the trumpeter's "is not a measured performance. Similarly, when one cultivates love and the other attitudes according to the method given ... no measured intentions remain."¹²

However bright such karmic prospects are, unless combined with the establishment of right view, they can only secure exceptionally good birth for a limited, though comparatively long period of time, as is the case of Brahmā gods, who are held to live above the sense realm. From the perspective of early Buddhist soteriology, to obtain a happy celestial birth cannot possibly guarantee that the individual will not eventually fall again into lower states, even below the human destiny. The insurance of being free from the lower states of birth and of being irreversibly heading to emancipation from existence can only come when the mental make-up of the practitioner is radically changed by wisdom, to the extent that the tendency to delusion and ignorance of the three characteristics has been seen through with stream-entry, the first level of awakening (and has eventually been eradicated with full awakening). That is, such insurance is only attained on entering the stream of the Dharma, with the establishment of right view, by definition not subject to retrogression.

It can be thus evinced that the practice of the *appamāṇas* generally improves and brightens the karma of the individual, in the sense of his or her general mental condition in the present, and of future mental states, but that in itself, as a meditative exercise, it falls short of determining liberating effects.

This important point can be best appreciated by keeping in mind that practices such as the immeasurables (*appamāṇas*) or Brahmā abodes (*brahmavihāras*), were most probably common in ancient India and originally embedded in religious thinking and goals quite different from those of the early Buddhists.

To the best of my knowledge, the early Buddhist discourses themselves do not provide definitions of the *appamāṇas* nor of the *brahmavihāras*, definitions which are to be found only in later literature.¹³ This absence can be easily explained in view of the non-scholastic nature of the early Buddhist discourse material. Moreover, if no need to define these concepts was felt by the early Buddhist tradition, this is a strong indication that the audience of the discourses must have already been acquainted with the terminology and meditation technique in question. Instead, the discourses engage with a re-definition of the *appamāṇas*, by re-addressing them on Buddhist terms, at least on one occasion directly contrasting them to those taught by non-Buddhist recluses (cf. below sections (3) and (5)).

In view of the ancient Indian conception of the high purity of Brahmā gods, it would not be surprising if the *brahmavihāras* had been employed long before the time of the Buddha as means of achieving meditative ‘communion with Brahmā’.¹⁴ The ever-expanding and all-encompassing radiation of the boundless states of benevolence and of the other *appamāṇas*, experienced as a psychophysical non-dual state, may indeed have been considered as an entry to the goal of communion with Brahmā by means of transcendence of the individual self by a merger with the divine absolute of the Brahmā’s state of existence.

Yet, in early Buddhist thought, existence is not in itself desirable but much rather something to be escaped from. The discourses in fact report that the Buddha was accused of being a destroyer of existence,¹⁵ a destruction which is in fact endorsed by early Buddhist thought: from a normative perspective, even divine modes of existence are not to be sought after. The immeasurable mental dispositions of a Buddha or of an arahant fall outside any ‘Brāhmic’ state and births, simply because Buddhas and arahants have transcended birth and becoming. Conversely, even the Great Brahmā, the highest among beings in the present world-system, is considered as subject to change and to becoming otherwise, for any Brahmā realm is held to be impermanent and thus far from providing a lasting escape from existence.¹⁶

In addition to this, what is important is that a Buddhist practitioner is able to develop some wisdom through insightfully investigating his or her own experience of states of consciousness that in the ancient Indian context were understood as ‘Brāhmic’. Such experiences are not relevant

to the Buddhist path of liberation as long as they are not grounded in rightly directed view according to the Buddhist vision, which requires that the practitioner applies insight evaluation of the impermanent, *dukkha*-bound and not-self nature to any (non-meditative and meditative) experience, however lofty these attainments might be.

The *Dhanañjāni-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* records an occasion when the standard *appamāṇa* instruction is given by the venerable Sāriputta to the Brahmin Dhanañjāni, gravely ill, as ‘the path to the communion with Brahmās’, after a question and answer session on the most desirable states of birth. Once Sāriputta has left without giving further instructions, Dhanañjāni is reported to have died and reappeared in the Brahmā-world. The discourse goes on with the Buddha commenting to the monks that Sāriputta had left “when there was still more to be done, having established Dhanañjāni in the inferior Brahmā-world (*hīne brahmaloke*)”. After Sāriputta comes to pay homage to the Buddha, he is questioned why he had left while there was still more to be done.¹⁷ Interestingly, here Sāriputta’s reply emphasizes that he had given an instruction limited in scope on account of the Brahmins’ firm devotion to the (attainment of) the Brahmā-world (*brahmalokādhimuttā*).

Another case of teaching the *appamāṇas* to a non-Buddhist is reported in the *Subha-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, in which the Brahmin Subha, who is neither a noble disciple nor a monastic (i.e., he is not aiming for final liberation), is instructed on the practice of the *brahmavihāras* just as a means to attain rebirth in the Brahmā realm.¹⁸ At the end of the discourse the Brahmin Subha goes for refuge. Thus in this instance, compared to the *Dhanañjāni-sutta* mentioned above, the same *appamāṇa* instruction and the same result, that “no action performed in a limiting way remains or persists there”,¹⁹ lead to quite different an end, that is, Subha’s setting out on the path by becoming a Buddhist disciple.

This backdrop clarifies that, notwithstanding its power to overcome ‘karma performed in a limiting way’, the *appamāṇas* are only able to provide partial and temporary solace to unpleasant saṃsāric embodiments, by bringing about types of birth and mental conditions that are however not at all devoid of the characteristics of change, unsatisfactoriness and lack of substantiality and that, as much as any other form of existence, ultimately need to be let go of. The insight instructions on *appamāṇa* meditation I discuss in part (4) of this article bring in precisely this

potential to develop insight into the three characteristics of the experience of *appamāṇa* meditation as a gateway to final liberation.

However, according to Maithrimurthi (1999: 34), the *appamāṇas* ought to be able to remove the limiting karmic effect of delusion (*moha*) as well as sensual passion and aversion.²⁰ As already remarked by Anālayo (2009b: 9 note 35), the effect of *appamāṇa* practice on limiting action described in the discourses refers as such to the next rebirth and does not imply complete elimination of karma. Firstly, the *appamāṇa* deliverances of the mind are meditative attainments that, as such, can be lost again: in fact the expression “deliverance of the mind” (*appamāṇā cetovimutti* or *appamāṇena cetasā vimutti*)²¹ when occurring on its own without being qualified as ‘unshakeable’, does not imply eradication of *dukkha*.²² Secondly, as we have seen, in the case of someone who is not endowed with right view (that is, someone who is not at least a stream-entrant), the development of *appamāṇa* meditation can only insure birth in one of the sensuality-free higher destinies of saṃsāric existence for a limited period of time.

On the other hand, for example, the *Karajakāya-sutta* and its parallels envisage the attainment of either final liberation or non-return for a noble disciple who is diligent in carrying out this practice.²³ In other words, it is only through further deepening of the practice, with the growth of wisdom and insight, that full liberation is possible. From what I have discussed so far, it seems that in the soteriological scheme set forth in early Buddhist texts the *appamāṇas* are auxiliary and instrumental to liberation (“eine Beiziehung zum Erlösungskontext”, as Maithrimurthi himself comments), but neither self-sufficient nor indispensable for reaching the end of craving and ignorance, the abandonment of the higher fetters, and the eradication of the influxes.²⁴

Further, as regards the scope of this practice, it can be noted that a trend towards a ‘therapeutic’ type of implementation of the *appamāṇas* oriented towards an increase of self-esteem is often observable in modern meditation circles in the West. A perusal of popular publications and websites, and attendance of some meditation programs on this theme, can give an impression of the type of attitude in question. Doctrinally and practically selective, this mode of presentation of the *appamāṇas* is quite limited in scope when compared to the early Buddhist radical ‘cure’ to all *dukkha*, a program of cure the *appamāṇas* are functional to. Such an approach, in itself a case of doctrinal adaptation and change, represents an

instance of overlooking the implications of the original soteriological paradigm and context, occurred, in turn, within a process of ideological de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation (and consequently of realignment of the practice). Thus, interestingly, it provides one more example of interpretation of this practice that is the precise opposite of the conclusions reached by academics who hold that the *appamāṇas* are a path that on its own leads to awakening.

In the early Buddhist soteriological scheme, the presence or absence of insight according to right view and of the awakening factors constitutes the most distinctive aspect. For any form of liberation of the mind to be able to lead to any of the stages of awakening, it needs to be developed in conjunction with the factors of awakening. I look in more detail at the relationship between (the factors of) awakening and the *appamāṇas* and in particular at the meaning of rightly directed concentration in relationship to the *appamāṇas* and the soteriological benefits of concentration in the context of this practice in the next section (3) of this article.

To conclude my foregoing discussion on the pivot point where karma, liberation, and the *appamāṇas* meet each other: close readings of the discourses make it clear that whereas the practice of the *appamāṇas* has no independent salvific role to play in early Buddhism, the dynamics of spiritual and meditative cultivation that emerge from the texts indicate that when it is carried out by noble disciples, its liberating potential becomes particularly outstanding.

Such potential is of particular relevance to someone who is on the path of progress from stream-entry or once-return to non-return. Early Buddhism defines the levels of awakening on account of the fetters (*samyojana*) that have been abandoned, and advancement on the higher stages of the path is described in standard terms as the weakening or eradication respectively of two (once-return or non-return) and five (arahantship) remaining fetters. From stream-entry onwards, the task of the practitioner – and the hallmark of the progress he or she may have achieved – is the weakening (for stream-entrants) and final disappearance (for once-returners) of any reaction of and tendency to passion and negativity based on sensuality, with the attenuation and eradication of the corresponding fetters of sensual desire and ill will.

In view of the nature of the fetters as mental tendencies that, when present, can be manifest or latent, strong or attenuated, one perspective

that suggests itself is to look at them in terms of karma, i.e., patterns of reactivity to sense experience that are to some degree present in the mind or else have been left behind forever. As asserted by a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, the three spheres of becoming that should be abandoned are the sense, form and formless spheres, and the three trainings which should be undertaken are the three further or higher trainings in morality, (cultivation of) the mind and wisdom. When these three spheres of becoming are abandoned and one trains in these three higher trainings, he or she has cut off the remaining fetters and made an end of *dukkha*.²⁵

This viewpoint helps understand the practical implication of the passages in the discourses where a clear correlation between the *appamāṇas* and progress on the path of emancipation from karma is set forth. In brief: in the case of stream-entrants and once-returners, their further spiritual development coincides with karmic emancipation from the two fetters to be overcome in the noble disciple's progress towards non-return. Therefore, unlike the instance of 'generic' *appamāṇa* practice, it is only in the case of these noble disciples that a degree of proper so-called liberation from karma has unmistakably taken place, as shown by the texts' specification that the recollection of the having transcended limiting karma is made by a noble disciple (endowed with right view) who has abandoned unwholesomeness etc.²⁶ The practice of the *appamāṇas* of a noble disciple who is not yet a non-returner heads precisely for this direction of emancipation from karma.

3. The *appamāṇas* and the factors of awakening

On the whole, the potential of the immeasurables to lead to the ultimate goal of liberation (namely, awakening) or else their falling short of such a potential would depend on the development of the essential tools conducive to this goal. As indicated by their name, the tools in question are the factors (leading to) awakening (*sambojjhaṅgas* or *bojjhaṅgas*).²⁷

One of the discourses on benevolence found in the *Sutta-nipāta* (popularly known as "the *Metta-sutta*")²⁸ begins by stipulating the need for a foundation of moral integrity. Then it poetically instructs one who is "not going into wrong views, virtuous and endowed with [right] view" (*diṭṭhiñ ca anupagamma sīlavā dassanena sampanno*, Sn 152ab) on how

to free himself or herself from birth in the sense realm, which is to be achieved with the help of *mettā* practice, the first of the four *appamāṇas*.

The discourse unfolds according to the threefold division of the path in ethics or *sīla* (Sn 143–145ab), meditation or *samādhi* (Sn 145bc–151), and wisdom or *paññā* (Sn 152).²⁹ This sequence parallels, for example, that of the probably original single Pali discourse consisting of the present *Saṅcetanika-suttas* and *Karajakāya-sutta* of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* and their parallels (where the placement of the abandonment of the ten unwholesome actions and development of the ten wholesome actions is followed by a *samatha* based development of the *appamāṇa* radiation, and by a review of the attainment that has been achieved by dint of the practice)³⁰ and that of the *Vatthūpama-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* and its parallels.

The same eminently ethical characteristic – abandoning the unwholesome and nurturing the wholesome, achieved through directing mindfulness to one’s intentions (*cetanā*) – evident in the applications of the *appamāṇas*, described with the help of the poetic imagery of the so-called “*Metta-sutta*”, becomes especially evident in the illustration of the acrobat simile of the *Sedaka-sutta* of the *Samyutta-nikāya* and its Chinese parallel, as well as in the statement regarding the impossibility (for a noble and successful practitioner of the *appamāṇas*) of undertaking any harmful action, as indicated in the *Karajakāya-sutta* and its parallels.³¹

Similar to the sequence of the probably original single antecedent to the *Saṅcetanika-suttas* and *Karajakāya-sutta*,³² the meditative radiation in the *Vatthūpama-sutta* is preceded by a detailed description of ethical purification prior to the meditative undertaking of the *appamāṇas*. The state of purity thus attained thanks to having ‘bathed with an inner bathing’ is held superior to any form of purification obtained through ritual bathing.³³

Thus the discourses clearly present a high level of ethical purity and mental clarity as furnishing the necessary pathway to the complete fulfilment of non-greed and non-ill-will (non-return) as well as non-delusion (arahantship).

In this regard, the progression intimately correlating ethical purity and further developments of the practice as found in *Vatthūpama-sutta* is worth closer examination. Here initial acknowledgement of mental

defilements is followed by partial success in abandoning them. This then equates to the acquisition of perfect confidence in the three jewels (i.e., the attainment of stream-entry), concentration based on happiness derived from such confidence arises, at which point the instruction on *appamāṇa* radiation is given, followed by insight review and the ensuing realisation of final liberation.³⁴

In the discourses, such an organisation of the subject matter is typical for occasions where a more advanced teaching is preceded by a preliminary exposition, or else a ‘reminder’, of the gradual path. In this particular instance, the establishment of mindfulness (*sati*), the first in the standard list of the awakening factors, is an essential requisite that needs to be in place so that the development of the boundless mental states can lead to further fulfilment of the path to liberation for one who is already endowed with morality and right view.³⁵

According to a discourse in the *bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, the Buddha declares that wanderers gone forth in other communities of recluses (*aññatitthiyā paribbājakā*) would not be able to explain the development and final goal of liberation of the mind attained through benevolence and the other immeasurables, because this is not within their domain. A satisfactory answer to these questions could only be given “by the Tathāgata or a disciple of the Tathāgata or one who has heard it from them.”³⁶

The explanation given by the Buddha in the same discourse is that liberation of the mind through benevolence and the other *appamāṇas*, which have respectively the ‘beautiful’ (*subha*), the base of infinite space, the base of infinite consciousness and the base of nothingness as their culmination, for a practitioner “endowed with view who has not yet attained a superior liberation”, should be practised by developing each of the awakening factors “accompanied by benevolence (etc.), in dependence on seclusion, dispassion, cessation, and leading to relinquishing.”³⁷

A series of short discourses on benevolence and the other *appamāṇas* found in the same *bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* presents the fruits and benefits of the *appamāṇas* developed on the basis of the awakening factors, further clarifying their foundational role.

These short discourses are in fact part of a sub-section of the *bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta* (the *ānāpāna-vagga*) devoted to describing the

development of the *bojjhaṅgas* in association with a number of meditation subjects, including, besides mindfulness of breathing, meditations on impurity and the four *appamānas*. Here each meditation subject is elaborated according to a sixfold method that consists of an explanation of the way the meditation subject in question brings about (1) great fruit and benefit, (2) one of two fruits (either final knowledge in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of non-return), (3) great good, (4) great security from bondage, (5) a great sense of spiritual urgency, (6) dwelling in great comfort.³⁸

These discourses on the development of the *appamānas* and the awakening factors have parallels in the Chinese *Samyukta-āgama* and in a discourse quotation found in the Tibetan *Abhidharmakośopāyikā*.³⁹ The *Samyukta-āgama* version reads as follows:

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was living at Sāvatti, in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. At that time the World-Honoured One told the monks: 'If a monk, who cultivates a mind of benevolence, has cultivated it much, he will attain great fruit and great benefit. How does a monk who cultivates a mental attitude of benevolence attain great fruit and great benefit? Here, with a mind endowed with benevolence, a monk cultivates the awakening factor of mindfulness, in dependence on seclusion, in dependence on dispassion, in dependence on cessation, and leading to relinquishing' ... up to ... 'he cultivates the awakening factor of mindfulness, in dependence on seclusion, in dependence on dispassion, in dependence on cessation, and leading to relinquishing.'⁴⁰

According to the discourse extract in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā*:

'Monks, if benevolence is developed and frequently attended to, there is great fruit and great benefit. And how is it that meditation on benevolence is of great fruit and of great benefit? Here a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by benevolence, based upon seclusion, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and leading to relinquishing. He develops the awakening factors of investigation of Dharma, of energy, of joy, of tranquillity, of concentration and of equanimity accompanied by benevolence, based upon seclusion, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and leading to relinquishing. It is in this way that

meditation on benevolence is of great fruit and of great benefit.’ (In the same way as benevolence, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity should be expounded.)⁴¹

Now, the question that occasions this instruction is: *how* is the practice of the immeasurables able to bring about great fruits and great benefit? The (prescriptive) answer is worded in all parallel versions according to the standard refrain of the ‘climax’ of the awakening factors (i.e., the “*viveka-nissita*” formula),⁴² the ground upon which the mind is suffused with benevolence, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Meditatively speaking, this can be understood as a mind endowed with the qualities of awakening that takes as its objects benevolence and, sequentially, the other immeasurable perceptions, that radiates in an expansive manner the resultant states of consciousness. Thus the foundational role is assigned to the awakening factors, on which basis the practice of the immeasurables is developed.

The other discourses in the *bojjhaṅga-samyutta* mentioned above present different forms of meditative perceptions according to this same pattern, hence highlighting the fact that the awakening factors are the primary framework and ground of the practice, and that the different ‘contents’ of the practice (the *appamānas*, etc.) are to focus on different aspects of experience, by ‘filling’ it, so to speak, with wholesome and useful objects of meditation targeted to a range of different purposes. In this respect, the immeasurables are no exception to the rationale underlying the multiplicity of meditation objects that are taught in early Buddhist texts.⁴³

As far as concentration (which is both the sixth, penultimate factor in the list of the awakening factors and the eighth, culminating factor of the eightfold path) is concerned, according to a discourse in the *Majjhima-nikāya*, the *Mahāmālunkya-sutta*, it is impossible to overcome the five lower fetters without undertaking the path necessary for such overcoming. The path at stake is contemplation of an absorption experience from an insight perspective.⁴⁴ The *Mahāmālunkya-sutta*’s assertion of the indispensability of concentration for progress to the higher levels of awakening is consistently found in a range of canonical materials. For example, according to a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, a person who has fulfilled morality and concentration but has not yet fulfilled wisdom destroys the five lower fetters.⁴⁵ This implies that to achieve the destruction of the five lower fetters (non-return), mastery of concentration

abilities is necessary, and the discourses repeatedly mention that one who is concentrated knows things as they have presently come to be according to reality.⁴⁶

Reams of paper have been devoted by modern scholarship to the dispensability or indispensability of absorption and on the correct interpretation of rightly directed concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) in the early Buddhist path, and centuries long debates have been held by monastics.⁴⁷ Close contextual readings of passages such as that in the just mentioned *Mahāmāluṅkya-sutta*, against the backdrop of early Buddhist meditation theory and philosophy taken as a whole, strongly indicate that at least the attainment and mastery of the first level of absorption is presented as indispensable for progress to full awakening.⁴⁸ While on the one hand the *appamāṇas* are not a self-sufficient path to liberation, on the other hand the instructions given to noble disciples, as seen above, clearly affirm that these practitioners, upon practicing them on the basis of ethical purification, are bound to attain either the highest liberation or non-return. Conversely, the type of arising in the Pure Abodes attained by such meditators is said to be “not shared by worldlings.”⁴⁹

To remain within the scope of the awakening factor of concentration and the *appamāṇas*, it seems to me that here concentration has a twofold function: (a) instrumental to the reduction of sensual involvement in general and (b) instrumental to the development of insight.

As regards the first function (a), cultivating the immeasurables at the level of absorption inherently weakens the search for sensual gratification, because any absorption experience trains the practitioner in inner withdrawal from sense experience, and is based on a momentum of detachment and letting go, which prepares the mind for increasing levels of giving up (the giving up of all grounds for [the establishment of] clinging being a definition of *nirvāṇa*).⁵⁰ At the same time, by making such a letting go not merely the ‘object’ but the actual key impulse of the meditative momentum, one-pointedness of the mind and deeper *samādhi* can be attained, as per definition of the faculty (*indriya*) of *samādhi* given in a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya*.⁵¹

This form of mental ‘habituation’ can also facilitate the attainment of the higher levels of awakening in that it offers an integral training towards cooling down the compulsive impetus of personality building,

with liberation entailing the complete relinquishment and cessation of personality, i.e., the five aggregates affected by clinging.⁵²

Thus the immeasurables cultivated at absorption level counter the fetters that bind to existence in the same way as in more general terms they function as antidotes to the hindrances to meditation and, outside a setting of formal meditation, to growth of unwholesome mental states. The weakening and eventual overcoming of the fetters, once the corresponding compulsions and reactions have been given up, leads in this way to a condition where their equivalent binding karma will no longer be generated.⁵³ Therefore, while progress from stream-entry or once-return to non-return appears to be naturally facilitated by the ability to enter and master absorption, all those who attain absorption based on the immeasurables and the corresponding temporary liberation of the mind would not become *de facto* non-returners or arahants by virtue of their attainment of absorption alone, but only when their remaining two (lower) fetters have been overcome through insight, as set forth in the *Mahāmālunkya-sutta*.

As regards the second function (b), absorption can be used both as a preliminary to insight meditation and as a mental experience to be reviewed in the light of insight for the development of wisdom. In turn, rightly directed absorption depends on the preliminary presence of a pure ethical foundation and on a correct understanding of its own purpose within the path, the concomitant development of the awakening factors being required for it to culminate in awakening.

In brief, in order to fully express their liberating potential, the *appamāṇas* necessitate the awakening factors, and the awakening factors necessitate each other. The texts indicate how the *appamāṇas* are to be used as platforms whereby, with the culmination of the path of ethical, emotional and intellectual purification, the breakthrough to the higher levels of awakening can occur. This type of guidance is provided in the form of review of *appamāṇa* based meditative experiences, to which I now turn.

4. The insight dynamics of *appamāṇa* meditation

The already mentioned *Mahāmālunkya-sutta* states that the indispensable path for the overcoming of the five lower fetters is contemplation of an absorption experience from an insight perspective. The discourse reads:

... a monk enters upon and abides in the first absorption ... Whatever exists therein [i.e., during that state of absorption] that is classifiable as bodily form, feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness, such states he [i.e., that monk] contemplates as impermanent, as *dukkha*, as a disease, as a tumour, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, as not-self. He turns his mind away from those states, and directs it towards the deathless element [contemplating thus]: ‘This is peaceful, this is sublime, that is, the stilling of all volitional formations, the relinquishing of all grounds for [the establishment of] clinging, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, *nirvāṇa*.’ Standing upon that, he attains the destruction of the influxes, or, if he does not attain the destruction of the influxes, then, because of that desire for the Dharma, that delighting in the Dharma,⁵⁴ with the destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes one of spontaneous arising [in the Pure Abodes] who attains final *nirvāṇa* without ever returning from that world. This is the path, the way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters.⁵⁵

This stipulation implies that the two wings of concentration and insight are necessary for the attainment of awakening or liberation. Absorption experience is the basis of contemplation, and insight is the mode of such contemplation, in that “[w]ithout having attained absorption, such contemplation can obviously not be undertaken.”⁵⁶ As the content of the ‘guided’ meditation described in the *Mahāmālunkya-sutta* indicates, insight contemplation is a direct knowledge of the three characteristics according to right view.⁵⁷ This passage “shows the development of insight (*vipassanā*) upon a basis of serenity (*samatha*), using the *jhāna* on which the practice of insight is based as the object of insight contemplation”,⁵⁸ and each of the three characteristics is shown respectively by the first two, and then the following three and six terms listed in the contemplation. As suggested by the *Samyutta-nikāya* commentary, what the monk “turns his mind away from” are the five aggregates experienced during the *jhāna*, which he has seen to be marked with the three characteristics.⁵⁹

Contemplation of the three characteristics of the five aggregates is in fact relevant from the first breakthrough reached with stream-entry, all

the way through to the higher levels of awakening, culminating in arahantship.⁶⁰ As summed up in the conclusion of the *Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, the five aggregates affected by clinging are dependently arisen, and desire, indulgence, inclination and holding based on them is the origin of *dukkha*, whereas to remove desire and lust for them is the cessation of *dukkha*. Or else, as the parallel to this discourse in the Chinese *Madhyama-āgama* concludes, seeing the conditionality of the five aggregates affected by clinging leads to disenchantment with and dispassion from any of their past, present or future manifestations, and thereon to awakening.⁶¹

According to another discourse in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, if one were to take anything to be permanent or satisfactory or a self instead of their opposite, and if one were to look on *nirvāṇa* as unhappiness instead of happiness, this would amount to being incapable of finding the right ground for the attainment of any of the levels of awakening.⁶²

Elsewhere, instructions on insight contemplation of states of absorption based on the *appamāṇas* are worded following the same sequence found in the *Mahāmālunkya-sutta*. For example, after the standard passage on radiating benevolence in all directions, one of the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* discourses on benevolence explains:

Whatever exists therein [i.e., during that state of absorption] that is classifiable as bodily form, classifiable as feeling, classifiable as perception, classifiable as volitional formations or classifiable as consciousness, such states he [i.e., that monk] contemplates seeing them as impermanent, as *dukkha*, as a disease, as a tumour, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, as not-self. On the breaking up of the body, after death, he arises in the retinue of the gods of the Pure Abodes. And this type of arising is not shared by worldlings.⁶³

Through these eleven perceptions developed with regard to the state of absorption, the reality of such a ‘beautiful’ and ‘grown great’ (*mahāggata*) mental experience (corresponding to birth beyond the sense sphere), is seen as characterised by the same marks as any other mental phenomenon: impermanent, *dukkha*, not-self. In this way delusion and clinging with regard to even the most sublime and wholesome mental states is dispelled by the vision of insight. Such insight knowledge alone has the potential to herald the realisation of *nirvāṇa*.

Another insight contemplation of the experience of *appamāṇa* meditation requires one to consider and understand it thus:

This liberation of the mind through benevolence (etc.) is conditioned and intentionally produced (*abhisankhataṃ abhisāñcetaṃ*), but whatever is conditioned and intentionally produced, is impermanent, subject to cessation.

If the practitioner is steady in this contemplation, he or she attains the destruction of the influxes, or at least non-return.⁶⁴

According to yet another insight review of the *appamāṇa* pervasion in the *Vatthūpama-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*:

He understands thus: 'There is this, there is the inferior, there is the superior, and beyond there is an escape from this whole field of perception.' When he knows and sees thus, his mind is liberated from the influx of passion, from the influx of being and from the influx of ignorance. When it is liberated there occurs the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' He understands: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.' ... this recluse is called one bathed with an inner bathing.⁶⁵

Thus the content of these contemplations fully reveals the liberating potential of seeing the wholesome and beautiful mind experienced as '*appamāṇa*' with insight and wisdom.⁶⁶

5. The *appamāṇas* and the early Buddhist soteriological path

As I have discussed in the preceding pages, the distinctive potential of a fully-fledged practice of the *appamāṇas* for a disciple in higher training combines ethical purification, cultivation of concentration and development of insight. These mutually enhance each other along the path that withers away the hindrances and brings to full blooming the awakening factors.

These dynamics of practice entail a development similar to that illustrated by a sequence found in a short discourse of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, the *Upanisā-sutta*.⁶⁷ This sequence is based on a principle that accounts for the dependent arising of a series of supportive factors for the realisation of arahantship, thus offering an interpretative tool for the meditative development based on which the unfolding of personal realisation of the teachings takes place.⁶⁸ The special relevance of this sequence as a hermeneutic tool for early Buddhist meditation theory and practice lies in the fact that it is consistent with the principle of conditionality that stands at the heart of the entire vision of the Dharma. Because it indicates the direction of practice of the gradual training, culminating in liberation, this model is complementary to the standard exposition of dependent cessation, which proceeds from the cessation of ignorance to the cessation of *dukkha*. The development of *appamāṇa* meditation seems to me to be in tune with such a principle, in that it nurtures the supportive factors for liberation and it can spark the meditative drive that leads to liberation.

Thus gradual training in purity and wholesomeness, in conjunction with the *appamāṇas* and insight, will empower and support the noble disciple's practice of the path initiated by insight into *dukkha*, heading to perfect comprehension and purification. Insight into *dukkha* is of relevance not only when one first enters the path, but it is in fact at the core of the insight review of the unsatisfactory nature of the *appamāṇa* absorption prescribed by the discourses.

To apply the paradigm of the four truths to the context of the training with the *appamāṇas*: the 'disease' is the existential karmic predicament itself; the 'cause' an ignorant and unwholesome conduct of the body, speech and the mind; 'cessation' the noble disciple's attainment of the liberation of the mind through the immeasurables and eventually the reaching of non-return and of the higher goal through further development of insight; and the 'appropriate remedy' wholesome conduct in conjunction with the establishment of right view and the awakening factors.

In particular, right view, the forerunner and precursor of insight into the four truths as they really are,⁶⁹ in the context of the discourses on karma and the *appamāṇas* (the already discussed *Sañcetanika-suttas* and *Karajakāya-sutta* with their parallels) results especially from the abandonment of the last group of unwholesome actions, those entailing mental unwholesome attitudes rooted in the holding of wrong view.

Thus the way the practice unfolds is in harmony with a liberating shift through which the dependent generation of karmic bondage, *dukkha* and unwholesomeness, is replaced by the ‘nirvāṇic dynamics’ of their dependent cessation (i.e., the reverse form of dependent origination). The climax of the standard refrain of the awakening factors in the discourses culminates with the “leading to relinquishing” (*vossaggaparīṇāmiṃ*), applied, in the present context, to the *appamāṇas*. Semantically and conceptually, this is similar to final liberation culminating in the giving up of all grounds for (the establishment of) clinging (*sabbūpadhipaṭṭi-nissaggo*)⁷⁰ through direct knowledge of their real nature.

With the immeasurables, much in the same way as any other form of early Buddhist meditation, the foundation is right view, and the path of purification progresses with the abandonment of the mental hindrances and increased aloofness from the world of the senses – all of which make deep meditation possible. Throughout, the practice is guided and directed by a fine-tuning of the awakening factors.

This pattern of development of the *bojjhaṅgas* and abandonment of the hindrances is of crucial importance, in that these two aspects of the practice represent the foundation of the establishment of mindfulness and the point of arrival of the early Buddhist soteriological path. Such a progression brings about wisdom, leading in this way to the realisation of *nirvāṇa* and the final destruction of the influxes. In this way, the *appamāṇa* experiences converge to cessation and relinquishing, to *nirvāṇa*.

Thus, as regards the conclusion reached by some scholars that early Buddhism knew two different paths to liberation, one of tranquillity versus one of insight, the foregoing analysis of the meditative dynamics of the early Buddhist *appamāṇas* is in my opinion a case in point showing that such conclusions are at odds with the doctrinal foundation as well as practical instructions recorded by the early Buddhist texts.⁷¹ Briefly stated, the early discourses do not present a single normative approach to the development of tranquillity and insight: different practitioners would first develop one or the other, or else cultivate them in conjunction, but neither of them is dispensable.⁷²

Early Buddhist texts propose an integrated approach to the *appamāṇas* that entails a process of relinquishing based on concentration

and insight and culminating in the experience of awakening. Methodologically speaking, I need to emphasise that my understanding of the overall soteriological implications of the dynamics that seem to emerge from the textual descriptions of early Buddhist meditation practice, in the present case the application of insight to the practice of the *appamāṇas*, is suggested by the hermeneutic principle of ‘dependent cessation’ as per the earlier mentioned *Upanisā-sutta*, a principle that is articulated throughout the texts themselves. I choose this approach rather than, for instance, attempting to come to an independent taxonomy relying on principles external to the textual materials in question.⁷³

This key point of the indispensability of insight is valid not only for early Buddhism, but for all Buddhist meditative traditions. For example, Wangchuk (2007: 199) makes the following remarks on the necessity of ‘gnosis’ (i.e., liberating insight), besides benevolence etc., for the purpose of release from *saṃsāra* according to Mahāyāna sources:

[T]he concept of gnoseological *bodhicitta* is based on the general Buddhist notion that the actual soteriological breakthrough comes in the form of an intellectual event, gnosis, and not an emotional one, no matter how positive, such as benevolence ... It is one’s view of or insight into *sūnyatā*, then, which actually releases one from the fetters of *saṃsāra*.

At least according to the early Buddhist perspective, however, the ‘intellectual’ or ‘gnoseological’ and ‘emotional’ levels would be, along with the ethical one, organically interrelated, as shown by close investigation of the dynamics of the *appamāṇas*. A distinction of this type seems to me possibly to echo, in traditional and possibly academic scholarship, a reception of some positions and polemical strands found in Mahāyāna works that in themselves seem to stem from a form of soteriological exclusivism based on proposing specific solutions to doctrinal problems arisen with later scholastic interpretations of the earlier Buddhist teachings. For example, the claim that the vehicle of the bodhisattvas is superior to both the vehicle of the *śrāvakas* and that of the *pratyekabuddhas* is based on the idea that a bodhisattva is destined to the attainment of awakening by removing the *kleśajñeyāvaraṇa* (emotional and mental afflictions or impediments), whereas the followers of the other vehicles would simply aim at *nirvāṇa*, interpreted as the extinction of the sole emotional afflictions. Yet, the early Buddhist conception does not know a substantial distinction between these spheres of experience, which

are both equally rooted in feeling, whereby *nirvāṇa* would not be correctly represented in terms of the extinction of purely emotional afflictions. As summed up by Gómez (1999: 703), in his criticism of de la Vallée Poussin's (1937) seeing a dichotomy between *jñāna* and *dhyāna* at the root of many doctrinal conflicts in Buddhism:

The contrast is not between the intellectual apprehension and the intuitive apprehension, but between all mental apprehension and an experience in the body or the whole person: in short, a realization.⁷⁴

Whatever epistemic value one is willing or else unwilling to place on such a realisation, the subordination – or instrumentality – of the practice to the final goal of cessation of *dukkha* attained with the destruction of the influxes and the uprooting of existence is, in my opinion, the soteriological key to read the *appamāṇas* training of the mind taught in early Buddhist texts.⁷⁵ None of the culminations of the lofty *appamāṇa* meditative developments are said to equal liberation. The texts never indicate that the destruction of the influxes (or any equivalent designation of the final goal) has been attained just through cultivating the *appamāṇas*. Conversely, insight contemplation of the *appamāṇas* occurs only in passages that deal with the attainment of liberation.

Like the Buddha, wanderers of other renunciate communities were also able to teach the abandonment of the five hindrances and the boundless suffusion of the whole world with a mind accompanied by benevolence, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, but to combine this with a development of the factors of awakening in dependence on seclusion, dispassion, cessation, and leading to relinquishing, with the sole aim of purifying the mind by virtue of such process and to simply realise its conditioned and impermanent nature, is peculiar to the teaching of the Tathāgatha.⁷⁶ As already noted by Gethin (2001: 180–181), the Buddha is not represented as categorically denying the claim of non-Buddhist wanderers to a teaching that bears some similarities to his own (although the claim of superiority on the part of the *Nikāyas* is unequivocal),⁷⁷ but:

... [T]here is a certain subtlety of argument here. The wanderers of other schools may abandon the five *nīvaraṇas* and develop the seven *bojjhaṅgas*, but the full potential inherent in this practice is not understood or fulfilled by them. In short, they do not really understand what they are doing ... If we bear in mind the way in which the *bojjhaṅgas* are related to various meditation subjects, the

point all in all would seem to be not that the Buddha teaches new or original meditation subjects, but that he is unsurpassed in defining the finer points of technique and relating these to progress towards the final goal.⁷⁸

I would suggest that this mode of functioning is in fact a recurrent characteristic of early Buddhist meditation and philosophy, one of whose distinctive procedures is to provide frameworks to realise the nature of experience according to right view, rather than being concerned with suggesting or inducing any particular type of meditative experience to be pursued for its own sake. Such a repositioning of perspectives is achieved by means of a corrective that can be defined as a concurrent epistemic and epistemological realignment. This is in every sense a major paradigm shift on the early Indian philosophical and religious scene.⁷⁹

ABBREVIATIONS

Abhidh-kh-bh	<i>Abhidharmakośabhāṣya</i> (ed. Pradhan 1975)
Abhidh-kh-vy	<i>Abhidharmakośavyākhyā</i> (ed. Wogihara 1932–1936)
AN	<i>Āṅguttara-nikāya</i>
B ^e	Burmese edition
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association
C ^e	Ceylonese edition
D	Derge edition (Tōhoku)
DĀ	<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i> (T 1)
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
Dhs-a	<i>Dhammasaṅgani-attakhatā</i>
DN	<i>Dīrgha-nikāya</i>
E ^e	European edition (PTS)
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i>
Paṭis	<i>Paṭisambidhāmagga</i>
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>
PTS	Pali Text Society
Q	Peking (Qianlong) edition (Ōtani)
SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
S ^e	Siamese edition
Si	Sichuan (Beijing) edition
SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
Sn	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
Spk	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī</i>
T	Taishō <i>Tripiṭaka</i> (CBETA edition, 2011)
<i>Upāyikā</i>	<i>Abhidharmakośopāyikā</i> (Q 5595)

All references to Pali texts are to the PTS editions, unless otherwise indicated. For Pali and other languages, on occurrence, I have adjusted the *sandhi*, punctuation, capitalisations, etc.

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NOTES

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¹ A more detailed study of the theme of intentionality and the *appamāṇas* can be found in Martini forthcoming 2012b. In the present article I use Pali terminology as I take the four main Pali *Nikāyas* as my main source representative of the early Buddhist teachings in that they are the most completely preserved literary corpus. The broader textual basis I consider as documenting the earliest phases of transmission of the Buddhist

teachings includes their counterparts in the Chinese *Āgamas* and the corresponding materials extant in Sanskrit fragments and in Tibetan translation. Unless dealing with particularly noteworthy differences or controversial points bearing on my main theme, I do not give in each and every case reference to extant parallels in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, etc.

² The therapeutic effects of the *appamāṇas* have indeed been made the object of contemporary psychological research, to the extent that such effects of the immeasurables become ‘measurable’ according to physiological changes in the plastic structure of the brain and/or psychometric parameters, e.g., Kristeller and Johnson 2005, Gilbert and Procter 2006, Fredrickson et al. 2008, Hutcherson et al. 2008, Lutz et al. 2008, Lutz et al. 2009, Johnson et al. 2009, Kraus and Sears 2009, Pace et al. 2009, and Feldman et al. 2010 (I am indebted to Daphna McKnight for most of these references). While this type of research, which is not devoid of its own methodological challenges, can claim a degree of empiric accuracy, the next and higher step in *appamāṇa* practice, where a soteriological orientation becomes prominent, is obviously less likely to be measurable through the instruments of Western natural or psychological science.

³ Cf., e.g., the maxim at Dhṛp 290; on the role of spiritual happiness in early Buddhism cf. Gethin 2001: 154f, Anālayo 2007 and Anālayo forthcoming 2012b. I return to the relationship between the awakening factors and the *appamāṇas* in section (3) of this article.

⁴ Objectless immeasurables as these were to be defined in later scholastic treatises stemming from Sarvāstivāda-Yogācāra meditative milieus, on which cf. Dhammajoti 2010 and Martini 2011: 169f, seem to me to be particularly akin to this type of earlier meditative development.

⁵ E.g., MN 99 ad MN II 207,22: *seyyathāpi ... balavā saṅkhadhamo appakasiren 'eva cātuddisā viññāpeyya: evam eva kho ... evaṃ bhāvitāya kho ... mettāya cetovimuttiyā, yaṃ pamāṇakataṃ kammaṃ, na taṃ tatrāvasissati, na taṃ tatrāvatiṭṭhati. ayam pi kho ... brahmāṇaṃ saḥabyatāya maggo* (the same is repeated for the other *appamāṇas*); the example of the trumpeter is also found in the Chinese parallel, MĀ ad T I 669c10 (for differences in the two versions cf. Anālayo 2011a: 578), on this passage cf. also Aronson 1980: 62f and esp. 69 (commenting on its occurrence in another discourse, DN 13 ad DN I 251,5).

⁶ E.g., Paṭi II 130–139 and Vism 296f (= IXf).

⁷ These two aspects, especially the first, are much developed in later scholastic literature, but an awareness of ‘meditation theory’ is already found in a section of the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, where the *appamānas* appear among a number of practices that are considered instrumental in the giving up of defilements, AN 11.22 ad AN V 360,21.

⁸ AN 10.208 ad AN V 299,23–27; for translations and studies of AN 10.208 and its Chinese and Tibetan parallels cf. Anālayo 2009a, Martini forthcoming 2012a and 2012b. For other occurrences of *pamānakataṃ kammaṃ* cf., e.g., DN 13 ad DN I 251,7, MN 99 ad MN II 207,25 and SN 42.8 ad SN IV 322,13 (in the first two cases the Chinese parallels, DĀ 26 ad T I 106c17 and MĀ 152 ad T I 669c10 do not have the reference to the effect of *appamānas* on limiting actions, whereas in the third case the parallels SĀ 916 ad T II 232b5 and SĀ² 131 ad T II 425b29 do refer to the effect of *appamānas*, as noted by Anālayo 2009a: 9 note 35).

⁹ MĀ 15 ad T I 438a11–15, transl. with minor modifications after Anālayo 2009a: 8f; the Tibetan parallel does not have the statement on limiting actions, *Upāyikā*, Q 5595 tu 272a4 or Si 161 p. 581,6, transl. in Martini forthcoming 2012a and 2012b.

¹⁰ Cf. the explanation given by the commentary on the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, Mp V 78,3 on AN 10.208 ad AN V 300,11: *sabbaṃ taṃ idha vedaniyaṃ ti diṭṭhadhammavedaniyaṭṭhānavasena vuttaṃ. na taṃ anubhavissatī ti mettāya upapajjavedaniyabhāvassa upacchinattā upapajjavedaniyavasena na anugataṃ bhavissatī ti – idaṃ sotāpanna-sakadāgāmi-ariyapuggalānaṃ paccavekkagaṇaṃ veditabbaṃ*, “‘it will all be experienced here’ is said with regard to karma that will be experienced in this present existence; ‘it shall not follow one along’ means that with regard to what should be experienced in the next existence, it will not come about in the future, because the experiencing in the next existence has been cut off through the practice of benevolence: This passage has to be understood as a reflection made by a noble person who is a stream-entrant or a once-returner.”

¹¹ Mp V 77,17: *pamānakataṃ kammaṃ nāma kāmāvacarakammaṃ*, “‘action performed in a limiting way’ refers to ‘sense-sphere karma’”; cf. also the similar gloss introducing a definition of ‘action performed in a non-limiting way’ at Spk III 105,27: *yaṃ pamānakataṃ kamman ti, pamānakataṃ kata nāma kāmāvacaraṃ vuccati: appamāṇa-kataṃ kammaṃ nāma rūpāvacaraṃ*. Spk III 105,25, commenting on the expression “liberation of the mind through benevolence” in SN 42.8 ad SN

IV 322,12, explains: *mettāya cetovimuttiyā ti, ettha mettā ti vutte upacāro pi appaṇā pi vaṭṭati. cetovimutti pana vutte appaṇā va vaṭṭati*, “with regard to ‘liberation of the mind through benevolence’, when [only] benevolence is mentioned, it refers either to access concentration or to absorption, but when it is qualified as ‘liberation of the mind’ (*cetovimutti*), it refers to absorption.” AN 10.208 ad AN V 300,2 etc. and its Chinese parallel, MĀ 15 ad T I 438a19 etc., employ the standard formulations “liberation of the mind through benevolence” and the other *appamānas* (*mettācetovimutti* and 慈心解脫 etc.), whereas the Tibetan parallel, *Upāyikā*, Q 5595 tu 272a6 or Si 161 p. 582,8 etc. (collated edition based on D) has: *byams pa’i sems kyi* (D/Si omit: *kyi*) *ting nge ’dzin sgom par byed pa*, “development of concentration of the mind of benevolence.” This expression does not seem to occur elsewhere in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā* and would presumably render a Sanskrit equivalent to Pali *cetosamādhi-bhāvanā*, cf. Martini forthcoming 2012b; on *appamāṇo cetosamādhi* cf., e.g., Maithrimurthi 1999: 28f.

¹² Aronson 1979: 31.

¹³ Cf., e.g., Theravāda Dhs-a 422f ad Dhs-a 192,14, and Sarvāstivāda **Mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*, T 1454 ad T XXVII 420c13–c19, 425b9–425c12, 420c13–420c24 and 425b26–425c1, partially transl. and discussed in Dhammajoti 2010: 166f and 171f.

¹⁴ E.g., DN 13 ad DN I 251,9: *brahmānaṃ saḥabyatāya maggo*, “the path to union with Brahmās”; on similar passages cf., e.g., Maithrimurthi 1999: 13f, including a survey of previous scholarship and references to non-Buddhist sources. For recent studies of Brahmā in early Buddhism cf. Anālayo 2004 and Anālayo 2011c: 12f (including references to relevant secondary literature) and esp. 14 note 6 for an example of a Brahmin retiring into seclusion to practice so as to attain direct communion with the Brahmā, and on the effect of Buddhist critique of the notion of the Brahmā in Brahmanism McGovern 2011.

¹⁵ MN 75 ad MN I 502,15: *bhunahuno* (S^c: *bhunahanassa*), lit., ‘destroyer of beings’ or ‘destroyer of growth’; on this expression cf. Anālayo 2010: 497 note 91.

¹⁶ E.g., AN 10.29 ad AN V 60,1: *mahābraṃuno pi ... atthi ’eva aññathattaṃ atthi viparināmo*, and SN 55.54 ad SN V 410,16: *brahmaloko pi ... anicca adhuvo sakkāya pariyāpanno*. The significance of the compound *brahmabhūto*, ‘Brahmā-become’, in the pericope of the attainment of liberation, e.g., MN 131 ad MN III 195,5, apparently at odd

with the early Buddhist philosophical and non-theological tenets, is discussed, e.g., in Pérez-Remón 1980: 113f and Maithrimurthi 1999: 67 note 78. Van Zeyst 1961: 308 sums up that in Buddhism there is no ground “for either a goal of divine union or a scheme of salvation in which man has to cooperate with the divine.”

¹⁷ As commented by Bodhi in Ñāṇamoli 2001: 1301 note 899, “[t]his remark has the force of a gentle reproach. The Buddha must have seen that Dhanañjāni had the potential to attain the supramundane path”, since elsewhere “he himself teaches only the way to the Brahmā-world when that potential is lacking in his listener”, cf. MN 99, discussed below; the Chinese *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, MĀ 152 ad T I 669c5, however, is much less critical of the venerable Sāriputta’s action: “instead of reproaching Sāriputta for not having done his duty, the Buddha much rather praises Sāriputta’s wisdom”, cf. Anālayo 2011a: 571, with note 218.

¹⁸ MN 99 ad MN II 206; for a comparative study of MN 99 cf. Anālayo 2010: 572f and esp. 578 note 250 (in this case, the sentence “no limiting action remains or persists there”, is not found in the parallel MĀ 152, but a similar statement occurs in MĀ 15 ad T I 438a14).

¹⁹ The *Majjhima-nikāya* commentary, Ps III 450,10, gives the same explanation as the above quoted *Anguttara-nikāya* commentary, cf. note 11.

²⁰ “Meines Erachtens haben somit beide Aspekte von *appamāṇa* – einmal im Sinne der *brahmavihāras*, zum anderen im Sinne des ohne-*rāga-dosa-moha*-Seins – (zumindest ursprünglich) eine Beziehung zum Erlösungskontext: die Praxis der *brahmavihāra*-Übung hat eben zum Resultat, daß die *pamāṇakatakammas* (ein Begriff, der möglicherweise eine Sekundärbildung analog zu *appamāṇa* darstellt) beseitigt werden”; cf. also Maithrimurthi 1999: 76.

²¹ E.g., MN 43 ad MN I 297,9, MN 127 ad MN III 146,5, SN 41.7 ad SN IV 296,26.

²² Cf. de Silva 1978 and Anālayo 2009b: 155.

²³ Cf. the discussion in Martini forthcoming 2012b.

²⁴ Pace the already mentioned conclusions reached by Maithrimurthi 1999 (cf. also Maithrimurthi 2004), as well as Gombrich 1996: 62 (as already pointed out by Bodhi 1997: 294), Gombrich 1998: 6f and recently Gombrich 2009: 78f, 88f and 195f, who elaborates in more detail on the position presented in his previous publications that the divine abodes are a sufficient soteriological paradigm: (“love and compassion can be salvific

for the person who cultivates those feelings to the highest pitch”, p. 195), holding that benevolence was originally taught by the Buddha as a way to awakening, but that the Buddha’s immediate followers would have then failed to understand the full import of the *brahmavihāras* and arrived at the “dogma that someone who practised the *brahma-vihāras* was reborn in the Brahma world but no higher” (p. 88); cf. also Pāsādika 2007: 266f and Martini 2011: 174.

²⁵ AN 6.105 ad AN III 444,14.

²⁶ Cf. AN 10.208 ad AN V 300,10: *so evaṃ pajānāti: yam kho me idha kiñci pubbe iminā karajakāyena pāpakammaṃ kataṃ, sabban taṃ idha vedanīyaṃ, na taṃ anugaṃ bhaviṣṣatī ti*, “one knows thus: ‘whatever evil actions I performed before with this physical body, their results will be experienced here and will not follow me’”; MĀ 15 ad T I 438a21: 比丘應作是念: ‘我本放逸, 作不善業. 是一切今可受報. 終不後世’, “monks, you should reflect like this: ‘formerly I was negligent and performed unwholesome deeds. Let the fruits of these be experienced entirely now, not in a later world!’”, transl. with minor modifications after Anālayo 2009a: 9; *Upāyikā*, Q 5595 tu 272b21 or Si 161 p. 581,20: ‘ga’ zhiḡ ‘di skad du nga’i lus ‘di nyid kyis sngon sdig pa mi dge ba’i las byas shing bsags la nye bar bsags pa de thams cad ‘di la myong bar gyur cig skyes nas dang lan grangs gzhan la myong bar ma gyur cig, “one says: ‘with this body of mine formerly I performed evil, unwholesome actions, that have been accumulated. With regard to all that has become accumulated, let it be experienced [now] and not be experienced further at the time of birth.’” All parallel versions of this discourse present the statement of the leading to or the certainty of the attainment either of non-return or of the highest, cf. AN 10.208 ad AN V 300,13; MĀ 15 ad T I 438a23; *Upāyikā*, Q 5595 tu 272b3 or Si 161 p. 582,2.

²⁷ With regard to benevolence Anālayo 2003: 195–196 explains that its “distinctive character ... as taught by him [i.e., the Buddha] lies in combining it with the awakening factors, in this way directly harnessing loving kindness to the progress towards realization.”

²⁸ Sn 143–152 ad Sn 25,5; this discourse, transmitted in the *Suttanipāta* of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, does not have known parallels preserved by other traditions of reciters.

²⁹ The *samādhi* stanzas (Sn 145bc–151) comprise an initial discursive part (Sn 145bc–148) followed by practical instructions (Sn 149–151), which are further subdivided into *samatha* meditation (Sn 149–150) and a more

dynamic application of mindfulness with review of the result of the practice (Sn 151). The meaning of the passage on the attainment of *taṃ santam padaṃ* in the context of the so-called “*Metta-sutta*”, benevolence and the experience of *nirvāṇa* (cf. also Dhṃ 368), has been discussed by several scholars, cf., e.g., the reviews in Maithrimurthi 1999: 65f and Kuan 2008: 115f. For the purpose of the present discussion, I would just like to point out that *nirvāṇa* is experienced at different levels on the path to full awakening, from stream-entry onwards, and the transition to a higher level of the path (as evidenced by the context of the qualities that are already established in the practitioner and those that have to be further fulfilled), seems to me to simply imply that the experience of *nirvāṇa* of a disciple at a comparatively lower stage on the path is not completed by a level of moral, affective and insight development corresponding to the one expected from an arahant at the highest point of spiritual pursuit.

³⁰ AN 10.206 ad AN V 292,14 (abbreviated in the second *Saṅcetanika-sutta*, AN 10.207). The two *Saṅcetanika-suttas* (AN 10.206 ad AN V 292,1 and AN 10.207 ad AN V 297,14) and the *Karajakāya-sutta* (AN 10.208 ad AN V 299,10), at present consecutively located in the *Karajakāya-vagga* of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, were most probably interrelated during oral transmission, with the original textual situation consisting of a single Pali discourse (AN 10.206 + AN 10.297 + AN 10.208). This probably original single Pali discourse is parallel to MĀ 15 ad T I 437b24–438b11 and *Upāyikā*, Q 5595 tu 270a4–272b5 or Si 161 pp. 577,2–582,10, cf. Anālayo 2009a, and also Martini forthcoming 2012a and 2012b. The complete sequence of instructions can be reconstituted by reading the three Pali discourses together and clarified in the light of their parallels.

³¹ AN 10.208 ad AN V 300,2, MĀ 15 ad T I 438a16 and *Upāyikā*, Q 5595 tu 272a6 or Si 161 p. 581,12; cf. Martini forthcoming 2012a. In fact, the removal of any doubt in recognising what is wholesome (*kusala*) and what is unwholesome (*akusala*) is concomitant with the attainment of the first level of awakening, cf., e.g., Anālayo 2003: 198; from this discriminating ability follows an ever deepening understanding of the nature of karma and intention, and with it a growing sense of subjective moral accountability.

³² Cf. above note 30.

³³ MN 7 ad MN 39,1: *ayaṃ vuccati ... bhikkhu sināto antarena sinānetāi*.

³⁴ MN 7 ad MN I 37,1; on variations in the parallel versions cf. Anālayo 2011a: 49f. For a study of the notion of purity and purification in early Buddhist discourse cf. Anālayo forthcoming 2012a.

³⁵ The discourse on the parable of an acrobat and his apprentice in the *Samyutta-nikāya*, devoted to illustrate a twofold dimension of mindfulness, self-protection and protection of others, also brings in the relationship of mindfulness and benevolence. According to the instruction, to truly fulfil these two protective tasks, mindfulness has to be cultivated through patience, harmlessness, benevolence and altruistic solicitude, SN 47.19 ad SN V 169,18; on the significance of this discourse and for a translation of the Chinese parallel cf. Anālayo forthcoming 2011, cf. also Aronson 1980: 53f. As regards ‘mindfulness’ in this discourse, Kuan 2008: 56 remarks that “[I]t should be noted that *satipaṭṭhāna* (establishment of mindfulness) here is singular, different from the plural form in the context of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*.” The singular form is also found in the context of the development of the perception of benevolence in Sn 151 ad Sn 26,19: *etaṃ satiṃ adīṭṭheyya*, “one should resolve on this mindfulness.” On this passage Bodhi 2011: 26 comments: “[t]he *Metta Sutta* even refers to meditation on loving-kindness as a kind of mindfulness”, and Kuan 2008: 56 that: “loving-kindness may also be counted as a type of emotion produced by deliberately transforming *saññā*, which is the job of *sati*. While the *Metta Sutta* mentions ‘this mindfulness’ (*etaṃ satiṃ*), it probably does not mean that loving-kindness itself is a kind of *sati*, but it implies that the process of developing loving-kindness involves *sati*. The development of loving-kindness is unique for its altruistic aspect which seems to be lacking in other types of *sati*”; on this point cf. also Maithrimurthi 1999: 67 note 79. For another instance of a perspective on mindfulness (in this case directed to the elements) which combines awareness of their qualities with the cultivation of analogous qualities of the four *appamānas*, as found in the *Mahārāhulovāda-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, MN 62 ad MN I 423,18 and its parallel in the Chinese *Ekottarika-āgama*, cf. the discussion in Martini 2011: 167f.

³⁶ SN 46.54 ad SN V 118,31: *nāhaṃ tam ... passāmi sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sasamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya yo imesaṃ pañhānaṃ veyyākaraṇena cittaṃ ārādheyya aññatra tathāgatena vā tathāgatasāvakena vā ito vā pana sutvā*; this discourse is taken up also by Gethin 2001: 177f.

³⁷ SN 46.54 ad SN V 119,3: *mettāsahagataṃ satisambojjaṅgam bhāveti vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ ...* On the *bojjaṅgas* and the “*viveka-nissita*” formula in the Pali *Nikāyas* cf. Gethin 2001: 162f; on the *bhojjaṅgas* in general cf. Anālayo 2003: 233f.

³⁸ The treatment of the *appamāṇas* in dependence on the *bojjaṅgas* (or else of the development of the *bojjaṅgas* accompanied by the *appamāṇas*) in the *ānāpāna-vagga* has already been noted by Gethin 2001: 180.

³⁹ The Pali parallel is SN 46.62 ad SN V 131 [+ SN 46.63, SN 46.64 and SN 46.65].

⁴⁰ SĀ 744, the translated section ranges from T II 197c15–21.

⁴¹ The translated section ranges from *Upāyikā*, Q 5595 tu 190b2–190b5 or Si 161 p. 400,15–401,8. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* quotation, “thus the awakening factor of mindfulness [is developed] accompanied by benevolence, etc.”, is found at Q 5595 tu 190b1 or Si 161 p. 400,14, cf. *Abhidh-kh-bh* 146,13, *yathā maitrīśahagataṃ smṛtisambodhyaṅgaṃ bhāvayatīty*, followed by a reference to the introductory narrative (*gleng zhi*, Sanskrit *nidāna*) at Śrāvastī; the same passage is commented upon in *Abhidh-kh-vy* 309,22–26, cf. Honjō 1984: 42 no. 63 and Pāsādika 1989: 64 no. 224. The Pali parallel is SN 46.62 ad SN V 131,15 [+ SN 46.63, SN 46.64 and SN 46.65].

⁴² Cf. above note 37.

⁴³ On the characteristics of the *bojjaṅga-samyutta* in general cf. Gethin 2001: 173f.

⁴⁴ MN 64 ad MN I 434,25.

⁴⁵ AN 3.86 ad AN I 233,22 and AN 9.12 ad AN IV 380,1: *sīlesu paripūrakārī hoti samādhismiṃ paripūrakārī paññāya mattaso kārī ... so pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ samyojanānaṃ parikkhayā*; on the implication of this passage cf. esp. Anālayo 2011b: 152 note 4; for a study of the higher fetters in the Pali *Nikāyas* cf., e.g., Somaratne 1999.

⁴⁶ An instance can be found, e.g., in the ‘discourse on concentration’, SN 22.5 ad SN III 13,30: *samāhito ... bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ paṇānāti*; on the implications of the expressions *yathābhūtaṃ* and *yathābhūtañānadassana* cf., e.g., Anālayo 2009b: 124f. For an assessment of concentration and especially rightly directed concentration in early Buddhist discourses cf. Anālayo 2010: 115f, and esp. 131f on the relationship between concentration and awakening.

⁴⁷ Cf. the survey in Anālayo 2003: 67f and additional references in Anālayo 2011b: 152 note 1.

⁴⁸ As shown by a recent study of the role of the first absorption in the early discourses based on comparative research, Anālayo forthcoming 2012b, with whose analysis I agree; cf. also Anālayo 2003: 72f and Anālayo 2010: 107f and 115f.

⁴⁹ AN 4.126 ad AN II 129,10, cf. also my discussion below.

⁵⁰ E.g., AN 10.60 ad AN V 110,23: *etaṃ santam, etaṃ paṇītam, yad idaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadipaṭṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nibbānam.*

⁵¹ SN 48.9 ad SN V 197,15: *vossaggārammaṇaṃ karitvā labhati samādhiṃ labhati cittassa ekaggataṃ ... idhaṃ vuccati samādhindriyaṃ.*

⁵² E.g., MN 44 ad MN I 299,1; for a comparative study of the parallels cf. Anālayo 2011b.

⁵³ Cf. above notes 11 and 26.

⁵⁴ MN 64 ad MN I 436,5: *ten 'eva dhammarāgena tāya dhammanandiyā;* on the meaning of *dhammarāga* cf. Anālayo 2009b: 33f.

⁵⁵ MN 64 ad MN I 435,31–436,9 (the same progression is repeated for the subsequent levels of absorption).

⁵⁶ Anālayo 2010: 135.

⁵⁷ As discussed at length by Anālayo 2010: 131f, the development of concentration in harmony with the other path factors, beginning with right view, is what defines concentration as rightly directed towards the purpose of awakening.

⁵⁸ Bodhi in Nāṇamoli 2001: 1268 note 655.

⁵⁹ Ps III 146,10.

⁶⁰ Cf. SN 22.122 ad SN III 168,1, with Spk II 334,8 commenting on this passage similar to Ps III 146,10 mentioned above in note 59.

⁶¹ MN 28 ad MN 191,29 and MĀ 15 ad T I 467a20.

⁶² AN 6.98–101 ad AN III 441,19.

⁶³ AN 4.126 ad AN II 129,4 (the passage is abbreviated in E^c; text supplied by AN 4.124); for instructions on the insight review of *appamāṇa* absorption in contemporary Theravāda cf. Mahāsi 1985/n.d.: 247f.

⁶⁴ MN 52 ad MN I 351,18 (the text is abbreviated in E^c; the abbreviated part is supplied by the preceding passage on the first absorption).

⁶⁵ MN 7 ad MN I 38,31; on differences in the parallel versions of this passage cf. Anālayo 2011a: 56f.

⁶⁶ On insight and the *appamāṇas* cf. also Aronson 1980: 74f and Dhammajoti 2010.

⁶⁷ SN 12.23 ad SN II 29, with its parallels MĀ 55 ad T I 490b29 and *Upayikā*, Q 5595 tu 54b4 or Si 161 p. 117,10.

⁶⁸ To look at the progression from this perspective highlights a distinctive aspect of the training, in that, as explained by Bodhi 1980: 11, it “views the same chain of events dynamically, from the inner perspective of living experience.”

⁶⁹ SN 37.7 ad SN V 442,9, comparing the function of right view as a forerunner and precursor of the breakthrough to the dawn in relation to the rising of the sun; on the four truths cf. Anālayo’s article in the same issue of the present journal.

⁷⁰ E.g., AN 10.60 ad AN V 110,23; on the terminology related to *vossagga* and *paṭinissagga* cf. Anālayo 2010: 145f.

⁷¹ The discussion was initiated by de la Vallée Poussin 1937 (with a critical examination by Gómez 1999), whose position has been followed and articulated, e.g., by Griffiths 1981, Schmithausen 1981, Bronkhorst 1986 (with a critical response by Gethin 2001: 180f), Gombrich 1996: 96f, Vetter 1988 and Wynne 2007, 117f, and critically reviewed (in some of his aspects or in general terms) e.g., by Swearer 1972: 369f, Bergonzi 1980: 332, Keown 1992: 77f, Gethin 1997: 221, Gethin 2004: 209 and Anālayo 2009b: 165f.

⁷² AN 4.170 ad AN II 157,1.

⁷³ Another meditative instance that highlights the interdependence of the emotional, ethical and intellectual spheres in early Buddhism is the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*), a meditative experience possible when a very high degree of emotional and intellectual purification has been attained. The requisites for the attainment of this experience (at least non-return) also indicate that the intellectual dimension in early Buddhism embraces the emotional and ethical aspects. On this attainment, which in my opinion has not yet been fully clarified by modern scholarship, cf., e.g., de la Vallée Poussin 1937: 210f, Schmithausen 1981: 249, Griffiths 1986, Harvey 1995: 187f, Lusthaus 2002: 129f, Pieris 2003, Somaratne 2006 and Anālayo 2010: 208 note 26.

⁷⁴ Cf. also Gethin 2004: 209.

⁷⁵ Gethin 2001: 181 further comments that “what is claimed as distinctive about the teaching of the Buddha is that it always perfectly relates the

abandoning of the *nīvaraṇas* and the development of the *bojjhaṅgas* to progress towards the cessation of suffering. It is this completeness of the Buddha's teachings that is emphasized, rather than its radical departure from the wanderer's teachings."

⁷⁶ Gethin 2001: 179 remarks that this development is "perhaps slightly unexpected in that the consideration of the *viveka-nissita* formula showed that for the commentaries the *bojjhaṅgas* are characteristically developed at the time of insight practice and the arising of the transcendent path and fruit. However ... the commentaries do suggest that this is not quite the whole story." Gethin further comments that although it is not cited as such, the account of the practice of the immeasurables developed in dependence of the *bojjhaṅgas* "would appear to be the kind of passages the commentaries have in mind when they say that the *bojjhaṅgas* can be brought out in respect of divine-abiding *jhānas*" (p. 180).

⁷⁷ Gethin 2001: 180 points out that the commentaries seem to play this fact down, cf. Spk III 168,24, as transl. in Gethin 2001: 180 note 163: "The wanderers do not really teach the abandoning of the *nīvaraṇas* and the development of the *bojjhaṅgas*. They merely overhear the Buddha teaching and then return to their *ārāma* where they teach their own followers making it appear that the method has been penetrated as a result of their own knowledge." A *Samyukta-āgama* partial parallel to SN 46.54, SĀ 743 ad T II 197b15, although without going as far as the *Samyutta-nikāya* commentary, seems to describe the Buddha's foreseeing the distraught reactions of the outside wanderers on hearing why their teaching cannot be compared to the apparently similar teaching taught by the Tathāgatha in stronger terms, anticipating their defeated and angry reaction, cf. SĀ 743 ad T II 197c6. For another example of a negative emphasis in the portrayal of interactions with non-Buddhist renunciates, cf. the case studied by Anālayo 2009c.

⁷⁸ As an instance of refinement in the mode of presentation of the teachings, Gethin 2001: 178f discusses the Buddha's exposition of the way the five *nīvaraṇas* are ten and the seven *bojjhaṅgas* fourteen, cf. SN 46.52 ad SN V 108,22.

⁷⁹ I would conclude that the instance of the 'Buddhist' specifics displayed by the Buddhist *appamāṇas* indicates that the early Buddhist spiritual and intellectual history (to the extent that this is witnessed by the texts) participates in the dynamics of cultural, religious and social inclusivism that characterise the early Indian religious milieux, in such a way that, as

far as soteriology is concerned, it remains marked by a very distinctive identity and orientation. Individual ‘case studies’ of ‘inclusivist’ choices and elements, and an analysis of the patterns that emerge from them, seem to point in this direction, cf., e.g., the recent studies by Anālayo 2011c and 2011d. For more general assessments of inclusive or inclusivistic modalities in the early Indian context, cf., e.g., the contributions in Oberhammer 1983, Kiblinger 2005 and Ruegg 2008: 97f. Verardi 2011: 12f, 18 and 71f comes to a radical reading of early Buddhist thought and discourse – in history – in terms of a fundamentally antinomian (and thereby historically subaltern) stance. Though Verardi’s position is too articulated to be discussed here, and it would entail an overall assessment of the early Buddhist ‘Middle Way’ in relation to institutions and history, it seems to me that the proposed notion of ‘subalternity’ might be able to provide an alternative interpretative paradigm and definition for such religio-historical tides now understood, at best, in terms of ‘inclusivism’, that deserves further in-depth scrutiny.