

The Buddha's Awakening Insights, His Role, and His Smile, Together with a Reassessment of the 'Play of Formulas'

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Introduction

This is the second of three studies dedicated to examining selected aspects of the *Samyutta-nikāya* in critical dialogue with proposals by Eviatar Shulman.¹ Based on exploring the awakening insights attributed to the Buddha in this collection, closer inspection of relevant discourses shows that the indubitable centrality of the Buddha does not function solely to highlight his extraordinary nature or to serve as a form of recollecting him, nor is his smile invested with cosmic significance in early Buddhist thought or even the Pāli commentaries. In an appendix to this article, the critical dialogue with Eviatar Shulman continues in relation to his theory of a 'play of formulas.'

The Buddha's Awakening Insights

In the introduction to his translation of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, Bodhi (2000: 36–38) identifies “template parallelism” as one distinct feature of the collection, taking the following form:

Template parallels are suttas constructed in accordance with the same formal pattern but which differ in the content to which this pattern is applied ... Template parallels cut across the division between *saṃyuttas* and show how the same formula can be used to make identical statements about different categories of phenomena, for example, about the elements, aggregates, and sense bases (*dhātu*, *khandha*, *āyatana*) ... The templates are in turn sometimes subsumed at a higher level by what we might call a paradigm, that is, a particular perspective offering us a panoramic overview of the teaching as a whole ... [A] major paradigm is the triad of gratification, danger, and escape (*assāda*, *ādīnava*, *nissaraṇa*), which generates three templates. At AN I 258–60 we find these templates used to generate three suttas in which the material content is the world as a whole (*loka*). SN, apparently drawing upon certain ways of understanding the concept of the world, contains twelve suttas churned out by these templates—three each in the *saṃyuttas* on the elements and the aggregates (14:31–33; 22:26–28), and six in the *saṃyutta* on the sense bases (35:13–18; six because the internal and external sense bases are treated separately).

Gratification, Danger, and Escape

Shulman (2022) takes up in particular *Samyutta-nikāya* discourses resulting from an application of this pattern that feature insights the Buddha gained with his awakening. These discourses present the Buddha's own insight in relation to the basic paradigm of gratification, danger, and escape (*assāda*, *ādīnava*, *nissaraṇa*), which is applied to the elements, the aggregates, and the sense spheres (*dhātu*, *khandha*, *āyatana*). One execution of this application takes the form of the Buddha reporting his pre-awakening reflection on the gratification, danger, and escape—in relation to the elements, aggregates, and sense spheres—concluding that it was only when he had gained the corresponding insight that he could claim to be fully awakened.² This is followed by another execution, according to which the Buddha reports that he had himself experienced the gratification, the danger, and the escape—in relation to the same elements, aggregates, and sense spheres—again concluding that it was only when he had gained the corresponding insight that he could claim to be fully awakened.³ A third execution of the same basic pattern no longer relates to the Buddha's awakening.

Based on having presented an extract from the treatment given to the senses, Shulman (2022: 21) reasons that, “[i]n the *Samyutta Nikāya* ... discourses are reproduced with small changes not in order to record the Buddha's words, but to investigate the inner potentials of the teachings and to pursue as full a conceptual articulation of them as possible.” Shulman (2022: 22) next proceeds to an extract from the same treatment given to the aggregates and then to the elements, which he introduces with the following question: “How do we know that this is not the Buddha's voice being preserved, and rather a textual model employed by the authors of the discourses for a certain narrative purpose?” The implication appears to be that the application of the same treatment to the sense spheres and then also the aggregates and the elements implies that this must be a textual model employed for narrative purposes. This then leads Shulman (2022: 24) to reason that “we must ask why it is that this specific text is framed as a reflection on the Buddha's path to enlightenment.” The idea appears to be that the application of the same formulaic treatment to different topics—the elements, the aggregates, and the sense spheres—implies that these descriptions do not function as accounts of the single realization the Buddha gained with his awakening.⁴ Therefore, the question needs to be asked what other purpose this type of presentation is instead meant to fulfil.

Now, the belief that any passage in the early discourses offers an accurate preservation of the Buddha's voice is in any case beside the point with textual material that has gone through centuries of oral transmission. Hence, the question would rather be whether the reciters of the *Samyutta-nikāya* would have perceived these descriptions as equally reflecting the single realization the Buddha gained with his awakening or whether they rather used the Buddha's awakening as a frame for communicating some narrative purpose, whatever that may be.

From the viewpoint of the doctrinal content of the above set of discourses on the elements, the aggregates, and the sense spheres, the last of these three takes two separate forms, one of which concerns the senses, and the other their objects. Since the senses relate to their respective objects and the latter cannot be experienced without the former, these two schemes point to the same insight. This already conveys that a difference in presentation does not invariably imply a substantial difference in meaning.

The aggregates in turn can be considered to offer a complementary perspective on subjective experience to that provided by the sense spheres, so that insight into their respective gratification, etc., need not be seen as a substantially different type of insight.⁵ With the elements a somewhat different scheme comes into play, as these only concern the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, representative of the material dimension of experience. This scheme is thus more limited in scope, as its internal dimension would correspond just to the first of the five aggregates and its external dimension to what is experienced through the five physical senses. A better fit could have been achieved by opting for the scheme of six elements, which adds space and consciousness (the latter here standing for the mind as a whole rather than just the fifth aggregate).⁶ Nevertheless, as acknowledged by Shulman (2022: 27n34) in reference to these three topics of the four elements, the five aggregates, and the six sense spheres, “these three spheres of analysis are a specific subset of *interrelated* objects” (emphasis added).

The Comparative Perspective

From a comparative perspective, no parallels are known for the discourses on the elements. Two *Samyukta-āgama* discourses also present insight into the gratification, danger, and escape in relation to the aggregates as a dimension of the Buddha's awakening, combined with his explicit indication that he only claimed to have become awakened once he had gained such insight.⁷ A difference is that the first of the set

of three consecutive Pāli discourses is without a parallel, and the third, which in the Pāli version does not relate to the Buddha's awakening, in the *Samyukta-āgama* instead does have such a relation. Part of the main teaching given in these two discourses has also been preserved in discourse quotations in the *Dharmaskandha* and in the form of Uighur fragments.⁸ In the case of the sense spheres, portions of parallels to the two discourses in which the Buddha reports that he had himself experienced the gratification, the danger, and the escape are extant as quotations in the *Dharmaskandha*.⁹

In sum, the presentation in the *Samyutta-nikāya* discourses of relating the Buddha's awakening to insight into the gratification, danger, and escape in relation to the aggregates and the sense spheres finds support in parallels from different reciter traditions, whereas the same in relation to the elements is without such support.

In general, the absence of a parallel is not in itself decisive.¹⁰ We only have access to one complete set of the four discourse collections, this being the one preserved in Pāli, whereas the *Āgamas* extant in Chinese stem from different reciter traditions. The allocation of discourses to these four collections and their placement within it vary greatly between different lineages of transmission, wherefore absence of a parallel for a Pāli discourse could in principle result from a version of this discourse being allocated to a different collection that has no longer been preserved. This is to some extent already evident with the above examples, where the *Dharmaskandha* shows that a Sarvāstivāda *Āgama* collection had parallels to both the expositions on aggregates and sense spheres, but the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Samyukta-āgama* only has versions of the former.

An additional perspective can be garnered by proceeding briefly beyond the *Samyutta-nikāya* to follow up on the indication offered by Bhikkhu Bodhi in the quote given above, in that a similar presentation also occurs in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. This has the same basic treatment of the gratification, danger, and escape in two modes related to the Buddha's awakening, followed by a third discourse that, similar to the pattern in the *saṃyuttas* on elements, aggregates, and sense spheres, has such an exposition without relating it to the Buddha's awakening.¹¹ In the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, however, the gratification, danger, and escape relate to "the world" (*loka*). The resultant set of discourses occurs among the Threes of the collection, which must be reflecting the exposition of gratification (1), danger (2), and escape (3), as there is no other triad to be found in each of these discourses.

One of several points that emerge from this case is that an exposition of gratification, danger, and escape could in principle be allocated to the Threes of a numerical collection. This provides a perspective on the absence of parallels to the exposition on the elements. Of course, it is quite possible that the discourses on the elements were generated within the *Samyutta-nikāya* based on the precedent provided by the corresponding discourses on the aggregates and sense spheres. They would thus be a form of presentation unique to the Theravāda reciter tradition and for this reason lack any known parallel. But it is equally possible that, if parallels had been in existence in another reciter tradition(s), these are no longer extant because the exposition on gratification, danger, and escape led to their inclusion among the Threes of a numerical collection to which we no longer have access.

In the case of the above *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourses, allocation to the Threes is to some extent a necessity, as the topic of “the world” is not part of the scaffolding of the *Samyutta-nikāya*. For this reason, this discourse could not be allocated to this collection. This is of further significance, as it implies that the pattern of three discourses expounding gratification, danger, and escape in relation to the world could not be the sole result of a process taking place within the *Samyutta-nikāya*. Instead, at least in this case the emergence of one set of these three discourses must have happened independently of collecting discourses according to the *saṃyutta* principle. This in turn makes it less probable that the expositions on the aggregates and sense spheres (which receive support from parallel versions) should be an outcome of the *saṃyutta* principle. Instead, a more probable scenario would be that these discourses were already in existence in some form and then were allocated to the *Samyutta-nikāya*, and the similar set on the world was instead placed into the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, since there was no proper place for it in the *Samyutta-nikāya*.

Another point that emerges from the same set of *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourses is that it further supports the above suggestion that the elements, aggregates, and sense spheres would have been considered complementary. Once the Buddha is shown to have penetrative insight into the gratification, danger, and escape in relation to the whole world, this would imply that he had insight into the gratification, danger, and escape in relation to the elements, the aggregates, and the sense spheres. In a reference to the elements, aggregates, and sense spheres, Shulman (2022: 27) in fact reasons that “these concepts are comprehensive enough to be defined as ‘the world’.” In other words, it seems fair to propose that

insight into these topics could indeed have been perceived from an emic perspective as dimensions of the single realization the Buddha gained with his awakening.

More on the Buddha's Awakening

In addition to the discourses taken up by Shulman (2022), several other discourses in the same *Samyutta-nikāya* also report insights related to the Buddha's awakening.¹² The first case to be taken up not only employs the same formula, indicating that it was only when the Buddha had gained the corresponding insight that he could claim to be fully awakened, it also applies this formula to the five aggregates. Instead of gratification, danger, and escape, however, in this case the relevant insight has four dimensions (*parivaṭṭa*, literally “turnings”),¹³ which are direct knowledge of the nature of each aggregate, of its arising, of its cessation, and of the path leading to its cessation. Not only the aggregates, but also the six senses recur elsewhere as a matter of insight that enabled the Buddha's claim to have reached full awakening. In this other context, they feature under the less common appellation of being six faculties (*indriya*), and the insight here concerns their arising, cessation, gratification, danger, and escape.¹⁴ The more common count of faculties by way of five—comprising confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—also features in yet another description of an insight that formed an indispensable foundation for the Buddha's claim to have reached awakening. In this case, the relevant insight again concerns the respective arising, cessation, gratification, danger, and escape.¹⁵

This is not yet the end of relevant discourses in the *Samyutta-nikāya*. Another such case involves feeling tones (*vedanā*). Here, the Buddha reports his pre-awakening investigation of their nature, their arising, the path leading to their arising, their ceasing, and the path leading to their ceasing, together with their gratification, danger, and escape. For each of these insights, the discourse reports that, in relation to things not heard before, vision arose (literally: an eye), understanding arose, wisdom arose, knowledge arose, and clarity arose (literally: light), thereby employing a formulaic description that in Pāli discourses designates insights either bordering on or corresponding to the actual attainment of the awakening of a Buddha.¹⁶ This discourse does not have the formula found in the other versions surveyed thus far, according to which this particular insight enabled the Buddha to claim that he had realized full awakening. Nevertheless, the explicit reference to his having investigated the matter during the time before he became awakened, combined with

the indication that, in relation to things not heard before, vision, etc., arose, shows that the present case also warrants being recognized as an integral aspect of the Buddha's awakening.

The same holds for his insight into dependent arising, which features in two discourses in the *Samyutta-nikāya* as something he had investigated during the time before his awakening, until finally vision, etc., arose.¹⁷ In view of the comprehensive scope of the doctrine of dependent arising, these two discourses have an effect somewhat similar to the set of three *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourses mentioned above, whose reference to the Buddha's insight into the world makes it reasonable to assume that this comprises his insights into the elements, aggregates, and sense spheres. The same reasoning would be applicable here.

However, in a different publication Shulman (2008: 299) has proposed that “dependent-origination addresses the workings of the mind alone,” wherefore “[v]iewing *pratītya-samutpāda* as a description of the nature of reality in general means investing the words of the earlier teachings with meanings derived from later Buddhist discourse. This results in a misrepresentation of much of what early Buddhism was about.” In a critical reply, I have shown this position to be unconvincing, as already the early discourses apply this teaching to material phenomena, such as, for example, the construction of a house “in dependence” on the required material.¹⁸ In another relevant instance, a vision of “dependent arising” concerns the insight that one does not become a brahmin by birth but by deeds (which are of course not confined to the mind, however much they originate from intention).¹⁹ These examples show that the early Buddhist formulation of this doctrine can indeed be considered to have a comprehensive scope.

The reference to vision, etc., in relation to things not heard before occurs also in what according to tradition was the first sermon given by the Buddha, known in the Pāli tradition as the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*. This discourse also has the formula on the Buddha only being able to claim that he had reached full awakening once he had gained the thematized insight, which here concerns the four noble truths. In this case, the Buddha's claim rests on his insight into the four noble truths in three dimensions (literally “turnings”) and twelve modes.²⁰ The three dimensions or turnings relate to each of the four truths: the first dimension/turning calls for recognition of each truth; the second requires developing understanding (1st truth), eradication (2nd truth), realization (3rd truth), and cultivation (4th truth); and the third involves bringing these

four modalities of development to their successful completion, when the truth of *duḥkha* has been understood, its arising has been eradicated, its cessation has been realized, and the path leading to its cessation has been cultivated. These three (turnings) times four (truths) then make up the twelve modes.

Realization of the four noble truths features as a rather comprehensive type of insight in early Buddhist thought, compared in a discourse found outside of the *Samyutta-nikāya* to the footprint of an elephant that—due to its large size—comprises all the footprints of other animals.²¹ A discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* uses the same simile to describe the comprehensive role of the faculty of wisdom among qualities leading to awakening, and another discourse in the same collection presents insight into the four noble truths as a manifestation of the faculty of wisdom.²² Taken together, these two Pāli discourses confirm the eminent role in matters of wisdom with which the four noble truths must have been invested from the viewpoint of the reciters of the *Samyutta-nikāya* (and other discourse collections). Thus, the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* confirms that, from the perspective of the reciters of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, descriptions of the Buddha's insight into the elements, aggregates, and sense spheres would quite probably have been perceived as complementary rather than as standing in contrast to each other.

Although this is hardly needed, confirmation for this conclusion can be garnered from another discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* that is not related to the Buddha's awakening but to purifying one's vision. According to the relevant narrative, a monastic had approached several other monastics with the same question regarding how one's vision can become well purified.²³ One answer describes insight into the six spheres of contact, but others instead mention insight into the five aggregates, the four elements, etc. The inquirer remains dissatisfied with these diverse answers and approaches the Buddha, who clarifies that these apparently divergent answers were all correct, illustrating the situation with different descriptions that could be given of the same type of tree. This shows that insight into the elements, aggregates, and sense spheres were indeed seen as complementary perspectives.

As explained by de Silva (1987: 49),²⁴ what at first sight may appear to be different and perhaps even conflicting insights the Buddha reportedly gained with his awakening, may instead be understood to point to

an experience like the circular vision, as when one is on top of a mountain where the scenery on the east is different from the

scenery in the west, similarly the scenery in the north is different from that of the south. However different the sceneries may be from the different directions, all the scenes constitute one integrated experience of a person standing on a vantage point [of the mountain's top].

The Role of the Buddha

Another topic to be explored is the assessment by Shulman (2022: 27f) that, as a general pattern, the “early discourses are an attempt to face the Buddha, to meet him and draw on his power and magnificent charisma, to take in his very being.” In doing so, “[t]hey are consistently looking to point out the marvels of the Buddha's being, to bring to life the great metaphysical marvel of his very existence.” That is, “[t]hey are *always* telling his story” (emphasis added).

In other words, according to Shulman (2022: 13) “the literary project of the early Buddhist Discourses can be seen as a grand sacred biography of the Buddha,” and the major goals of this literature are “[t]elling his story, imagining him in compelling, persuasively glorious, and touching ways, bringing out the rare value of his presence.” Related claims based on texts from other Pāli collections (mainly the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*) can be found in his monograph study *Visions of the Buddha*, where Shulman (2021: 84 and 118) argues that “early Buddhist texts can be seen to derive from the contemplative practice of *Buddha-anusmṛti* (Pāli *Buddha-anussati*)—visualizing, commemorating, or being mindful of the Buddha,” in that these “texts are, quite sincerely, visualizations of the Buddha.”

Since both publications present such concerns as a consistent trait of the early discourses, instances that do not fulfill such a function would undermine the proposed assessment. In what follows, I survey relevant instances from the *Samyutta-nikāya*, in keeping with the overall topic of the present article.²⁵

Whole *samyuttas* neither mention the Buddha nor present him as the speaker of their teachings. These already show that the early discourses are not “always telling his story,” and that their concern is not just providing “a grand sacred biography of the Buddha.” One relevant example is the *Vana-samyutta*, which collects encounters between celestials and various named and unnamed monastics. The Buddha takes no active part in any of these encounters and comes up only indirectly. This occurs once in a reference to the “teacher,” mentioned alongside the

Dharma and the Community in the course of a recommendation given by a celestial, and twice celestials refer to monastics as “disciples of Gotama.”²⁶

Other examples would be the *Jambukhādaka-saṃyutta* and the nearly identical *Sāmaṇḍaka-saṃyutta*, which feature exchanges between Sāriputta and someone else that also take place without any active participation of the Buddha. He only features once in a reference to the holy life lived under him and once in a reference to the five aggregates being reckoned to be one’s “identity” by him.²⁷ In the above instances, the concern is not with the Buddha himself but rather with his disciples or his teachings.

Still stronger cases are the *Sāriputta-saṃyutta* and the *Anuruddha-saṃyutta*, which report a series of conversations between others and either Sāriputta in the first collection or else Anuruddha in the second, without any appearance of, contribution by, or reference to the Buddha at all.²⁸ The Pāli discourses in these *saṃyuttas* are clearly not “an attempt to face the Buddha, to meet him and draw on his power and magnificent charisma, to take in his very being,” simply because he has no role to play in them at all.

The Great Metaphysical Marvel of the Buddha’s Very Existence?

In addition to the indications to be gathered from the above-mentioned *saṃyuttas*, several individual discourses in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* present the Buddha as subject to the constraints that come with being a human, and at times they do so in ways that are not necessarily inspiring, rather than showcasing his existence as a great metaphysical marvel.

The introductory narration of a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* reports that the Buddha had been invited to inaugurate a newly built assembly hall of the Sakyans by being the first to make use of it. He comes with a following of monastics and gives a Dharma talk to the assembled Sakyans. When these have left, he tells Mahāmoggallāna to continue giving a Dharma talk to the assembled monastics, as he has back pain and wishes to lie down, which he then does.²⁹ The commentary struggles with this description, presenting the explanation that the Buddha wanted to make use of the assembly hall in all four postures.³⁰ Since he had walked in, stopped a moment to stand, and then sat down, the reference to back pain—which actually should be understood to have been only a minor discomfort—served as an excuse to permit him to adopt the prone

posture as well. This strained explanation shows the degree to which the description given in this discourse conflicts with the image of the Buddha held in later tradition.

The Pāli commentary also has difficulties with another *Samyutta-nikāya* discourse in which Ānanda describes the condition of the Buddha's aging body, whose complexion is no longer bright, whose limbs are flaccid and wrinkled, whose body is stooped, etc. Although the discourse reports that the Buddha himself confirms that his body was showing such clear marks of old age, the commentary struggles to explain these away as just minor and barely visible.³¹ The present instance seems to be in line with the previous one, in that such depictions of the Buddha as having a body that gives rise to back pain or manifests the deterioration that comes with aging were experienced as challenging from the viewpoint of later tradition. These two cases thus alert to the need to distinguish clearly between earlier and later depictions of the Buddha, situated in their respective historical-cultural settings.

The issue of being subject to pain continues with another two discourses in the *Samyutta-nikāya*, which begin by reporting that the Buddha experienced strong pains due to an injury to his foot. In one of these two discourse celestials praise him for enduring the pain without complaint,³² but in the other discourse Māra challenges him for taking a rest, querying why he was just sleeping while in seclusion (and thus not seen by anyone).³³ The same challenge by Māra recurs in another discourse, which reports that the Buddha was asleep at sunrise after having spent much of the night in walking meditation.³⁴ Although the introductory narration in each case explains the situation, the depiction as such is remarkable, given that elsewhere the *Samyutta-nikāya* presents being still asleep at sunrise as characteristic of a spoiled type of future monastics who can easily be overpowered by Māra.³⁵

Other instances of the Buddha being shown to act in ways that are not necessarily inspiring are when he enters a council hall in a way that apparently violated local customs and is reproached for that or else when he keeps returning to the same person to beg for food until the latter rebukes him for making a nuisance of himself.³⁶ In both cases, the Buddha is not short of a reply and in the end is able to clear himself. Nevertheless, the fact stands that he is depicted acting in a way that is certainly not “imagining him in compelling, persuasively glorious, and touching ways, bringing out the rare value of his presence.”

A conflict with the notion of the nature of the Buddha held in later tradition emerges in relation to the report of his initial hesitation to teach at all, which forms the topic of a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya*.³⁷ Due to such hesitation, Brahmā had to intervene and convince the Buddha to reveal the path to awakening to others. This is not easily reconciled with the belief, prominent in all later Buddhist traditions, that he had intentionally prepared himself for becoming a teacher of mankind during a long series of past lives.

According to another discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya*, the Buddha had to tell his monastic disciples that they should not be envious of the honor and the lavish gifts Devadatta received from Prince Ajātasattu, described as involving twice daily personal visits to present large amounts of food offerings.³⁸ This can be related to one of the dilemmas taken up in the *Milindapañha*, which is the question of why the Buddha personally ordained Devadatta, who became a schismatic and eventually ended up in hell.³⁹ The case of Devadatta, whom the present discourse shows receiving high honor and much support, clearly did not sit easily with tradition and his ordination was perceived as standing in conflict with the later conception of the Buddha as an omniscient teacher able to foretell future events. Another problem with the notion of the Buddha's omniscience is the report in a *Samyutta-nikāya* discourse that on one occasion he went begging alms without receiving anything.⁴⁰ A discourse found outside the *Samyutta-nikāya* reckons precisely such going to beg without getting anything among the types of misfortune that reveal that a teacher is not omniscient.⁴¹

Even quite apart from any supposed omniscience, difficulties can manifest just in relation the Buddha's role as a teacher and guide. On one occasion he is on record for being unable to dispel the suspicions a particular monastic harbors toward Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna,⁴² as a result of which this monastic is then reborn in hell. When on another occasion the Buddha declares that a Sakyan lay disciple has passed away as a stream-enterer, other Sakyans receive this declaration with incredulity, to the extent that they ask sarcastically who then will not be a stream-enterer?⁴³

Another and for the present investigation particularly significant event related to the same role of the Buddha is the report that he had recommended cultivating the perception of the body as unattractive (*asubha*), the practice of which resulted in a substantial number of monastics developing such loathing toward their bodies that they

committed suicide.⁴⁴ As pointed out by Richard Gombrich,⁴⁵ “the story reflects amazingly badly on the Buddha: not only does it impugn his omniscience, but something far worse: it shows him guilty of the most shocking misjudgment, failing to foresee the effect of his own preaching.”

This discourse is incompatible with the idea that the early discourses are a form of recollection of the Buddha. According to the standard formula for recollection, the Buddha is the “supreme trainer of persons to be tamed,” *anuttaro purisadammasārathi*, being the “teacher of celestials and humans,” *sattthā devamanussānaṃ*.⁴⁶ These qualities directly conflict with the record of his teaching leading to a mass suicide. The incongruity could have been avoided by just dropping the relatively brief reference to the Buddha giving such a recommendation and instead starting off with monastics who cultivate the perception of the body as unattractive in an excessive way, etc. Such a shortened description would have served what appears to be the main narrative purpose of the discourse just as well. The fact that this reference is still in place definitely implies that recollection of the Buddha was not the central concern operating behind the composition, shaping, and transmission of the discourses in the *Samyutta-nikāya*.

In evaluating the proposal by Eviatar Shulman that the discourses are a form of recollecting the Buddha, it also needs to be kept in mind that the practice of recollection can similarly be cultivated in relation to the Dharma and the Saṅgha, for example. If the discourses were just about recollection of the Buddha, there would hardly be anything left as a basis for recollecting the Dharma. A closely related problem concerns taking refuge, as the same proposal deprives the second of the three objects of refuge of its content, due to being assimilated into the first object, the Buddha. In other words, it is not just the report of the mass suicide of monastics, or the other instances surveyed above, that undermines the proposed role of the discourses in relation to the figure of the Buddha. The very nature of the three jewels as a fundamental point of reference of early Buddhist thought, in their role of serving as the objects of refuge and of recollection, prevents reducing the function of the discourses to recollection of the first jewel only.

A discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* reports the Buddha placing the Dharma above himself. According to the narrative context, the Buddha had been reflecting that it would be preferable for him to dwell with reverence and deference toward someone else. Since he was unable to identify another person superior to him in accomplishment, he decided

instead to direct his reverence and deference toward the Dharma he had realized.⁴⁷ This implicitly places the Dharma in a higher position than the Buddha himself. It follows that reducing the different teachings to a form of recollecting the Buddha means—to borrow the terminology used by Shulman (2008: 299) in relation to the doctrine of dependent arising, quoted above—“investing the words of the earlier teachings with meanings derived from later Buddhist discourse. This results in a misrepresentation of much of what early Buddhism was about.”

The Nature of the Buddha’s Smile

A commentarial narrative related to a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* reports that the Buddha displayed a smile, which leads Shulman (2023b: 8) to assert that “as a literary trope, the Buddha’s smile is a cosmic occurrence that relates to knowledge beyond the present.” This assessment invites an exploration of selected descriptions of the Buddha’s smile in earlier and later texts,⁴⁸ in order to explore if and to what extent these indeed consistently carry a cosmic significance.

The relevant commentarial passage indicates that the Buddha displayed a smile, *sitaṃ pātvākāsi*, and then reports that this motivated Ānanda to inquire about the reason, whereupon the Buddha explained the fruit to be expected from the meritorious deed that had just been performed by Mallikā.⁴⁹ The pattern of the Buddha’s smile leading to an inquiry by Ānanda occurs also in three Pāli discourses found in the *Majjhima-nikāya* and the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, with the difference that, instead of leading to a prediction, it stimulates the disclosure of events from the past.⁵⁰ In all such instances, the Buddha is at a particular location, and nothing special has happened. That is, viewed from the outside there is no apparent reason for him to smile. Ānanda of course knows that something must have provided the reason for this smile; his inquiry then serves as the occasion for revealing that reason.

Although instances conforming to this pattern of the Buddha’s smile leading to some kind of revelation are not found in the *Samyutta-nikāya* itself, a discourse in this collection does report the Buddha displaying a smile. In this case, however, this results in irritating others, since he had smiled silently instead of expressing acceptance of an apology that the others had just offered.⁵¹ This instance is significant because it reports a negative reaction toward the Buddha’s smile, which does not leave any room for interpreting it as something extraordinary. In addition, it also shows the Buddha smiling for some particular reason in the course of a

conversation with others, thereby indicating that reported instances of his smiles are not confined to those specific occasions when, thanks to Ānanda's intervention, he then reveals something unknown to Ānanda.

Several other discourses in the *Samyutta-nikāya* do conform to the pattern of a display of a smile while in a particular location, which then leads to some edifying revelation, but in these cases the one who smiles is rather Mahāmoggallāna. The one who inquires about the reason in these cases is another monastic, so that here the display of such a smile performs its function without any participation by Ānanda. The inquiry by the other monastic eventually leads to Mahāmoggallāna disclosing, in the presence of the Buddha, that by dint of his supernatural abilities he had perceived the apparition of a particular sentient being reborn as a sort of ghost in a condition of suffering in at times bizarre circumstances. The Buddha confirms Mahāmoggallāna's descriptions and discloses the karmic actions that led to this particular rebirth condition.⁵²

In this way, the *Samyutta-nikāya* offers significant perspectives on the topic under investigation. Besides showing that a smile of the Buddha can have quite ordinary repercussions, to the extent of resulting in negative reactions, it also shows that the display of a smile leading to some revelation is not unique to the Buddha. In fact, the overall most frequent instance of this trope in Pāli discourses is clearly the case of Mahāmoggallāna, whose smiles and subsequent revelations make up an entire *samyutta* dedicated to this topic.⁵³

The smile of the Buddha continues to be of considerable interest in later texts.⁵⁴ For example, the Sanskrit version of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* presents a developed version of the basic trope of the Buddha's smile followed by Ānanda's inquiry into the reasons, which here leads on to a prediction of someone's future Buddhahood. According to its report, with the Buddha's smile a golden-colored light emerges that radiates through endless world systems and rises up to the Brahmā realms; on returning, it circumambulates the Buddha three times and then disappears into the top of his head.⁵⁵ An earlier version of this episode, extant in a second-century *Prajñāpāramitā* translation by Lokakṣema, only reports that a golden light emerged when the Buddha smiled, without any reference to world systems, Brahmā realms, or any type of action performed by this light.⁵⁶

A mature conception of the nature and repercussions of a smile by the Buddha can be found in the *Divyāvadāna*.⁵⁷ According to this work, it is a standard pattern that multicolored rays of light emerge from the Buddha's smiling mouth, some of which radiate downward to the various hells and others upward to various heavens. In cold hells these rays become warm and in hot hells cool. The Buddha then also manifests an image of himself that the sentient beings in hell see, as a result of which they gain faith and then proceed to a better rebirth. The rays that instead radiate to the different heavens proclaim teachings on insight.

On returning to the Buddha, the rays enter him in a way that reflects what type of teaching he will now deliver. If he will reveal an event from the past—this being the type of teaching that the early discourses relate to his display of a smile, although without any light effects—they will enter him from behind. If instead he is about to give a prediction regarding the future, they will enter him from the front. Depending on the nature of the prediction to be given, the rays will choose an appropriate part of the body. In the case of predictions regarding rebirth in lower realms, the rays will enter his feet. Such repercussions of bad karma stand in the background of Mahāmoggallāna displaying smiles, although here the Buddha is not on record for smiling himself, let alone displaying rays of light, and his ensuing revelation of the respective karmic deed concerns the past rather than the future. With more favorable predictions in the *Divyāvadāna* scheme, the rays enter higher parts of the Buddha's body. For a prediction of future Buddhahood, they will enter the highest part of his body, the top of his head—as indeed reported in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*.

This type of description seems a long way from a simple reference to the Buddha displaying a smile, *sitaṃ pātvākāsi*. In instances of this type in Pāli discourses, special light effects are not required for prompting an inquiry by Ānanda. In the respective narrative contexts, the circumstance that there is no evident reason for the Buddha to smile makes it natural that his attendant wants to find out what would have motivated it. Even the instance from the Pāli commentary does not fit the *Divyāvadāna* scheme of connecting the places where the light enters the Buddha's body to stories from the distant past or predictions of future births. In the case of Mallikā, the prediction concerns something that was to happen on the same day. This confirms what should anyway be obvious, in that a bare reference to the Buddha displaying a smile is nothing more than a bare reference to the Buddha displaying a smile.

This is not to say that the Buddha's smile was perceived as ordinary by Pāli commentators. These were apparently so intrigued by the nature of the smile of a fully awakened one that in their scheme of different mental states they carved out a specific place for the type of mind that informs such a smile.⁵⁸ This type of mental state is the sole preserve of those who have destroyed the influxes (*āsava*), which in the early discourses functions as a specific qualification of arahants (including the Buddha of course).⁵⁹ The concern here is not so much with any repercussions of the smile on the external level, however, as the key aspect appears to be rather the inner purity of the mind. In fact, even though some Pāli commentaries relate light effects to the Buddha's smile, these do not have any cosmic repercussions.⁶⁰ This type of presentation needs to be differentiated from the *Divyāvadāna*, for example, where light manifestations of cosmic repercussions indeed come to be associated with the Buddha's smile.

The notion of a cosmic significance of actions or qualities of the Buddha being already evident in early Buddhist texts is a central theme of another publication by Shulman (2017) with the title "Buddha as the Pole of Existence, or the Flower of Cosmos." In a critical reply, I pointed out the unconvincing nature of central arguments presented in support of such a cosmic interpretation.⁶¹ This led me to the following conclusion (Anālayo 2021b: 598):

The presentation appears to conflate different historical strata of texts. Although it is indeed the case that there has been a tendency among early generations of scholars of Buddhism to ignore mythic and supernormal aspects of early Buddhism, correcting this lack of balance should not go overboard by projecting later developments onto the early texts.

In reply to the criticism raised in this article, Shulman (2023a: 284 n42) sees this as "again tend[ing] to focus on tangential points of my argument." Yet, conflation of different historical strata is hardly tangential. The case of attributing a cosmic role to the Buddha involves projecting substantially later developments onto early Buddhism, and that despite of what the actual textual evidence conveys. The same holds for the supposed centrality of the Buddha to the extent that the main function of the discourses is reduced to serving as a form of recollection of the Buddha. These instances point to a serious and recurrent problem in the writings of Eviatar Shulman.⁶²

Conclusion

Descriptions of different insights related to the Buddha's awakening in the *Samyutta-nikāya* appear to have been seen from an emic perspective as complementary dimensions of a single realization. The role of the Buddha in the *Samyutta-nikāya* is not to overshadow the Dharma to such an extent that the discourses merely serve as a form of recollecting him. Several *Samyutta-nikāya* discourses portray the Buddha in a less than inspiring way; especially remarkable in this context is the report of his meditation instruction leading to a mass suicide among his monastic disciples. The Buddha presented in early Buddhist texts in general is also not of a cosmic type, and the one instance of his smile reported in the *Samyutta-nikāya* shows this to be, after all, just a smile.

Appendix: A Reassessment of the 'Play of Formulas'

In the present appendix, I continue the critical dialogue with Eviatar Shulman, but now in relation to his theory of a 'play of formulas.' In an article published in the present journal in 2021,⁶³ I defended my work against a series of unjustified criticisms, based on repeatedly misrepresenting my positions, raised by Eviatar Shulman in his monograph (2021) and in several successive articles prior to its publication.⁶⁴ At the same time, I also pointed out that much of the textual evidence adduced to promote his theory fails to provide the needed support, which of course decisively undermines his proposal.

His recent rejoinder (2023a) gives me the impression that my critical reply has led to some reconsiderations. An example is when Shulman (2023a: 262) expresses a positive assessment of the potential of comparative study, in the form of the following acknowledgement: "Comparison can shed light on the differences, helping us to perceive the uniqueness of each tradition and respect its integrity. Comparison can help us explore the possibility of an early 'canon' or set of foundational teachings."⁶⁵ In fact, Shulman (2023a: 259) even reasons that "comparing different versions of the discourses, preserved in different languages and cultural contexts, by different 'schools' and in different periods of time—the dominant approach to the early discourses in contemporary scholarship—while *necessary*, is insufficient" (emphasis added). Comparative study is indeed in itself insufficient, as it only provides the *necessary* foundation for other modes of engagement with the texts.

The above positions seem distinct from the earlier claim to be combating the common philological approach of comparing parallels, articulated by Shulman (2021: 7). The clear recognition that comparative study is indeed a *necessity* is particularly welcome. The perspective that emerges in this way could perhaps benefit from a few minor clarifications or additional observations. One of these concerns the query by Shulman (2023a: 259f): “Would not the Chinese version of the *Dīrgha-Āgama*, for example, used apparently by the Dharmaguptaka school, or the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda one, not have their own emphases within the literature?” Indeed, they have such emphases, and for quite some time these have been identified through comparative study.

Another proposition by Shulman (2023a: 260), which appears to be a restatement of an earlier claim, is that “an exclusive reliance on the comparative method presupposes the existence of a definite, original version of texts that pre-dates the early schisms.” Given the above, correct assessment that “[c]omparison can help us explore the possibility of an early ‘canon’ or set of foundational teachings,” perhaps the issue at stake is the idea of reconstructing historical facts; in fact, Shulman (2023a: 261) next refers to using such a supposedly original version for the purposes of “historical reconstruction.” If I understand him correctly here—in the sense that ‘the original’ is forever out of reach and texts transmitted orally over centuries are not a sufficient basis for reconstructing what actually happened at the time of the Buddha—then we are in agreement in this respect.⁶⁶

Shulman (2023a: 262) also queries: “What then is the comparison between different versions meant to reveal? Should we try to ‘correct’ one author’s vision of the Buddha?” Perhaps this query relates to the assumption by Shulman (2023a: 266) that “[f]rom the perspective of any original version, this takes changes to be mistakes, not adaptations and re-creations.” The position taken in this way seems to involve a misunderstanding. Most findings that emerge in comparative study simply testify to change or variation. A consultation of any of my comparative studies of *Majjhima-nikāya* discourses in Anālayo (2011) will show that for the most part I only report such variations. These are just selected differences; in fact, much more could be identified, which would require translating all relevant versions to start with—an impossibility within the broad scope of research I had adopted. In contrast, the identification of errors is a comparatively rarer occurrence. Nevertheless, at times these appear to have occurred, in line with the correct acknowledgement by Shulman (2023a: 269) that “surely in some cases there were errors.”

In a recent study of early Buddhist orality (Anālayo 2022), I deliberately collected such errors from my various studies to counter a prevalent, paradigmatic assumption that changes must result from some form of intentional intervention. This assumption is understandable in view of the type of textual production with which we as scholars are familiar, but it does not do justice to orality. Obvious errors that could hardly have been done intentionally can help to facilitate a stepping back from this ingrained assumption in order to look at the material from a fresh perspective. This need seems to be relevant to the present case as well, given that in the context of a discussion of his approach to early Buddhist orality Shulman (2023a: 266) affirms the following: “Changes were not lapses of memory, but intentional acts.” Without intending to deny that some changes must indeed have been the outcome of intentional acts, defaulting to the perspective expressed in this statement can easily lead to erroneous assessments, and this affects the theory of a ‘play of formulas’ to the extent to which it adopts the belief that variations must be an expression of intentional creativity.⁶⁷

Shulman (2023b) has articulated his position in respect to intentional creativity in relation to the *Sagātha-vagga*, and I replied in Anālayo (2023: 299–329), pointing out problems with his arguments and adducing textual evidence in support of the impression that the emic expectation was that the texts in this collection were to be memorized in the form in which they had been received. This involves in particular references to memorization found in the texts themselves, and aids for memorization at the end of groupings of texts in the form of summary verses (*uddāna*). Such evidence actually “teaches us what their authors understood themselves to be doing,” to borrow the phrasing from Shulman (2023a: 260), rather than relying for such purposes just on our personal impressions when reading such texts. This much should suffice to address in principle what Eviatar Shulman has identified as a key point calling for attention and which appears to be a central concern in his present rejoinder.⁶⁸

In addition to this basic clarification, it may be opportune to take up briefly the cases of the *Pāṭika-sutta* (DN 24) and the *Udumbarika-sutta* (DN 25), mentioned in Shulman (2023a: 261 and 264). The mode of presentation adopted in these discourses comes without any indication that the main actions and conversations they present should be read as other than reports of actual events, and the respective commentaries quite clearly approach these discourses as records of what was done and said at the time of the Buddha,⁶⁹ rather than as creative retellings by later

'authors.' Such an emic perspective needs to be taken into account when attempting to understand how these texts were composed and transmitted in ancient India, rather than relying solely on how we may perceive these discourses in the 21st century.

As far as the relevant textual sources allow us to judge, early Buddhist oral transmission was indeed informed by an effort to preserve the Buddha's teaching, and to report what from an emic perspective was believed to have actually happened. Of course, this does not turn the contents of such reports into historical facts. It also does not mean that changes did not happen. Quite obviously these happened, and much of my comparative studies are precisely about identifying these. But it does mean that we need to find a way of explaining changes that takes into account the emic perspective rather than just defaulting to intentional creativity. Such defaulting naturally feeds into the assumption about the discourses that there must be "an intense creative vector behind their composition," and that "more commonly it involved creative engagement in different generative modes, so that each tradition, perhaps even each author on each day, cultivated a particular vision of the Buddha or his teaching" (Shulman 2023a: 261). Such ideas fail to take into account not only the attitude held by tradition but also its ancient Indian precedent in Vedic orality.

A related topic is the role of formulas themselves, in relation to which another significant reconsideration emerges from the latest rejoinder by Shulman (2023a: 258). He explains that "the term 'the play of formulas'" designates "a method for explaining the manner of composition of *at least some* of the discourses, in which oral formulas—fixed textual elements—can be *added* to the texts and used to expand and elaborate upon them" (emphasis added). Shulman (2023a: 265) also offers the following clarification: "To be clear, the play of formulas does not speak about composition through formulas as the one and only method of creating a Sutta in the Nikāyas. Normally, almost by rule, there must be new material." On the same page he confirms that "[t]o draw attention to the play of formulas is not to say that authors are only using ready-made materials." In sum, according to Shulman (2023a: 269), "the theory of the play of formulas ... does not deny other interpretations ... Not every utterance in the Nikāyas is a re-use of a formula."

I welcome these statements as a helpful contribution to the overall aim of the rejoinder by Shulman (2023a) to advance and clarify his position. Such statements appear to be indeed an advance, compared to his earlier definition of the play of formulas in Shulman (2021: 227), where he

takes the position that “that the main texts of early Buddhism were the formulaic encapsulations of both narrative and doctrinal materials,” which in turn “allows us to understand how discourses were created from formulas bottom-up.”

Once it is acknowledged that the play of formulas just explains the composition of “at least some” discourses, which are not “only using ready-made materials,” given that a “re-use of a formula” is not applicable to any text, it obviously follows that the supposed primacy of formulas can no longer be upheld, simply because all those other discourses must have been created in a different way, independent of formulas. In fact, once the formulas “can be *added* to the texts and used to expand and elaborate upon them,” they are quite obviously no longer the primary elements in the composition of these texts. They are rather *additions* to them. In other words, if the proposed theory indeed “does not deny other interpretations,” in some way room must be made for the repercussions of these other interpretations. It would follow that a case-by-case examination is needed to determine whether and to what extent formulas played a role in shaping a particular text, rather than assuming such shaping to be the norm.

In this way, Eviatar Shulman’s recent comments open up the possibility of proceeding beyond the idea that formulas must be *the* basic building blocks of discourses and instead conceive of their role in this respect as only one option among others. Such a perspective much better accommodates the rich complexity of orality, instead of trying to force this into the tight mold of a single, indeed monocausal, explanation that insists on the primacy of formulas. The same step would also conveniently dispense with the requirement of some sort of pool of ready-made formulas in existence that can be drawn upon for textual composition.

Shulman (2023a: 270) observes that “[b]oth Mark Allon and Anālayo believe that formulas only make sense in full texts as part of a complete narrative, but I argue that they think so only because they are used to reading full texts.” The reference to being “used to reading full texts” is not clear to me in the case of Mark Allon, as his research often involves manuscript fragments and thus not full texts. At any rate, the textual evidence with which Mark Allon and myself are familiar—which between the two of us is a fairly substantial amount—does not offer any support whatsoever for the assumption that independent formulas were in existence, nor has Eviatar Shulman thus far been able to identify any evidence testifying to such existence.

This already provides an answer to the query by Shulman (2023a: 271): “if the texts are filled with formulas ... why not assume that these are the earliest texts of Buddhism?” Besides, the reasoning as such is not compelling. Even if the streets of Rome are filled with cars, we would still not assume that cars are the earliest parts of Rome. In the same vein, the fact that formulas are now found in the texts carries no implications regarding when they came into being, as they could be just as well contemporary with other textual portions, or even later.⁷⁰

The problem with the proposed idea is not just the need to imagine some repertoire of formulas for which there is simply no evidence. In addition, why would anyone compose just formulas in the first place? I am at a loss to imagine a coherent reason for such a type of composition, and with all the efforts invested in promoting the ‘play of formulas,’ Eviatar Shulman has so far not been able to address this problem, even though it is a key requirement for his theory.⁷¹ Occam’s razor would be a good approach here, I think, in the sense of giving precedence to a more parsimonious and simple explanation that avoids unnecessary complications.

Once it has been clearly recognized that some discourses came into being independently of any pre-existing formula, the emergence of formulas could much more easily and conveniently be attributed to the setting provided by such discourses. This would be in line with the following suggestion by Shulman (2023a: 283n35): “Perhaps, the ‘author’ borrowed the formula from one original text, but this would make other instances all examples of how a formula is imported into a text to tell a story.” Although he then continues by reverting to his earlier idea that formulas exist on their own, taking his own suggestion fully on board would pay off immediately, as it would avoid the problems of having to invent a pre-existing pool of formulas and of having to imagine cogent reasons motivating the composition of just formulas to fill up this pool.

Overall, his latest contribution has left me with the subjective impression that this is perhaps more of an interim report of rethinking in progress, given that promising new perspectives occur side by side with the persistence of earlier and no longer fully compatible positions, and these two dimensions have not yet been brought fully into alignment with each other. Although this is just a subjective impression, it would explain why unavoidable consequences of the reconsiderations already in place have not yet been fully articulated.

At any rate, and just to be clear, my criticism is not meant to imply that texts never resulted from a combination of pre-existing formulas. An example in point would be the second of the two *Jhāna-saṃyuttas*, which is found in the *Mahāvagga* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*.⁷² The second *Jhāna-saṃyutta* combines the formulaic description of the four absorptions with standard repetition series found in the *Mahāvagga*.⁷³ In this case, we can be quite sure that these formulas were already in existence, since the composition of the standard description of the absorptions will more naturally arise in a context where these fulfill some wider purpose, and the repetition series in the present case appears to be simply an inheritance from previous parts of the *Mahāvagga*. Although extant for the most part only in abbreviated form, the present case amounts to altogether fifty-four discourses, each of which provides a more robust case for a bottom-up creation of a discourse from formulas than any of the examples presented by Shulman (2021).⁷⁴

There are several other points in Shulman (2023a), including inaccurate presentations of my positions, that in principle call for a critical reply and correction. However, in his abstract Shulman (2023a: 258) asserts that “Anālayo ... addresses the specific points where I address his own work, without looking at the broader picture.” In the same vein, in his conclusions Shulman (2023a: 276) states that “Anālayo, in his response to my work, did not engage with the main arguments I presented and chose mainly to respond to specific references to his work.” The assessment as such is correct, as the main purpose of my critical reply in Anālayo (2021c)—clearly announced in the title as a critical reply rather than a book review—was indeed to defend my research against unjustified criticism and to point out specific problems with the textual evidence adduced in support of the proposed theory. Of course, once the evidence fails to support the theory, this suffices to undermine it.⁷⁵

In addition, as already mentioned above, I have addressed his proposal regarding a creative vector he sees at work in early Buddhist orality in another, recent publication.⁷⁶ Together with the few observations made above, this much should be enough to do justice to the main topic that according to his present rejoinder requires being covered. In order to acknowledge his call for engaging with his main arguments, it seemed appropriate that I complement my earlier approach by mainly looking at the broader picture in my present reply. Hence, for the time being, I leave aside articulating more detailed replies to individual points not yet covered.

By way of conclusion, I am glad that my criticism has served as an occasion for Eviatar Shulman to reconsider his position and present an attempt to clarify and advance it. Several clarifications have indeed emerged and there is a clear advance in his thinking on the matter. The direction he has taken in this way—and hopefully will follow through to its logical conclusion—brings his position more in line with the general understanding in Buddhist Studies of the significance and function of formulas.

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Aṅguttara-nikāya</i>
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association
D	Derge edition
DĀ	<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i> (T 1)
DN	<i>Dīrgha-nikāya</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125)
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
Mil	<i>Milindapañha</i>
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i>
P	Peking edition
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>
SĀ	<i>Saṃyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
SĀ ²	<i>Saṃyukta-āgama</i> (T 100)
SN	<i>Saṃyutta-nikāya</i>
Sn	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
Spk	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī</i>
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i>
T	Taishō edition (CBETA)
Up	<i>Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

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Notes

- 1 The first of these three is found in Anālayo 2023: 299–329, in reply to Shulman 2023b.
- 2 SN 14.31 at SN II 170,²⁸ (elements), SN 22.26 at SN III 28,²⁶ (aggregates), SN 35.13 at SN IV 7,²⁸ (senses), and SN 35.14 at SN IV 8,²³ (sense objects). The distinction between the latter two cases to some extent gets blurred when Shulman 2022: 20 and note 19 gives the Pāli text for the “outer sense spheres,” *bāhirānaṃ āyatanānaṃ*, the objects, but then translates this as “inner senses.”
- 3 SN 14.32 at SN II 172,⁵ (elements), SN 22.27 at SN III 29,²⁸ (aggregates), SN 35.15 at SN IV 9,²⁹ (senses), and SN 35.16 at SN IV 10,²⁰ (sense objects).
- 4 See also the position taken in general by Shulman 2023a: 259 that “it is not only mistaken to think that texts represent historical events, but also to assume that they were meant to be communications of such moments to begin with ... what might look like history is often storytelling.”
- 5 Gethin 1992: 151 mentions an example that illustrates this complementarity, when “the first truth is occasionally summed up, not in terms of the five aggregates, but in terms of the six sense spheres,” which he notes is the case for SN 56.14 at SN V 426,7.
- 6 The scheme of six elements does feature elsewhere in the collection; see, e.g., SN 18.9 at SN II 248,²³ SN 25.9 at SN III 227,²³, or SN 26.9 at SN III 231,⁵.
- 7 Parallel to SN 22.27: SĀ 14 at T II 2c11; parallel to SN 22.28: SĀ 13 at T II 2b15, but with an explicit relationship to the Buddha’s awakening.
- 8 Partial parallels to SN 22.27: Dietz 1984: 47,²¹ and Shōgaito 1998: 366; partial parallels to SN 22.28: Dietz 1984: 48,¹² and Shōgaito 1998: 366.
- 9 Partial parallel to 35.15: Dietz 1984: 48,²³; partial parallel to SN 35.16: Dietz 1984: 49,¹⁹. In the same context, partial parallels to SN 35.17 and 35.18 can also be found. Although Akanuma 1929/1990: 220 lists SĀ 243 as a parallel to SN 35.15–18, closer inspection shows the discourse to be too different to be reckoned a parallel.
- 10 See Anālayo 2018.
- 11 AN 3.101.1–2 at AN I 258,²³ has the Buddha’s pre-awakening reflection on the gratification, danger, and escape, AN 3.101.3–4 at AN I 259,¹³ has his report that he had himself experienced the gratification, danger, and escape, and AN 3.102 at AN I 260,¹ has the third modality that does not relate to the Buddha’s awakening. The Asian editions present the two parts of AN 3.101 as two distinct discourses. The decision by the PTS editor to present these as a single discourse is not convincing, as the statement by the Buddha on his insight into gratification, danger, and escape being the basis for his claim to have reached full awakening forms a point of closure; it makes little sense to have this once at mid-discourse and then again at its end. The translation by Bodhi 2012: 340 adopts the discourse division found in the Asian editions. Although this is indeed a meaningful step, he has changed the discourse numbering here and on other occasions. This is not entirely unproblematic as the standard way in Buddhist studies circles of referencing discourses follows the PTS numbering. Thus, those who seek for a discourse by its number will be unable to locate it easily in his translation; in fact, due to previous changes AN 3.101 has become AN 3.103 and AN 3.104. An easy solution would have been to distinguish between, for example, AN 3.101A and AN 3.101B to mark two different discourses but at the same time keep to the established numbering. The same problem also holds for his translation of the *Samyutta-nikāya* (Bodhi 2000).
- 12 The survey in what follows is confined to descriptions of insights and does not cover descriptions of meditative cultivation leading to the Buddha’s awakening.
- 13 SN 22.56 at SN III 59,⁸. The parallel SĀ 41 instead presents *five* types of insight, which are the nature of each aggregate, its arising, its gratification, its danger, and its escape; the Buddha makes it clear that he has such insight in five dimensions; T II 9b9: 我於此五受陰, 五種如實知. Although he does not explicitly present this as a necessary condition for his claim to be fully awakened, the same would to some degree be implicit, since his awakening is the source of his insight. On adopting this interpretation, SĀ 41 would achieve the same basic effect of authenticating a particular insight through making it a

- personal discovery of the Buddha, even though it does not adopt the much longer and more explicit form found in SN 22.56.
- 14 SN 48.28 at SN V 206.4.
- 15 SN 48.21 at SN V 204.5. No parallel is known for SN 48.21 or SN 48.28. Both discourses are found in the *Indriya-samyutta*, whose *Samyukta-āgama* counterpart has not been fully preserved, due to an accidental loss of the 25th fascicle of the *Samyukta-āgama* translation. For this reason, the absence of a parallel in these two cases could just be the result of this accidental loss.
- 16 SN 36.24 at SN IV 233,25 (this is the first insight, which is then repeated for the others). In the parallel SĀ 475 the Buddha reports that such a pre-awakening investigation was undertaken by all previous Buddhas, and at T II 121c₁₁ he then explicitly indicates that the same holds for himself. See also Choi 2018 on a quotation from this discourse preserved in Sanskrit fragments of the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*.
- 17 The first of the two is SN 12.10 at SN II 10,2, where I follow Chung 2008: 99 against Akanuma 1929/1990: 191 in considering SĀ 285 to be a parallel only to SN 12.53 and not to SN 12.10, with the result that the latter remains without a known parallel. The second is SN 12.65 at SN II 104,7; the introductory reference to a pre-awakening reflection recurs in the parallels Chung and Fukita 2020: 94, Bongard-Levin, Boucher, Fukita, and Wille 1996: 76, Kudo and Shono 2015: 467 (Or.15009/670r2), SĀ 287 at T II 80b25, EĀ 38.4 at T II 718a14, T 713 at T XVI 826b10, T 714 at T XVI 827c1, and T 715 at T XVI 829a10.
- 18 MN 28 at MN I 190,15 and MĀ 30 at T I 466c29; on this and the next example see in more detail Anālayo 2021a: 1095f and 2024. Moreover, as pointed out by Jones 2022: 138, “Shulman’s argument does not take into account how the *nidānas* also depict the conditionality of experience in terms of objective phenomena such as the body (*rūpa* in *nāma-rūpa*) and its ageing and death (*jarā-maraṇa*),” concluding that “Shulman’s argument ... implicitly shows us that early Buddhist teachings cannot always be so easily squeezed into modern interpretations.”
- 19 Sn 653.
- 20 SN 56.11 at SN V 423,4; similar indications are found in what, in the case of this discourse, is a rather broad range of parallels, for a comparative study of which see Anālayo 2012b and 2013. Just the formula on vision in relation to things not heard before also features in relation to the four noble truths in SN 56.12 at SN V 424,13.
- 21 MN 28 at MN I 184,26 and MĀ 30 at T I 464b20.
- 22 SN 48.54 at SN V 231,2 and SN 48.10 at SN V 199,2.
- 23 SN 35.204 at SN IV 191,28; see also SĀ 1175 at T II 315b10 and Up 6078 at D 4094 *nyu* 41b5 or P 5595 *thu* 80b6.
- 24 In the same vein, Dhammadinnā 2021: 106 reasons that such “passages are not mutually contradictory, nor do these different listings imply the pursuit of each and every possible content of experience,” in that these different insights “are all different angles—rather than specific contents—of subjective experience.”
- 25 For selected instances found in other discourse collections see Anālayo 2021b.
- 26 SN 9.11 at SN I 203,16 refers to “the teacher” as the first of the three jewels, whereas the parallels SĀ 1334 at T II 368b17 and SĀ² 354 at T II 490b1 refer to “the Buddha” alongside the Dharma and the community, 佛, 法, 僧. SN 9.4 at SN I 199,16 and SN 9.13 at SN I 204,7 refer to the disciples of Gotama, as do the parallels to the former, SĀ 1331 at T II 367c12, SĀ² 363 at T II 491c12, and Marciniak 2019: 544,4 (see also Senart 1897: 421,2). The same holds for one of the parallels to the latter, SĀ 1343 at T II 370a16, whereas another parallel to SN 9.13, SĀ² 351 at T II 489b25, instead speaks of the disciples of the [Sakyan] sage, 牟尼諸弟子, where the first two characters presumably serve as an abbreviation of 釋迦牟尼. A difference in principle is that discourses in the *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99) adopt the standardized introduction mentioning the Buddha’s whereabouts, e.g., SĀ 1334 at T II 368b9: 一時, 佛住舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園. This appears to be the result of some standardization in this collection; the relevant discourses in the other *Samyukta-āgama* (T 100) do not mention the Buddha’s whereabouts.

- 27 SN 38.4 at SN IV 253,²⁶⁺²⁸ = SN 39.4 at SN IV 262,¹¹ and SN 38.15 at SN IV 259,³⁰ = SN 39.15 at SN IV 262,¹¹; see also SĀ 490 at T II 126b⁸⁺¹⁰ (corresponding to SN 38.4). Although the counterpart in SĀ 490 to the exposition of identity given in SN 38.15 does not bring in the Buddha, he does feature together with the Dharma and the Community, lacking knowledge of which comes up in the exposition on ignorance; see SĀ 490 at T II 126c6. The *Samyukta-āgama* reciters present this series of exchanges as a single discourse, rather than as a *samyukta*. Nevertheless, the actual presentation clearly intends a series of separate encounters, as after each exchange the two conversation partners get up and leave, 時, 二正士共論議已, 各從座起而去. The next discourse after SĀ 490 is SĀ 491 at T II 128a²⁸, which consists of the indication 如閻浮車所問經, 沙門出家所問亦如是. This thus constitutes a counterpart to the *Sāmaṇḍaka-samyutta*, given similarly in abbreviation in the Pāli version. In keeping with the standardization mentioned in my previous note, SĀ 490 at T II 126a7 refers to the Buddha's whereabouts.
- 28 SN 28.1–10 at SN III 235,⁵ and SN 52.1–24 at SN V 294,². In the case of the former, only SN 28.10 has a parallel in SĀ 500 at T II 131c⁹, which refers to the Buddha in its introductory line on the location of the discourse, 一時, 佛住王舍城迦蘭陀竹園; on SĀ 500 see also Choong 2016. In the case of the latter, the *Aniruddha-samyukta* contains several discourses that have parallels in the corresponding Pāli collection, although in keeping with the standardization mentioned in my two previous notes these discourses mention the Buddha in their introductory line, see, e.g., SĀ 535 at T II 139a¹⁶: 一時, 佛住舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園. 爾時, 尊者阿那律住松林精舍.
- 29 SN 35.202 at SN IV 184,⁸, with a counterpart in SĀ 1176 at T II 316b⁷. Although the relevant Sanskrit fragments have not preserved this episode, the Buddha subsequently getting up, once Mahāmaudgalyāyana had finished his talk, has been preserved, which implies that earlier he had been in the prone posture; see Waldschmidt 1978: 28.
- 30 Spk III 52,¹⁴; see also Anālayo 2011: 35n55.
- 31 SN 48.41 at SN V 217,¹ and Spk III 244,¹³; for a parallel to SN 48.41 extant in Tocharian see fragment 5b6, Sieg and Siegling 1949: 15.
- 32 SN 1.38 at SN I 28,¹; see also SĀ 1289 at T II 355a²⁸ and SĀ² 287 at T II 474a¹.
- 33 SN 4.13 at SN I 110,²⁴; the parallels SĀ 1090 at T II 285c¹⁸ and SĀ² 29 at T II 382b²² report similar challenges, here preceded instead by a narrative comparable to the episode taken up below in my next note, according to which the Buddha had spent the night in walking meditation and then had taken a rest.
- 34 SN 4.7 at SN I 107,¹⁹; see also SĀ 1087 at T II 285a²² and SĀ² 26 at T II 381c²⁵.
- 35 SN 20.8 at SN II 268,¹⁴; see also SĀ 1252 at T II 344b¹³.
- 36 SN 7.22 at SN I 184,¹² and SN 7.12 at SN I 174,¹. With the parallels to SN 7.22, SĀ 1180 at T II 319a²⁶ and SĀ² 94 at T II 407a²⁰, it is no longer clear that the Buddha had violated a custom. Similarly, the parallels to SN 7.12, SĀ 1157 at T II 308a⁸ and SĀ² 80 at T II 401b¹⁶, only report a thought by the donor rather than an open rebuke.
- 37 SN 6.1 at SN I 137,¹; see also Anālayo 2011: 178–182.
- 38 SN 17.36 at SN II 242,³; see also SĀ 1064 at T II 276b²¹, SĀ² 3 at T II 374b²¹, and EĀ 23.7 at T II 614a¹⁹.
- 39 Mil 107,²⁷; this part is not found in the Chinese parallel. For a comparative study see Minh Chau 1964.
- 40 SN 4.18 at SN I 114,⁹; see also SĀ 1095 at T II 288a¹⁶ and EĀ 45.4 at T II 772b².
- 41 MN 76 at MN I 519,¹⁶; see also Anālayo 2011: 415f.
- 42 SN 6.10 at SN I 150,²²; see also SĀ 1278 at T II 351b¹⁹, SĀ² 276 at T II 470a²¹, and EĀ 21.5 at T II 603b¹².
- 43 SN 55.24 at SN V 375,⁸; see also SĀ 936 at T II 239c²³, SĀ² 160 at T II 434b¹⁴, and Up 6046 at D 4094 *nyu* 23b³ or P 5595 *thu* 58b⁷, none of which reports such a sarcastic remark.
- 44 SN 54.9 at SN V 320,¹⁰; see Anālayo 2014b for a comparative study.
- 45 The quote is found in Anālayo 2014b: 44, where it forms part of an addendum to my study.
- 46 See, e.g., SN 12.41 at SN II 69,²², where the formula features as one of the four factors of stream-entry.

- 47 SN 6.2 at SN I 139,25 (= AN 4.21 at AN II 20,28); see also SĀ 1188 at T II 322a1, SĀ² 101 at T II 410a16, and Up 9022 at D 4094 *nyu* 84b4 or P 5595 *thu* 131a3.
- 48 See Fiordalis 2021 for a detailed study of the trope of the Buddha's smile, covering also previous publications, to which the subsequently published Tanabe 2022 could be added.
- 49 Spk I 140,15, in a comment meant to provide some narrative background to a question posed by Pasenadi to Mallikā in SN 3.8 at SN I 75,6.
- 50 MN 81 at MN II 45,3, MN 83 at MN II 74,16, and AN 5.180 at AN III 214,25 (of which no parallel appears to be known); for parallels to this episode in MN 81 and MN 83 see Anālayo 2011: 441 and 468.
- 51 SN 1.35 at SN I 24,18; the parallel SĀ 1277 at T II 351a26 also reports that the Buddha smiled, whereas another parallel, SĀ² 275 at T II 469c25, reports that the Buddha remained silent, without mentioning any smile. The possibility that a smile can have unexpected repercussions comes up also in the context of a listing of ten possible dangers for a monk who visits the king's harem in AN 10.45 at AN V 81,19, the relevant instance taking the form of the king seeing that the queen smiles at the monk or the monk smiles at her and thereupon suspecting that something must be going on between these two. The survey of ten dangers in the parallel EĀ 46.6 at T II 777a16 does not take up this possibility.
- 52 This is a standard pattern throughout the relevant *saṃyutta*, the first case being SN 19.1 at SN II 254,23 (= Vin III 105,1); the first case in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* is SĀ 508 at T II 135a14; see also Choong 2017.
- 53 Fiordalis 2021: 71 does not fully capture this aspect when he reports that “Maudgalyāyana also smiles once in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*.” The same problem recurs in Fiordalis 2021: 74 and 75 in the form of references to “two instances in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* in which the Buddha and Maudgalyāyana smile” (respectively), and to “[t]he episode in which Maudgalyāyana smiles.” The trope of Mahāmoggallāna's smile features altogether twenty-one times in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, in each of the discourses from SN 19.1 to SN 19.21. The circumstance that SN 19.2 to SN 19.21 abbreviate the material shared by all these discourses, including the reference to his smile, may have led to the impression that there is just a single instance of Mahāmoggallāna smiling.
- 54 An example pertaining to this category would be the description of the light effects accompanying Dīpaṃkara's smile in EĀ 43.2 at T II 758b13. This is one of several instances of substantially later material having been incorporated by this collection; see Anālayo 2016a: 51–111, 165–214, 443–471, and Kuan 2019.
- 55 Wogihara 1932/1935: 743,26: *atha khalu bhagavāms tasyāṃ velāyāṃ suvarṇavarṇasmitaṃ prādurakarot. tad anantāpariyantān lokadhātūn ābhaya sphāritvā yāvad brahmalokam abhyudgāmya punar eva pratyudāvṛtya bhagavantaṃ triḥ pradakṣiṅkṛtya bhagavata eva mūrdhni antaradhīyata.*
- 56 Karashima 2011: 340,2 (= T 224 at T VIII 458a13): 佛笑, 口中金色光出。A description of another instance of the Buddha displaying a smile, however, proceeds in a more elaborate manner; see Karashima 2011: 436,9 (= T 224 at T VIII 468b5), with a counterpart in Wogihara 1932/1935: 865,18. Both instances involve predictions, which is also the narrative context in Spk I 140,15 (although in the latter case this is just about mundane success rather than about some spiritual attainment, let alone a prediction of future Buddhahood).
- 57 Cowell and Neil 1886: 67,16.
- 58 See Vism 457,5. Bodhi 1993: 45 explains that “[t]his is a citta peculiar to Arahants, including Buddhas and Paccekabuddhas who are also types of Arahants. Its function is to cause Arahants to smile about sense-sphere phenomena. According to the Abhidhamma, Arahants may smile with one of five cittas—the four beautiful sense-sphere functional cittas ... and the rootless smile-producing consciousness mentioned here.”
- 59 In reply to criticism by me regarding the implication of the destruction of the *āsavas*, Shulman 2023a: 282n28 asserts: “I do not take the destruction of the *āsavas* to necessarily be a one-time, final event, which rather seems like an experience that advanced practitioners return to.” In the early discourses, the destruction of the *āsavas* indeed refers to the one-time, final event of full awakening whereby one becomes an arahant (or a Buddha). Rhys

Davids and Stede 1921/1993: 115 introduce their survey of references to *āsava* in such phrases as *āsavānaṃ khaya* by stating: “[r]eferring specially to the *extinction* (khaya) of the *āsavas* & to Arahantship following as a result.” Nyanatiloka 1952/1988: 27 explains: “*Khīṇāsava*, ‘one whose cankers are destroyed,’ or ‘one who is cankerfree,’ is a name for the Arahāt or Holy One. The state of Arhatship is frequently called *āsavakkhaya*, ‘the destruction of the cankers.’” Collins 1982: 127 notes: “One of the most frequent terms for an enlightened sage like the Buddha is *khīṇāsava*—‘with corruptions destroyed’.” Bhikkhu Bodhi in Nānamoli 1995/2005: 44 explains that “[t]he suttas employ a stock description of the arahant that summarises his accomplishments: he is ‘one with taints destroyed ...’”; there is no end to the scholars that could be quoted on this point. Of course, Eviatar Shulman is free to disagree with the prevailing scholarly consensus on the significance of *āsavakkhaya*, but for that to be taken seriously, let alone for it to serve as a defense in a debate, textual evidence would need to be adduced in support.

- 60 See the Pāli commentaries on MN 81 and AN 5.180, Ps III 279,²³ and Mp III 305,¹⁶.
- 61 The same discussion also covers some related arguments made in Shulman 2019. Although more cautiously worded, Fiordalis 2021: 88 seems to head in a similar direction with the following proposal: “In a ‘Buddhalogical’ context; that is, in the context of specific Buddhist reflection on the nature of a buddha, while earlier iterations of the Buddha’s smile highlight the temporal connection to the buddhas of the past, the miracle of multiplication, that is, the miracle of multiplying the body, adds a spatial dimension to the connection between buddhas. These connected narrative tropes thus work to emphasize the Buddha as a unique kind of being whose supreme sovereignty is unparalleled, except by other buddhas, and may indicate a trajectory in the conception of the Buddha as an underlying metaphysical reality encompassing but ultimately transcending material reality.” It is not entirely clear to me what he intends to convey here. Nevertheless, just for the record, the miracle of multiplying the body features already in the early Buddhist discourses in a standard set of supernormal abilities and is quite clearly not seen as an ability specific to Buddhas; see, e.g., DN 2 at DN I 78,²⁵ DĀ 27 at T I 109b⁸ (to be supplemented from DĀ 20 at T I 86a⁸), T 22 at T I 275b⁷, and Gnoli 1978: 246,¹⁶.
- 62 For another and rather serious instance of the same lack of historical perspective see Anālayo 2023: 319f.
- 63 Although he clearly intends my criticism in Anālayo 2021c, Shulman 2023a: 285 incorrectly gives the publication date as 2022. Another unclarity concerns the following comment by Shulman 2023a: 284n42: “Mahinda Deegalle (2003; 2006) has discussed *bhānakas* as preachers and even poets. Nance (2008), Drewes (2011) and Gummer (2012) also raise valuable considerations regarding the creativity of the *bhānakas*. All these works are not referred to by Anālayo, who accuses me time and again of being out of tune with the literature.” Mahinda Deegalle discusses preaching in Sri Lanka. Nance 2008: 136f offers a summary of scholarship on reciters in early Buddhism and then proceeds to Mahāyāna literature. Similarly, Drewes 2011: 332–335 also provides such a summary as a starting point for then proceeding to the main concern of his study, *dharmabhānakas* in early Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Gummer 2012 in turn studies *dharmabhānakas* in the *Suvarṇa(pra)bhāsottama-sūtra*. It is not clear to me why quoting these scholars should be seen as a must when I discuss early Buddhist orality, which can only be influenced by precedents (such as Vedic orality) but not by later developments. The lack of clarity that emerges in this way seems to be in line with a lack of historical perspective; see also my previous note.
- 64 For an instance in his recent rejoinder conforming to the same tendency see below note 66.
- 65 Following this assessment, Shulman 2023a: 262 continues by expressing reservations, in that comparison “requires us to take the creative nature of the texts into consideration, and to refrain from assuming simplistically that the discourses are primarily an attempt to preserve the Buddha’s words, and that the one dominating textual practice that prevailed in the early tradition was fixed recitation.” In reply to a case study by Shulman 2023b of the *Saḡātha-vagga*, I have shown in Anālayo 2023: 320–329 that the actual textual evidence contradicts his basic premise of intentional creativity, which in turn decisively

undermines his above reservations. Since the case of the *Sagātha-vagga* was chosen by him to articulate his ideas, it seems fair to take this case study as representative and conclude that, if Eviatar Shulman wishes to continue advocating creativity instead of memorization, the arguments I provided in support of the latter would first need to be addressed based on actual textual evidence—rather than just subjective impressions—comparable in type to the evidence adduced by me, namely indications in the texts reflecting emic expectations regarding their own transmission. As far as I can see, such evidence points squarely to memorization rather than creative retelling.

- 66 In Anālayo 2021c: 10–13 I clarified that my approach to comparative study does not involve an attempt to reconstruct what actually happened at the time of the Buddha, quoting in the main text of my article statements expressing my attitude in this respect from Anālayo 2011: xxv and n. 13, 2012a: 425, and 2016b: 13. In reply, Shulman 2023a: 263 argues that “while trying to distance himself from historicism, Anālayo refers almost exclusively to his studies on Vinaya”; in fact, “Anālayo says nothing of the kind regarding the Sūtra literature, where he actually argues that the comparative study of texts offers ‘a window on the early stages of the development of Buddhist thought and doctrine’.” This seems to conflate two different issues. One is the potential of comparative study to improve our understanding of the development of Buddhist thought. The other issue—and it is this topic that my different statements address—is that comparative study cannot lead to a reconstruction of what the protagonists of the discourses actually did or said at the time of the Buddha. Shulman 2023a: 279n16 refers to my statement in Anālayo 2011: xxv. This shows that his allegation that I supposedly said “nothing of the kind regarding the Sūtra literature” is made in full awareness that the first of these three statements occurs in the introduction to my comparative study of the *Majjhima-nikāya* and thus obviously applies to discourse literature. Besides, *Vinaya* and discourse literature interrelate and were transmitted by the same reciters, wherefore what applies to one of these in matters of historical reconstruction applies similarly to the other. This is evident in the other two studies, quoted above, in which I clarified my approach. In my study of the tale of Sudinna as reportedly the occasion for promulgating the first *pārājika*, Anālayo 2012a, I argue that the Theravāda *Vinaya* account appears to have integrated textual material from the *Ratthapāla-sutta* (MN 82). In an oral setting, where texts are not accessible other than in memory or when being recited, this type of transfer would have required *Vinaya* reciter(s) who had also memorized this discourse. The topic of study in Anālayo 2016b is the account of the foundation of the order of nuns, which besides being found in various *Vinayas* is extant in three discourse versions, AN 8.51, MĀ 116, and T 60. Moreover, in the first chapter of that study I take up the *Nandakovāda-sutta* (MN 146) and its parallels. All of this reflects the close interrelationship between discourse and *Vinaya* literature. Given that my statement in Anālayo 2016b: 13 clearly applies also to these discourses, that is, to AN 8.51 as well as MN 146 and their respective discourse parallels, it is more than obvious that it also applies to other discourses. Giving his readers the impression that my clarifications—about only intending to report the perspective of the reciters and not what actually happened at the time of the Buddha—concern only *Vinaya* literature is part of an unfortunate tendency by Eviatar Shulman to misrepresent my positions despite having access to sufficient information to enable a rectification of his assessments.
- 67 Shulman 2023a: 269 argues that “the early Buddhists, like *all human cultures*, were richly creative in the religious sphere, including in relation to their foundational scriptures” (emphasis added). This overlooks the obvious precedent for early Buddhist orality in the Vedic oral tradition, with its emphasis on precise memorization, rather than encouraging creativity.
- 68 See, e.g., Shulman 2023a: 260, 264, and 279n16.
- 69 See Sv III 816–844.
- 70 *Pace* Shulman 2023a: 270: “While such formulas do not exhaust the texts, discourses are filled with them, so that their existence can be taken as primary. This is much like saying that the whole is composed of parts.” Once again, the mere existence of formulas does not imply that these must be earlier or more primary than other textual material. To stay

- with the example already used, cars are integral parts of the whole of our contemporary experience of Rome. Yet, they are not its primary parts. If all cars were to be banned for some reason, we would still consider the city to be Rome.
- 71 Shulman 2023a: 283n35 acknowledges that “[t]he question regarding the initial generation of formulas, and especially narrative ones, is one that the theory of the play of formulas does not yet address.”
- 72 SN 53.1 to SN 53.54 at SN V 307–310.
- 73 To be precise, this holds for SN 53.1 to SN 53.53, which employ formulas found in repetition series starting at SN V 38. SN 53.54 in turn relates the standard formula of the four absorptions to the overcoming of the five higher fetters, using a formula found already at SN V 61. The formulas found earlier in the *Mahāvagga* in the form of the respective repetition series and the reference to the overcoming of the five higher fetters relate to the noble eightfold path and thus occur in a doctrinal context that fits them better than absorption attainment. For this reason, it can reasonably be proposed that the expositions in SN 53.1 to SN 53.54 involve an employment of formulas already in existence, rather than providing themselves the environment for the first arising of these formulas.
- 74 Another relevant example could be the last discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama*, discussed in Anālayo 2014a: 44–47.
- 75 As I noted in Anālayo 2021c: 4: “Eviatar Shulman frequently points to the mere presence of formulas in various discourses as if their existence were in itself proof of his theory. This is not the case. In order to support the proposed theory, the formulas would have to be shown to have functioned as the primary elements out of which the discourse was constructed ‘bottom-up’” (emphasis removed); for an instance reflecting this mode of thinking see the reasoning in Shulman 2023a: 270, quoted above in my note 70. In addition to this clarification, in my critical reply I took up what appeared to be the most significant examples he has provided and showed that these do not conform to the play of formulas. Taken together, this decisively undermines his proposal that the composition of early Buddhist texts operates according to the theory of a play of formulas, in the way formulated in Shulman 2021.
- 76 As already mentioned earlier, this is Anālayo 2023: 299–329.

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