

SELF-MAKING & NOT-SELF

§1. "This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended'... 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed'" — *SN 56:11*

§2. "And which qualities are to be comprehended through direct knowledge? 'The five clinging-aggregates,' should be the reply. Which five? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate." — *MN 149*

§3. "And what is comprehension? Any ending of passion, ending of aversion, ending of delusion: This is called comprehension." — *SN 22:23*

§4. "And why do you call it 'form' [*rūpa*]? 'It is afflicted [*ruppati*],' thus it is called 'form.' Afflicted with what? With cold & heat & hunger & thirst, with the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles. 'It is afflicted,' thus it is called 'form.'

"And why do you call it 'feeling'? 'It feels,' thus it is called 'feeling.' What does it feel? It feels pleasure, it feels pain, it feels neither-pleasure-nor-pain. 'It feels, it is called 'feeling.'

"And why do you call it 'perception'? 'It perceives,' thus it is called 'perception.' What does it perceive? It perceives blue, it perceives yellow, it perceives red, & it perceives white. 'It perceives,' it is called 'perception.'

"And why do you call them 'fabrications'? 'They fabricate the fabricated,' thus they are called 'fabrications.' And what is the fabricated that they fabricate? For the sake of form-ness, they fabricate fabricated form. For the sake of feeling-ness, they fabricate fabricated feeling. For the sake of perception-hood... For the sake of fabrication-hood... For the sake of consciousness-hood, they fabricate fabricated consciousness. 'They fabricate the fabricated,' thus they are called 'fabrications.'¹

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

§5. "And what is clinging? These four are clings: sensuality-clinging, view-clinging, habit-&-practice-clinging, and doctrine-of-self-clinging. This is called clinging." — *SN 12:2*

§6. "Then, Sāriputta, you should train yourselves: 'There will be no I-making or my-making conceit-obsession with regard to this conscious body. There will be no I-making or my-making conceit-obsession with regard to all external themes. We will enter & remain in the awareness-release & discernment-release where there is no I-making or my-making conceit-obsession for one entering & remaining in it.' That's how you should train yourselves. When there is in a monk no I-making or my-making conceit-obsession with regard to this conscious body, no I-making or my-making conceit-obsession with regard to all external themes, and when he enters & remains in the awareness-release & discernment-release where there is no I-

making or my-making conceit-obsession for one entering & remaining in it, he is called a monk who has cut craving, has ripped off the fetter, and—from rightly breaking through conceit—has put an end to suffering & stress.” — AN 3:33

§7. As he was sitting to one side, Ven. Rādhā said to the Blessed One, “A being,’ lord. ‘A being,’ it’s said. To what extent is one said to be ‘a being?’”

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Rādhā: When one is caught up [*satta*] there, tied up [*visatta*] there, one is said to be ‘a being [*satta*].”

“[Similarly with the other aggregates.]” — SN 23:2

§8. “If one stays obsessed with form, that’s what one is measured [limited] by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified. [Similarly with the other aggregates.]

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with form, monk, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.

“[Similarly with the other aggregates.]” — SN 22:36

§9. “There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person... assumes form to be the self.... Or... he assumes the self as possessing form... form as in the self... self as in form... or feeling to be the self... the self as possessing feeling... feeling as in the self... self as in feeling... or perception to be the self... the self as possessing perception... perception as in the self... self as in perception... or fabrications to be the self... the self as possessing fabrications... fabrications as in the self... self as in fabrications... or consciousness to be the self... the self as possessing consciousness... consciousness as in the self... self as in consciousness.

“Now [in each case] that assumption is a fabrication. What is the cause, what is the origination, what is the birth, what is the coming-into-existence of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by the feeling born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving... That feeling... That contact... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It is by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to effluents.” — SN 22:81

§10. “To what extent, Ānanda, does one delineate when delineating a self? Either delineating a self possessed of form & finite, one delineates that ‘My self is possessed of form & finite.’ Or, delineating a self possessed of form & infinite, one delineates that ‘My self is possessed of form & infinite.’ Or, delineating a self formless & finite, one delineates that ‘My self is formless & finite.’ Or, delineating a self formless & infinite, one delineates that ‘My self is formless & infinite.’

“Now, the one who, when delineating a self, delineates it as possessed of form & finite, either delineates it as possessed of form & finite in the present, or of such a nature that it will (naturally) become possessed of form & finite [in the future/after death/when falling asleep], or the thought occurs to him that ‘Although it is not yet that way, I will convert it into being that way.’ This being the case, it is proper to say

that speculation about a self possessed of form & finite obsesses him. [Similarly with the other delineations.]” — *DN 15*

§11. “Monks, where there is a self, would there be (the thought,) ‘belonging to my self?’”

“Yes, lord.”

“Or, monks, where there is what belongs to self, would there be (the thought,) ‘my self?’”

“Yes, lord.”

“Monks, where a self or what belongs to self are not pinned down as a truth or reality, then the view-position—‘This cosmos is the self. After death this I will be constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change. I will stay just like that for an eternity’—Isn’t it utterly & completely a fool’s teaching?”

“What else could it be, lord? It’s utterly & completely a fool’s teaching.” — *MN 22*

§12. “Mahali, if form were exclusively stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings would not be infatuated with form. But because form is also pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings are infatuated with form. Through infatuation, they are captivated. Through captivation, they are defiled. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. And this is how beings are defiled with cause, with requisite condition. [Similarly with the other aggregates.] ...

“Mahāli, if form were exclusively pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings would not be disenchanted with form. But because form is also stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings are disenchanted with form. Disenchanted, they become dispassionate. Through dispassion, they are purified. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the purification of beings. And this is how beings are purified with cause, with requisite condition. [Similarly with the other aggregates.]” — *SN 22:60*

§13. “If form were self, this form would not lend itself to dis-ease. It would be possible [to say] with regard to form, ‘Let my form be thus. Let my form not be thus.’ But precisely because form is not self, this form lends itself to dis-ease. And it is not possible [to say] with regard to form, ‘Let my form be thus. Let my form not be thus.’ [Similarly with the other aggregates.]” — *SN 22:59*

§14. “Monks, do you see any clinging in the form of a doctrine of self which, when you cling to it, there would not arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair?”

“No, lord.”

“...Neither do I... What do you think, monks: If a person were to gather or burn or do as he likes with the grass, twigs, branches, and leaves here in Jeta’s Grove, would the thought occur to you, ‘It’s *us* that this person is gathering, burning, or doing with as he likes?’”

“No, lord. Why is that? Because those things are not our self and do not pertain to our self.”

“Even so, monks, whatever is not yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term welfare and happiness. And what is not yours? Form is not yours... Feeling is not yours... Perception... Fabrications... Consciousness is not yours. Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term welfare and happiness.” — MN 22

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

§16. “Monks, there is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person... doesn’t discern what ideas are fit for attention, or what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he doesn’t attend to ideas fit for attention, and attends (instead) to ideas unfit for attention... This is how he attends inappropriately: ‘Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?’ Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: ‘Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?’

“As he attends inappropriately in this way, one of six kinds of view arises in him: The view *I have a self* arises in him as true and established,
or the view *I have no self*...

or the view *It is precisely because of self that I perceive self*...

or the view *It is precisely because of self that I perceive not-self*...

or the view *It is precisely because of not-self that I perceive self* arises in him as true and established,

or else he has a view like this: *This very self of mine—the knower which is sensitive here and there to the ripening of good and bad actions—is the self of mine which is constant, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will endure as long as eternity.*

“This is called a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, and death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. He is not freed from stress, I say.

“The well-taught disciple of the noble ones... discerns what ideas are fit for attention, and what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he doesn’t attend to ideas unfit for attention, and attends (instead) to ideas fit for attention... He attends appropriately, *This is stress... This is the origin of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.* As he attends appropriately in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: identity-view, uncertainty, and grasping at habits and practices.” — MN 2

§17. Having taken a seat to one side, Vacchagotta the wanderer said to the Blessed One, “Now then, Master Gotama, is there a self?” When this was said, the Blessed One was silent.

“Then is there no self?” For a second time the Blessed One was silent.

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer got up from his seat and left.

Then, not long after Vacchagotta the wanderer had left, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Why, lord, did the Blessed One not answer when asked a question asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer?”

“Ānanda, if I, being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is a self, were to answer that there is a self, that would be in company with those contemplatives and brahmans who are exponents of eternalism [i.e., the view that there is an eternal soul]. And if I, being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is no self, were to answer that there is no self, that would be in company with those contemplatives and brahmans who are exponents of annihilationism [i.e., that death is annihilation]. If I, being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is a self, were to answer that there is a self, would that be in keeping with the arising of knowledge that all phenomena are not-self?”

“No, lord.”

“And if I, being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is no self, were to answer that there is no self, the bewildered Vacchagotta would become even more bewildered: ‘Does the self that I used to have now not exist?’” — *SN 44:10*

§18. [A certain monk:] “Lord, knowing in what way, seeing in what way, is there—with regard to this body endowed with consciousness, and with regard to all external signs—no longer any I-making, or my-making, or obsession with conceit?”

“Monk, one sees any form whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—every form, as it has come to be with right discernment: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

[Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

“Monk, knowing in this way, seeing in this way is there—with regard to this body endowed with consciousness, and with regard to all external signs—no longer any I-making, or my-making, or obsession with conceit.”

Now at that moment this line of thinking appeared in the awareness of a certain monk: “So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?”

Then the Blessed One, realizing with his awareness the line of thinking in that monk’s awareness, addressed the monks: “It’s possible that a senseless person—immersed in ignorance, overcome with craving—might think that he could outsmart the Teacher’s message in this way: ‘So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?’ Now, monks, haven’t I trained you in counter-questioning with regard to this & that topic here & there? What do you think? Is form constant or inconstant?” —“Inconstant, lord.” —“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” —“Stressful, lord.” —“And is it fitting to

regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?'

"No, lord."

[Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

"Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

[Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

"Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'" — *MN 109*

Strategic Uses of "Self"

§19. Evil is done by oneself.

By oneself is one defiled.

Evil is left undone by oneself.

By oneself is one cleansed.

Purity and impurity are one's own doing.

No one purifies another.

No other purifies one. — *Dhp 165*

§20. Your own self is your own mainstay,

for who else could your mainstay be?

With you yourself well-trained,

you obtain a mainstay hard to obtain. — *Dhp 160*

§21. You yourself should reprove yourself,

should examine yourself.

As a self-guarded monk with guarded self,

mindful you dwell at ease. — *Dhp 379*

§22. "And what is the self as a governing principle? There is the case where a monk, having gone to a wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, reflects on this: 'It's not for the sake of robes that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; it is not for the sake of almsfood, for the sake of lodgings, or for the sake of this or that state of [future] becoming that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness. Simply that I am beset by birth, aging, and death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress, [and I hope,] "Perhaps the end of this entire mass of suffering and stress might be known!" Now, if I were to seek the same sort of sensual pleasures that I abandoned in going forth from home into homelessness—or a worse sort—that

would not be fitting for me.’ So he reflects on this: ‘My persistence will be aroused and not lax; my mindfulness established and not confused; my body calm and not aroused; my mind centered and unified.’ Having made himself his governing principle, he abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is unblameworthy, and looks after himself in a pure way. This is called the self as a governing principle.” — *AN 3:40*

§23. Ven. Ānanda: “‘This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, ‘The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered and remains in the effluent-free awareness-release and discernment-release, having directly known and realized them for himself right in the here-and-now.’ The thought occurs to him, ‘The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered and remains in the effluent-free awareness-release and discernment-release, having directly known and realized them for himself right in the here-and-now. Then why not me?’ Then he eventually abandons conceit, having relied on conceit. ‘This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.’ Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said.” — *AN 4:159*

§24. “And how is a monk one with a sense of himself? There is the case where a monk knows himself: ‘This is how far I have come in conviction, virtue, learning, generosity, discernment, quick-wittedness.’” — *AN 7:64*

Strategic Uses of “All dhammas are not-self”

§25. ‘All dhammas are not-self’ —
When one sees [this] with discernment
and grows disenchanted with stress,
this is the path to purity. — *Dhp 279*

§26. “In seeing six rewards, it’s enough for a monk to establish the perception of not-self with regard to all phenomena without exception. Which six? ‘I won’t be fashioned in connection with any world. My I-making will be stopped. My my-making will be stopped. I’ll be endowed with uncommon knowledge. I’ll become one who rightly sees cause, along with causally-originated phenomena.’” — *AN 6:104*

§27. “There is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: ‘This is peace, this is exquisite—the

pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and from the total ending of the five lower fetters [self-identification views, grasping at habits & practices, uncertainty, sensual passion, and irritation]—he is due to arise spontaneously (in the Pure Abodes), there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world." — *AN 9:36*

§28. "What is All? Simply the eye and forms, ear and sounds, nose and aromas, tongue and flavors, body and tactile sensations, intellect and ideas. This, monks, is termed the All. Anyone who would say, 'Repudiating this All, I will describe another,' if questioned on what exactly might be the grounds for his statement, would be unable to explain, and furthermore, would be put to grief. Why? Because it lies beyond range." — *SN 35:23*

§29. "Monks, that dimension is to be experienced where the eye [vision] ceases and the perception of form fades. That dimension is to be experienced where the ear ceases and the perception of sound fades... where the nose ceases and the perception of aroma fades... where the tongue ceases and the perception of flavor fades... where the body ceases and the perception of tactile sensation fades... where the intellect ceases and the perception of idea/phenomenon fades: That dimension is to be experienced." — *SN 35:116*

§30. "Among whatever phenomena [*dhammas*] there may be, fabricated or unfabricated, dispassion—the subduing of intoxication, the elimination of thirst, the uprooting of attachment, the breaking of the round, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, the realization of unbinding—is considered supreme. Those who have confidence in the phenomenon of dispassion have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result." — *Iti 90*

§31. "All dhammas gain footing in the deathless.
"All dhammas have unbinding as their final end." — *AN 10:58*

§32. "Consciousness without surface,
endless, radiant all around,

has not been experienced through the earthness of earth... the liquidity of liquid... the fieriness of fire... the windiness of wind... the allness of the all." — *MN 49*

§33. "Now, it's possible, Ānanda, that some wanderers of other persuasions might say, 'Gotama the contemplative speaks of the cessation of perception & feeling and yet describes it as pleasure. What is this? How is this?' When they say that, they are to be told, 'It's not the case, friends, that the Blessed One describes only pleasant feeling as included under pleasure. Wherever pleasure is found, in whatever terms, the Blessed One describes it as pleasure.'" — *MN 59*

§34. Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: “With the remainderless fading and cessation of the six spheres of contact, is it the case that there is anything else?”

Ven. Sāriputta: “Do not say that, my friend.”

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: “With the remainderless fading and cessation of the six spheres of contact, is it the case that there is not anything else?”

Ven. Sāriputta: “Do not say that, my friend.”

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: “...is it the case that there both is and is not anything else?”

Ven. Sāriputta: “Do not say that, my friend.”

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: “...is it the case that there neither is nor is not anything else?”

Ven. Sāriputta: “Do not say that, my friend.”

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: “Being asked... if there is anything else, you say, ‘Do not say that, my friend.’ Being asked... if there is not anything else... if there both is and is not anything else... if there neither is nor is not anything else, you say, ‘Do not say that, my friend.’ Now, how is the meaning of this statement to be understood?”

Ven. Sāriputta: “Saying, ‘... is it the case that there is anything else... is it the case that there is not anything else... is it the case that there both is and is not anything else... is it the case that there neither is nor is not anything else?’ one is objectifying the non-objectified. However far the six spheres of contact go, that is how far objectification goes. However far objectification goes, that is how far the six spheres of contact go. With the remainderless fading and cessation of the six spheres of contact, there comes to be the cessation of objectification [*papañca*], the stilling of objectification.” — AN 4:173

§35. *Upasāva*:

One who has reached the end:
Does he not exist,
or is he for eternity free from affliction?
Please, sage, declare this to me
as this dhamma has been known by you.

The Buddha:

One who has reached the end has no criterion
by which anyone would say that —
it does not exist for him.
When all dhammas are done away with,
all means of speaking are done away with as well. — Sn 5:6

§36. Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Khemā the nun and, on arrival, having bowed down to her, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to her, “Now then, lady, does the Tathāgata exist after death?”

“That, great king, has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata exists after death.’”

“Well then, lady, does the Tathāgata not exist after death?”

"Great king, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: 'The Tathāgata does not exist after death.'"

"Then does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?"

"That has not been declared by the Blessed One: 'The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death.'"

"Well then, does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?"

"That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'"

"Now, lady, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, 'That has not been declared by the Blessed One: 'The Tathāgata exists after death.' When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists and does not exist after death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, 'That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.' Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One?"

"Very well, then, great king, I will cross-question you about this very same matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think, great king? Do you have an accountant or calculator or mathematician who can count the grains of sand in the river Ganges as 'so many grains of sand' or 'so many hundreds of grains of sand' or 'so many thousands of grains of sand' or 'so many hundreds of thousands of grains of sand'?"

"No, lady."

"Then do you have an accountant or calculator or mathematician who can count the water in the great ocean as 'so many buckets of water' or 'so many hundreds of buckets of water' or 'so many thousands of buckets of water' or 'so many hundreds of thousands of buckets of water'?"

"No, lady. Why is that? The great ocean is deep, boundless, hard to fathom."

"Even so, great king, any physical form by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of form, great king, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean. 'The Tathāgata exists after death' doesn't apply. 'The Tathāgata doesn't exist after death' doesn't apply. 'The Tathāgata both exists and doesn't exist after death' doesn't apply. 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor doesn't exist after death' doesn't apply. [Similarly with the other aggregates.]" — *SN 44:1*

§37 [The Buddha:] "What do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard form as the Tathāgata?" — "No, lord."

"Do you regard feeling as the Tathāgata?" — "No, lord."

"Do you regard perception as the Tathāgata?" — "No, lord."

"Do you regard fabrications as the Tathāgata?" — "No, lord."

"Do you regard consciousness as the Tathāgata?" — "No, lord."

"What do you think? Do you regard the Tathāgata as being in form? ... Elsewhere than form? ... In feeling? ... Elsewhere than feeling? ... In perception? ... Elsewhere than perception? ... In fabrications? ... Elsewhere than fabrications? ... In consciousness? ... Elsewhere than consciousness?" — "No, lord."

“What do you think? Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?” — “No, lord.”

“Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?” — “No, lord.”

“And so, Anurādha—when you can’t pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, ‘Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death?’”

“No, lord.”

“Very good, Anurādha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress.” — *SN 22:86*

§38. “By & large, Kaccāna, this world is supported by [takes as its object] a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world as it has come to be with right discernment, ‘non-existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it has come to be with right discernment, ‘existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one.

“By & large, Kaccāna, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings [sustenances], & biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on ‘my self.’ He has no uncertainty or doubt that mere stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. It’s to this extent, Kaccāna, that there is right view.

“‘Everything exists’: That is one extreme. ‘Everything doesn’t exist’: That is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.” — *SN 12:15*

§39. “When a disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they have come to be, it is not possible that he would run after the past, thinking, ‘Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past?’ or that he would run after the future, thinking, ‘Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?’ or that he would be inwardly perplexed about the immediate present, thinking, ‘Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?’

“Such a thing is not possible. Why is that? Because the disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they have come to be.” — *SN 12:20*