

## Further thoughts on the 'two path thesis'

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### Abstract

Early Buddhist texts are heterogeneous; some admit to doctrinal disagreement, others post-date the Buddha. In a corpus recording developments beyond the Buddha's life, and which is open about its internal disagreement, it is more than likely that there was a debate between the adherents of calm and insight meditation.

In previous issues of this journal, I argued that more than one conception of the Buddhist path is stated in early Buddhist texts (Wynne 2018, 2018a). One of these papers (2018a) has focused on the notion of an early debate between calm and insight meditation, and as such was critical of Bhikkhu Anālayo's recent treatment of this problem (Anālayo 2106, 2017). Since this is an important debate in Buddhist Studies, I am glad that Anālayo has responded to my critique and defended his own position (2018); the exchange of ideas is most welcome. I am especially grateful to Anālayo for pointing out some works, by himself and others, of which I was unaware. But while Anālayo's points have enriched my understanding of early Buddhism, they have not made me change my mind. Here I will explain why.

There is ample evidence for a debate between calm and insight in the surviving texts of different Indian traditions. For example, the Pali commentary on SN 12.70 interprets those who claim to be 'liberated by insight' as 'dry seers devoid of *jhāna*' (*nijjhānakā sukkhavipassakā*). The Sarvāstivādin tradition

has a similar understanding, albeit placed in its version of the same Sutta (SĀ 347), rather than a commentary. The question is, just how old was this debate? Should we be guided by the Pāli tradition, in which the notion of ‘dry seers’ is a commentarial rather than a canonical formulation, or is the Sarvāstivādin tradition essentially correct in attributing the idea to the canonical period? Bhikkhu Bodhi (2007: 68) is surely right in judging that in this case, the Sarvāstivādin text is later than its Pāli counterpart. But even if the Sarvāstivādin tradition may have emended the textual record, perhaps there was good reason to do so. Perhaps SĀ 347 is substantially correct, and reflects the fact that a pre-sectarian text was transmitted with an understanding that to be ‘liberated by insight’ is the same thing as having no jhānic attainment.

### 1. ‘Released on both sides’

There is circumstantial support for the idea that a pure insight tradition is implicit in SN 12.70. At least some canonical texts record old arguments about the relationship between calm and insight. This can be seen in the notion of ‘release on both sides’ (*ubhato-bhāga-vimutti*), which deals with the ‘sides’ of ‘calm/meditation’ and ‘insight’, and is given different formulations in the Pāli Suttas. For the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* (MN 70), the two ‘sides’ are the formless meditation and an unspecified insight (*paññā*) by which the spiritual corruptions are destroyed.<sup>1</sup> But in the *Mahā-nidāna Sutta* (DN 15) the two sides are conceptualised differently: the *bhikkhu* attains the eight ‘releases’ (including the formless releases) in forward and reverse order, wherever, whenever and for as long as he likes, as well as realising ‘the corruptionless release of mind, a release through insight, in the present, through the destruction of the corruptions’.<sup>2</sup>

The difference between these two positions seems slight, since both texts focus on more or less the same meditative states (the formless states), and an insight by which the corruptions are destroyed. But this would be a superficial judgement. The formulation of MN 70 follows what could be called the path of

<sup>1</sup> MN I.477: *ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokkhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te kāyena phusitvā viharatī, paññāya c’ assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā hontī.*

<sup>2</sup> DN II.71: *yato kho ānanda bhikkhu ime aṭṭha vimokkhe anulomam pi samāpajjati, paṭilomam pi samāpajjati, anuloma-paṭilomam pi samāpajjati, yatthicchakaṃ yadicchakaṃ yāvaticchakaṃ samāpajjati pi vuṭṭhātī pi, āsavānañ ca khayā anāsavaṃ ceto-vimuttiṃ paññā-vimuttiṃ diṭṭhe va dhamme sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharatī, ayaṃ vuccatānanda, bhikkhu ubhato-bhāga-vimutto.*

formless meditation, stated in a number of texts, according to which the *bhikkhu* progresses through the formless states, before finally attaining the state of the 'cessation of perception and sensation', a state in which insight destroys the corruptions. This path is described in MN 25 (the *Nivāpa Sutta*), where the *bhikkhu* attains the formless releases, including cessation, and then achieves the same insight described in MN 70 (MN I.160: *paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*). The notion of being 'released on both sides' in MN 70 is just another way of describing the formless path of MN 25.

The *Mahānidāna Sutta* offers a very different version of the concept. By making the attainment of the formless releases a non-essential meditative skill, it indicates that it is spiritually superfluous; the *bhikkhu* does not cultivate them (*phusitvā viharati*) to attain insight. As such, its version of the concept is in fact a critique of the formless path to liberation. While its own understanding of the path is unclear, the 'release of mind, a release by insight' is a common early Buddhist pericope which combines meditative attainment (*cetovimutti*) and insight (*paññāvimutti*). Some texts place this pericope after the jhānic path or something like it (e.g. MN 38, MN 53, MN 54, MN 108, MN 119), and if so, this section of DN 15 would amount to a jhānic critique of the formless path to insight. But this point is not so obvious, since the *ceto-vimutti paññā-vimutti* pericope has a much wider application than the *jhānas*.

In reading MN 70 and DN 15, it seems as if we are observing, somewhat obliquely, the different sides of an ancient debate. In fact, DN 15 leaves us in no doubt that this is the case. After stating its version of *ubhato-bhāga-vimutti*, it adds a further critical point: 'there is no other release on both sides higher or loftier than this release on both sides'.<sup>3</sup> However its notion of 'released on both sides' is understood – perhaps as a jhānic formulation – the authors of DN 15 were certainly making some sort of calm-insight argument against a different understanding of the path.

From this we conclude not only that there were disagreements about the path among some early Buddhists, but also that some of these disagreements found their way into the canonical texts. It is doubtful that such differences go back to the Buddha himself; the Buddha can hardly have argued that his version of 'released on both sides' is superior to another idea circulating in his community. The difference between DN 15 and MN 70 – an argument not between calm and

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<sup>3</sup> DN II.71: *imāya ca ānanda ubhatobhāgavimuttiyā aññā ubhatobhāgavimutti uttaritarā vā pañītatarā vā natthī ti.*

insight, but between two versions of calm-insight – must instead belong to the period after the Buddha. This is undisputable, and it is not difficult to extend the line of enquiry beyond rival versions of calm-insight, to debates between calm and insight, in texts that are likely to post-date the Buddha.

First, we can consider two Majjhima Suttas with different versions of Sāriputta's liberation. MN 74 has a pure insight version, in which Sāriputta is not alone in a privately cultivated meditative state, but contemplates a teaching of the Buddha, while standing behind him, fanning him. MN 111 has a different version of Sāriputta's liberation, in which he attains liberating insight in the state of cessation.<sup>4</sup> MN 111 thus resembles the view of MN 70 and MN 25, in that the same insight formula is connected with the formless states. Essentially, we have an insight version of Sāriputta's liberation (MN 74), and a calm-insight version of it (MN 111). Another difference between calm and insight might be stated in texts on the Buddha's awakening. In the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta* (SN 56.11), the Buddha gains insight into the Four Noble Truths, but there is also a calm-insight version in the *Tapussa Sutta* (AN 9.41), where the Buddha attains liberating insight after attaining the state of cessation (AN IV.448). Once again, the difference is between formless meditation and its insight pericope, on the one hand, and insight into Buddhist truths on the other. If the attainments of the *jhānas* are to be assumed in SN 56.11, the difference between it and AN 9.41 would resemble the difference between DN 15 and MN 70 (as long as the *ceto-vimutti paññā-vimutti* formula in DN 15 is taken to imply a jhānic path to insight).

## 2. Dating the calm-insight debate

The different formulations of 'released on both sides', as well as different accounts of the liberations of the Buddha and Sāriputta, suggest different versions of calm and insight, and even a debate between the two. This can only have developed in the generations after the Buddha's *parinibbāna*, and was perhaps inevitable; human beings, by their very nature, cannot help disagreeing and arguing with each other, especially over the fundamentally important matter of religion. If we now turn to the three texts most relevant to the calm-insight debate – SN 12.68, SN 12.70, AN 6.46 – we will see that they too must post-date the Buddha, and probably also record early debates.

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<sup>4</sup> On these accounts, see Wynne (2018: 90ff).

Their lateness is obvious in the figure of the venerable Nārada: apart from appearing in a sceptical guise in SN 12.68, he also appears in AN 5.50, a late text set in Pāṭaliputta which concerns the troubles of King Muṇḍa, apparently the great-grandson of Ajātasattu.<sup>5</sup> The Pāli commentaries tell us that Ajātasattu's reign lasted twenty-four years after the Buddha's death; thereafter, the reign of his son Udayabhadra lasted sixteen years, and the combined reign of Anuruddha and Muṇḍa, grandson and great-grandson of Ajātasattu respectively, lasted either eight or eighteen years.<sup>6</sup> According to these estimates, Muṇḍa's reign ended either forty-eight or fifty-eight years after the Buddha's death, and if so Nārada must have flourished in the period c. 20-60 AB. Taking a general estimate, SN 12.68 can thus be dated to around 30-50 AB.

The introduction to SN 12.68 also fails to mention where the Buddha was living, a tacit admission that it takes place after his death. The same is true of AN 6.46: it also fails to mention where the Buddha was living, and so must also be set after his death. A reasonable guess would be to date it in line with Nārada, c.30-50 AB. This leaves SN 12.70, and although it features the Buddha, this attribution can only be considered a *fraud*, just like the various formulations of *ubhato-bhāga-vimutti*. SN 12.70 belongs in the conceptual world of SN 12.68 and AN 6.46, and contains vocabulary that is quite rare and technical (e.g. *dhamma-ṭṭhiti-nāṇam*, *nibbāne nāṇam*).

If SN 12.68, SN 12.70 and AN 6.46 post-date the Buddha by a few generations, and if divergent Buddhist ideas were being voiced in the canonical texts of this period, especially with regard to the relationship between calm and insight, it is highly likely that these texts also record a debate between calm and insight. Let us briefly reconsider once again their contents in the light of Anālayo's response. The certainty that some Pāli discourses and parallel texts were composed after the Buddha's death, and the equal certainty that divergent calm-ideas are stated in late texts, is the context within which the three key texts should be understood.

### 3. SN 12.68

Both Musīla and Nārada claim to know, directly, all the links in the causal sequence of Dependent Origination, and the fact that 'Nirvana is the cessation of becoming'. But they respond differently when asked if they are liberated

<sup>5</sup> DPPN, s.v. Muṇḍa

<sup>6</sup> Sp I.72-73. *parinibbutte ca pana sambuddhe ajātasattu catuvīsativassāni rajjam kāresi, udayabhadro ca soḷasa, anuruddho ca muṇḍo ca aṭṭhārasa (aṭṭha)...*

Arahants: Musīla stays silent, implying that he is, whereas Nārada affirms that he is not, and likens his state to a person who can see water in a well, ‘without touching it with his body’ (*na ca kāyena phusitvā*).

Nārada’s disagreement with Musīla can only be a challenge to his position; the simile of the well thus belongs in a critique of Musīla’s claim to liberation through knowledge. The notion of ‘seeing water, but not ‘touching it with the body’ (*kāyena phusitvā*), is of course a metaphor for knowing something without experiencing it; we can assume that Nārada has a knowledge of Nirvana, but has not experienced it. At the very least, Nārada offers a critique of Musīla’s knowledge-based soteriology – the notion that liberation is attained through insight alone. But Nārada’s metaphor is probably more specific than this. The notion of ‘touching with the body’ is repeatedly connected to the ‘formless releases’ and the ‘cessation of perception and sensation’ (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*) in the canonical discourses. If so, Nārada’s critique refers to Musīla’s failure to realise a particular type of direct religious experience through specific meditative practices. Since the most common meditative referent of ‘touching with the body’ is the formless states, this is the most likely interpretation.

In response to this interpretation, Anālayo cites Swearer’s argument (1972: 369) ‘that the interpretation proposed by de La Vallée Poussin “is severely challenged by an analysis of *viññāṇa* and *paññā*”. But Swearer does not spell out what his critique of La Vallée Poussin actually is. His full statement criticising La Vallée Poussin, not given by Anālayo, is as follows:

Without venturing further into the details of LVP’s argument, the general perspective that the “intellectual” and the “ecstatic” or “rational” and “mystical” are two opposing means to the ultimately real in Pāli Buddhism is severely challenged by an analysis of *viññāṇa* and *paññā*.’ (1972: 369)

Swearer’s study of *viññāṇa* and *paññā* is useful, but since his critique of La Vallée Poussin does not give any ‘details’, it does not seem relevant. The same applies to Anālayo’s citation of Gómez (1999):

Gómez (1999: 703) concludes that, contrary to the assessment by de La Vallée Poussin, “the contrast is not between the intellectual apprehension and the intuitive apprehension, but between all mental apprehensions and an experience in the body or the whole person: in short, a realization.”

While Gómez has many useful things to say, once again his critique of La Vallée Poussin is not based on a text-critical study of the important ideas and words. Gómez does not analyse the different possible senses of *any* ideas or terminology employed in our three texts. It is also unclear what Gómez actually means by mentioning a contrast ‘not between the intellectual apprehension and the intuitive apprehension, but between all mental apprehensions and an experience in the body or the whole person’. With reference to the particular debate at hand, it too can be put aside as a vague assessment of Buddhist soteriology.

Anālayo finally points out a Sutta (SN 48.53) which uses the expression ‘touching with the body’ without reference to the formless spheres, and refers to a paper by Bodhi (2003) to make two objections:

Wynne does not refer to the detailed discussion of this discourse by Bodhi (2003), a study critical of the two paths theory, which marshals relevant evidence from other discourses that Wynne has not taken into account: a reference to *asekhas* as having touched with the body the consummation of the five spiritual faculties [= SN 48.53], and another discourse that defines the consummation of these five spiritual faculties to be the deathless [= SN 48.57]. This in turn leads Bodhi (2003: 63) to the conclusion that “both the *sekha* and the *arahant* ‘see’ *nibbāna* with wisdom, but the *arahant* alone can ‘dwell contacting it with the body’.”

In several places (2018: 4, 12, 13, 16) Anālayo points out that I have not taken Bodhi (2003) into account. This is quite true. While I was aware of this paper, as an itinerant scholar with no institutional affiliation I was unable to procure it. Anālayo’s fixation on this fact would be quite understandable if it meant something essential had been overlooked. But this is not the case. SN 48.53 is a rather isolated text, in fact the only Pali discourse which mentions the ‘stage of a learner’ (*sekha-bhūmi*) and ‘stage of an adept’ (*asekha-bhūmi*).<sup>7</sup> There is no compelling argument that SN 12.68 ought to be interpreted through SN 48.53. And even if it was, it would only imply that Nārada’s point is that having correct knowledge is not the same things as experiencing Nirvana; in other words, Nārada would still be offering a clear critique of Musīla’s claim that knowledge is enough.

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<sup>7</sup> SN V.229-30.



Wynne (2018a: 85) mentions texts of a similar import to SN 48.53, in that they apply *kāyena phusitvā* to other states apart from the formless spheres; ‘touching with the body’ is sometimes mentioned with reference to the *jhānas*, albeit in only a few texts, whereas a few more texts refer to the liberating experience in a similar fashion (‘witnessing with the body’, *kāyena sacchikaroti*; Wynne 2018a: 84). While considering such references, I argued that, on the whole, Nārada’s use of the metaphor of ‘touching with the body’ most probably refers to the formless spheres. And as we have seen here, MN 70 opposes DN 15 in offering a rival ‘formless’ version of the path to liberation; the same is true of MN 111 versus MN 74, and AN 9.41 versus SN 56.11. The phrase *kāyena phusitvā* is also applied to the formless releases in SN 12.70, and is connected with meditators in AN 6.46. The overall context is clear enough, but Anālayo unfortunately pays no attention to it, and hence does not offer a reasonable judgement about the *most likely* reading of SN 12.68.

At the least, SN 12.68 registers a kind of critique against ‘release through insight’. But since Nārada’s critique also implies that direct experience through meditation is required, the only plausible meditative states to which he can refer are the formless spheres.

#### 4. SN 12.70

Susīma encounters Buddhist mendicants in Rājagaha who say they are ‘liberated by insight’ (*paññā-vimuttā kho mayam*). These mendicants claim not to have any of the higher knowledges which come after the four *jhānas*, including the ‘three knowledges’ which finally effect liberation; they also say they have not ‘touched with the body’ the formless states. When Susīma asks the Buddha how this can be, the Buddha guides him through the not-self teaching and Dependent Origination; this teaching elaborates the point that first there is the ‘knowledge of the regularity of dhammas’ (*dhamma-ṭṭhiti-ñāṇam*) and then ‘knowledge of Nirvana’ (*nibbāne ñāṇam*). Since no reference has been made to practising any type of meditation, the Buddha's point seems to be that the liberating knowledge of Nirvana, which makes a person ‘released through insight’, requires doctrinal contemplation but no meditation. The text seems quite clear, and Anālayo’s only response to my reading of it is to note (2018: 13) that

Wynne (2018: 86) has similarly failed to take into account the discussion by Bodhi (2009). This has brought to light that two Chinese parallels to SN 12.70, found in the Saṃyukta-āgama



and the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya, explicitly report Susīma's stream-entry. While acknowledging that the textual evidence on this point is ambiguous, Bodhi (2009: 65) rightly points out that such an attainment would fit the context of SN 12.70.

The Pāli text concludes with Susīma confessing to entering the Sangha under false pretences, and the Buddha giving an unusually harsh response, by comparing Susīma's behaviour to that of a criminal who might be executed by a king. Although the Buddha finally accepts Susīma's apology (SN II.128), the context hardly suggests stream-entry. In any case, whether or not Susīma attained stream-entry is beside the point. The important points are: the claim of some to be 'liberated by insight'; the Buddha's statement that *knowledge* (of the regularity of phenomena) precedes the *liberating knowledge* of Nirvana; and his subsequent explanation of this through the not-self teaching and Dependent Origination, at the same time saying nothing about meditation. Anālayo says nothing about these points.

## 5. AN 6.46

Just like SN 12.68, AN 6.46 records a difference of opinion beyond the Buddha's life. Unlike SN 12.68, which records a frank but mild disagreement between Musīla and Nārada, the disagreement in AN 6.46 is fractious. 'Meditators' are in disagreement with contemplatives 'devoted to the doctrine': whereas the meditators 'touch with the body' (*kāyena phusitvā*) the 'deathless element', the contemplatives 'penetrate the profound words of the doctrine with insight'. A text describing fractious debate is likely to make doctrinal points using specific terminology, rather than engaging in generalities. If so, the meditators' claim about 'touching' the liberated state implies the path of formless meditation, the states with which the notion of 'touching with the body' is almost entirely concerned in the Pāli Suttas. Indeed, a passage in the *Itivuttaka* (It 51) equates the 'deathless element' (*amataṃ dhātum*) with 'cessation' (*nirodha*), the culmination of the 'formless releases'.

As for the contemplatives, it is surely anachronistic to refer to them as 'scholar monks' (Anālayo, 2018: 13): we can hardly imagine that an early group of 'scholar monks' abused a group of liberated meditators. The text reads most naturally as a debate between opposing groups of spiritual *rivals*. Thus the notion of 'seeing' by means of 'penetrating the profound words of the doctrine with insight' (*gambhīraṃ atthapadaṃ paññāya ativijja passanti*), as a rival

claim to the meditators, probably refers to a sort of liberating cognition. In my previous study (2018a: 82-3), I noted that in the Dhammapada (v.100-02), the term *atthapadaṃ* has no liberating connotations. But I also argued that in AN 4.192, AN 1.112, AN 4.186 and AN 9.4, the expression refers to higher levels of insight, and quite probably liberating insight.

It is worth considering AN 9.4 in more detail, since Anālayo's response focuses specifically on this text. In the relevant section of AN 9.4, venerable Nandaka teaches a group of mendicants the following five benefits of listening to the Dhamma and discussing it:

1. The one who illumines the perfect holy life becomes liked by, agreeable to, honoured by and respected by (*piyo... manāpo... garu... bhāvanīyo*) the Buddha (*satthu*).<sup>8</sup>
2. The one who illumines the perfect holy life, 'in relation to the Dhamma, he experiences inspiration in the meaning, and inspiration in the Dhamma.' (Bodhi 2012: 1253)
3. The one who illumines the perfect holy life 'gains vision, having penetrated the profound words of the doctrine with insight' (AN IV.362: *gambhīraṃ atthapadaṃ paññāya ativijha passati*).
4. The one who illumines the perfect holy life is regarded by his audience as being a realised person, or on the way thereto (AN IV.362: *ayam āyasmā patto vā pajjati vā*).
5. Those who are learners in the audience (*ye kho bhikkhū sekhā*) will put what they hear into practice in order to attain liberation, whereas those who are liberated Arahants will abide blissfully in the present.

This teaching thus assigns four benefits to a Dhamma teacher, and one benefit to his audience. The list of the teacher's benefits are seemingly progressive: the Dhamma preacher gains the Buddha's respect, experiences the meaning of

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<sup>8</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi (2012: 1253) follows the Ee reading (*satthā piyo*) rather than Be (*satthu piyo*) and translates 'the Teacher becomes pleasing and agreeable to him, respected and esteemed by him'. This is probably not correct, for the same expression always seems to be qualified by an object in the genitive case: to be 'beloved *to*' or 'respected *by*' someone (in the genitive case)'.

the Dhamma at a deeper level, then gains higher insight into it, before finally becoming renowned as an adept. The fact that the fourth benefit concerns the preacher's renown as liberated or almost liberated suggests that the third benefit is about attaining liberation or coming somewhere close to it. Anālayo's reading of the passage (2018: 15) is simply incorrect:

... the reference to *atthapadam* in AN 9.4 appears in the context of an ascending list of five benefits of listening to the teachings, where it is part of the description of the third benefit. The fifth benefit is that those in training who hear such teachings will be inspired to make an effort to progress to awakening; for *arahants*, hearing such teachings will serve as a pleasant abiding in the here and now. The context does not allow for considering the reference to *atthapadam* in the third benefit as already involving the final goal.

Anālayo has strangely failed to notice the bipartite structure of the list, which means that the third benefit *must* be closely connected with 'the final goal'. There is no other possible reading; the text is quite transparent. Based on this mistake, Anālayo misrepresents my analysis of AN 6.46. He first claims (2018: 15), that I 'set aside' the occurrence of *atthapada* in the Dhammapada 'as if only prose occurrences are relevant to ascertaining the meaning of the compound.'<sup>9</sup> He also claims that I 'left out' AN 9.4 when discussing *atthapadam*, because 'AN 9.4 in this context would have inevitably led to a conclusion that does not accord with the two paths theory.' (2018: 15). Anālayo then makes the following claim:

From the viewpoint of the need to take the sources seriously and at their own word, this procedure is rather disconcerting. Far stronger words could in fact be used here to qualify Wynne's methodology. Anyway, the facts speak for themselves. (2018: 15)

If Anālayo's judgement of AN 9.4 was correct, he might perhaps have a point. But his reading is clearly mistaken –which would not have been the case had he

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<sup>9</sup> What I actually say is this (2018: 84): 'The parallels to the expression *gambhīraṃ atthapadam paññāya ativijjha passati* show that it denotes an advanced level of insight, one which is either liberating or tantamount to it. Only one early text (Dhp VIII) uses the term *atthapada* in a sense which is obviously unrelated to liberating insight.'

consulted Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation and comments on the passage.<sup>10</sup> And so if 'far stronger words' are to be used in our debate about AN 9.4, unfortunately they do not apply to my 'methodology'. As Anālayo states, 'the facts speak for themselves'. We can only conclude that in the majority of textual parallels, 'seeing, having penetrated the profound words of the doctrine' refers to insight which is probably liberating. Thus we have very good reasons to believe that the contemplatives of AN 6.46 claimed to be liberated without practising meditation.

## 6. Concluding remarks

It is quite right for Anālayo to have pointed out that my previous critique failed to mention important publications, both by himself and others. But although Anālayo notes that 'Wynne ... does not even mention Swearer (1972), Gómez (1999), or Bodhi (2003), let alone engage seriously with the points raised by them', this point is rendered redundant by Anālayo's failure to cite any telling critique from them. And although Anālayo has attacked my supposedly 'disconcerting' treatment of AN 9.4, his critique is undermined by his misreading of this text. To adapt a phrase from Richard Gombrich, a mountain has been made out of a non-existent molehill.

To a neophyte, all this might look like a game of smoke and mirrors: I say one thing, Anālayo says another, claim is opposed by counter-claim and on it goes. But a couple of things now seem undeniable, and speak firmly in favour of an early Buddhist debate between calm and insight. First, rival claims about calm and insight made their way into the Buddhist canon; the *Mahā-nidāna Sutta* openly admits this. And second, two of the three key texts (SN 12.68, AN 6.46) admit that they belong to the period after the Buddha's lifetime. To this we can add the certainty that after the Buddha's death, Buddhist thought did not stand still. Buddhists were argumentative, and disagreements would inevitably have arisen.

If some canonical discourses post-date the Buddha; if arguments about calm and insight *are* recorded in them; and if the formless meditations were at the heart of this dispute, how else are SN 12.68, SN 12.70 and AN 6.46 to be seen, if not as relics of a creative and occasionally fractious period?

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<sup>10</sup> Bodhi (2012: 1252-54); Bodhi (1818 n.1840) comments as follows on AN 9.4: 'Strangely, though the theme of this passage is the benefit in listening to and discussing the Dhamma, the second, third and fourth benefits (and perhaps the first as well) accrue to the monk who is *teaching* the Dhamma.' Bhikkhu Bodhi is far too cautious here; the first benefit *obviously* concerns the monk who teaches, although this has been obscured by his incorrect preference for the Ee rather than Be reading..

The context and content of the texts could hardly be clearer: all refer to disagreements, all contain ample evidence for liberation as a kind of doctrinal knowledge, and all assume that the formless spheres comprised a different path to liberation. The early debate between calm and insight should thus be understood as a debate between calm in the sense of the formless path to liberation, and between insight in the sense of contemplating not-self and/or dependent origination.

## Abbreviations

The numbering of individual Pāli Suttas (e.g. AN 8.86) follows the method of Sutta Central (<https://suttacentral.net/>). Citations or indications of the volume and page of individual Pali texts (e.g AN IV.344) refer to the volume and page number of PTS (Ee) editions.

AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
DPPN	<i>Dictionary of Pali Proper Names</i> ; Malalasekera, G. P. 1997: Oxford: Pali Text Society.
It	Itivuttaka
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
SN	Samyutta Nikāya
Sp	Samantapāsādikā (Vinaya-aṭṭhakathā)

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