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Act and Result in *Nikāyan* Ethics

Stephen Evans¹

Abstract

Scholars continue to debate the ethical priority of act versus result in Buddhist ethics. The present essay looks at the issue as an approach to exploring the connection between act and karmic yield: Why there should be such a connection at all? The priority question was not asked in the *Nikāyas* (or commentaries) and it seems to have been the same thing to say that an act was good and that it had happy karmic yield, suggesting a kind of identity between the two. Given the necessity and specificity of the connection—the yield *must* accrue and must accrue for *this* person—and the analogical resemblance between act and karmic yield, a causal explanation seems unsatisfactory. Suspending such assumptions, the connection appears simply as an indissoluble unity. It is hypothesized here that the unity is grounded in a primordial cosmic order, which I call the “sacral

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dimension,” conformity to which is by definition right and of necessity beneficial, violation of which is by definition wrong and of necessity harmful. Evidence for belief in such an order is found in the *Nikāyas* and supporting similarities noted in the *Upaniṣads*.

Introduction

About the time that Buddhism was in its formative stages in India, Socrates over in Greece was worrying Euthyphro with the question: Are pious actions loved by the gods because they are holy, or are they holy because loved by the gods? Had he rather lived in India, he might have asked of a Buddhist Euthyphro, whether, on the one hand, certain actions have happy karmic yield because they are good and right, or, on the other, they are good and right because they have happy karmic yield: are the actions or the results morally prior?

Modern-day Buddhist scholars have put forth answers to this question at least since C. A. F. Rhys Davids asserted that “The Buddhist, then, was a Hedonist,” and “his morality . . . utilitarian,” on the strength of the *kamma-vipāka* law that eventually and necessarily pleasure follows right and good actions (xciii). There now seems to be near consensus among scholars that actions are morally right in themselves rather than because of their results. That, however, leaves open the question why there should, in the first place, be an ironclad correlation between certain kinds of action and certain kinds of karmic yield. It is these correlations that interest us here, and I explore the priority issue as a way of throwing light on them. The exploration leads me to argue that the connection between act and karmic yield cannot be understood on the model of cause and effect. I hypothesize instead a kind of unity between act and yield grounded in an assumed primordial order, what

might be called a “sacral dimension,” conformity to which is by definition right and of necessity beneficial to the agent, violation of which is by definition wrong and of necessity harmful.

Modern writers often demythologize the law of karma as expressing likely “ordinary” (e.g., social and psychological) effects of action on the agent. While such demythologization is perfectly valid, even necessary, to constructing modern forms of Buddhism, and while an intuition of such effects may well have provided inspiration for the original mythology, the interest here is in the mythology itself.

My focus is exclusively on the Pāli *Nikāyas*, though I am not aware of any commentarial material that would contradict my hypothesis. In the following, I use “act” and its derivatives for the Pāli *kamma* with the understanding that, in keeping with Buddhist dogmatics, the term embraces intentional mental, verbal, and bodily actions. Although *vipāka* may not always signify specifically karmic yield in the *Nikāyas*, I use the term with that meaning here, in order to avoid awkward constructions such as “karmic yield” or “karmic fruit” and to avoid loading the discussion with the connotations of “result.”² I beg the reader’s indulgence in keeping this restricted use of the term in mind: *vipāka* as the issue of the law of karma, not as ordinary consequences.

The law of karma is often presented in the *Nikāyas* as mediated by *puñña*, a force of goodness generated by *kusala* actions that accumulates in a personal store until expended in pleasant *vipāka*, often in a subsequent lifetime, perhaps by rebirth in a heaven. *Akusala* actions, on the other hand, generate *apuñña*, also known as *pāpa*, which, in turn, accumulate until expended in painful *vipāka* such as rebirth in hell

² *Vipāka* means “fruit” and the image of *kamma* as a seed that later yields fruit is common. We would not say that the fruit is the “result” of the seed—or even the “result” of planting it.

(Evans “Ethical” 522-529).³ Defining *kusala* (as well as its opposite *akusala*) is notoriously difficult, with meanings and connotations ranging through “skillful,” “wholesome,” “healthful,” and “morally right.” Damian Keown suggests “good” as the best approximation covering the range (119); I tend to agree, though Lance Cousins fears that the connotations of “skill” may thus get lost, and suggests that the term may often be understood as “produced by wisdom” (145). I shall retain the Pāli terms in an attempt to avoid projecting presuppositions into the argument. Our interest is in the use of these terms when predicated of actions said to issue in *vipāka*. As we shall see, many such actions would not today be considered of specifically ethical import, so that the *kusala/akusala* distinction belongs to a category that includes but is broader than the modern understanding of ethics (Harvey 48-49).⁴ Properly speaking, as is well known, *kusala* acts are those intentional acts rooted in *alobha*, *adosa*, and *amoha* and *akusala* acts are those rooted in *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*,⁵ but that does not bar us from supposing that the roots so are evaluated because of the ultimate *vipāka*.

We are not interested here in the *content* of Buddhist ethics, that is, in rules of behavior, except as that may help to clarify the nature of the link between act and *vipāka*. Moreover, our focus is specifically on the relation between *kamma* and *vipāka* as distinct from ordinary, that is,

³ *Puñña*, *pāpa*, and *apuñña* are, however, ambiguous terms, and predicated of actions may simply mean “good” or “bad” (Evans “Ethical”).

⁴ *Succarita* and *duccarita*, “good conduct” and “misconduct,” are often used as apparent synonyms of *kusala* and *akusala*, and may possibly correspond more closely to modern ethical valuations. I cannot pursue this possibility here, and treat them as synonyms, although noting their occurrence.

⁵ I understand the “roots,” *mūlas*, as attitudes or orientations. I am uncomfortable with the usual translations of “greed,” “hatred,” and “delusion,” especially for *moha*, which means not so much “false belief,” i.e., “delusion,” as it means dullness, inattention, lack of clarity.

material, psychological, and social, processes. What we would today think of as ordinary effects are explicitly recognized in the *Nikāyas* alongside and distinct from *vipāka*,⁶ and it is evident that the law of karma is thought to be a force in its own right rather than simply a metaphor for ordinary consequences. It is nevertheless relevant that *kusala* actions coincide, for the most part, with social conventions of what actions are good and right and are said also to be psychologically and socially beneficial for the agent in the ordinary sense. Any characterization of the relation between *kamma* and *vipāka* must be consistent with these features, though I cannot treat of them here. Damian Keown has shown that *kusala* attitudes and predispositions, what he calls virtues, are just those that conduce to and participate in *nibbāna*. This must be accounted for as well and I address the issue briefly.

The Relation Between *Kamma* and *Vipāka*

References to the law of karma are ubiquitous in the *Nikāyas* and it seems for the most part to have been taken for granted in the culture of the time in some form.⁷ The second of the three knowledges gained in the process of becoming enlightened, according to the stock description, is of the course of rebirth in dependence upon the conduct of previous lives. With the divine-eye, the meditator sees individuals being reborn in painful circumstances, including hell, due to misconduct, *duccarita*, of body, speech or thought, finding fault with the Aryans, and wrong view,

⁶ E.g., *akusala* behavior leads to neglect and loss, a bad reputation, and lack of confidence, i.e., ordinary results, *as well as* to unfortunate rebirth (D II 86). See also, e.g., M III 163-165.

⁷ But not universally, as evidenced by the fact that disbelief in the law is said in the *Nikāyas* to lead to an unhappy rebirth and that some sects are said to deny the law.

and he sees individuals of good conduct, *sucharita*, being reborn in pleasant circumstances (D I 82). The *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta*, noting that beings inherit their actions, with their actions as womb, with their actions as relatives (*kammadāyādā kammayonī kammabandhū*), gives a detailed list of rebirth destinations as *vipāka* correlated with different kinds of action, or rather habitual behaviors (M III 202-203). Certain behaviors lead either to hell or, if human birth is attained, to a state corresponding to the deeds. Killing animals, if a human birth is attained, yields a short life span; one who harms beings will be beset by illnesses in a new human existence; one who is quick to anger may expect to be born ugly. Resentment of others' success leads to lack of influence, stinginess towards *samaṇabrahāmaṇas* to poverty, haughtiness to low birth. The opposite modes of behavior yield correspondingly fortunate rebirths (M III 203-205).

It is worth emphasizing, first, that the *vipāka* affects specifically the agent who performed the initial action and, second, the analogical correspondence between act and *vipāka*: killing issues in a short lifespan, harming in illness, unpleasant behavior in unpleasant appearance, and so on. It is as though the *vipāka* were a reflection of the act, as in a mirror, or as if the *puñña* or *pāpa*, the form in which actions “await” the agent like “relatives and friends after a long absence” (Dhp 220),⁸ takes on something resembling the material form of the originating act which is later imparted upon the agent. In the common image, used in this sutta, that one “inherits” his actions, the agent takes on the qualities of previous acts as he takes on the qualities of his ancestors. It would seem, then, that present actions not only issue in future pain and pleasure, but also to some extent constitute the agent's own future being.

⁸ Translations from the Pāli are by the author unless otherwise noted.

It is also worth noting that not all the actions here would be considered ethically significant by modern definitions. Being quick to anger is socially unpleasant, but not necessarily ethically wrong—evidently the presence of *dosa* activates the karmic “process,” even in the absence of doing actual harm to others or of breaking any specific precept; similarly, finding fault with the Aryans and wrong view. Throughout the *Nikāyas* many actions that we would consider morally neutral are said to issue in *vipākas*. For example, in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* simply holding certain opinions are said by the Buddha to issue in certain rebirth destinations, the karmic “process” activated, evidently, by *moha* (D I 16).

The *Kukkuravata Sutta* has received attention of late (e.g., Harvey, Adam), in connection with the metaphor of “dark” and “bright” actions and *vipākas*. In the sutta, two ascetics have adopted the ritual practice of imitating an animal, acting and living, one like a dog and the other like a bull (M I 387). The Buddha informs them that these practices, at best, will issue in rebirth as the respective animal—note again the resemblance of the *vipāka* to the action; but if the practice is accompanied by the belief that it will lead to rebirth as a deity, they may find themselves reborn in hell (M I 388-389). The actions here are perhaps unwise, and the false belief foolish, manifesting *moha*, but we would today not think them *ethically* reprehensible.⁹

The Buddha continues with a classification of four kinds of action: dark action with dark *vipāka*; bright action with bright *vipāka*; both with mixed *vipāka*; and neither, conducing to the destruction of action (M I 389). Dark and bright actions are equated to *akusala* and *kusala* actions respectively at D III 82, and again, the Buddha is evidently

⁹ At least as presented. If this is the *Gosava* rite mentioned at *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 8.6.1.23, it would involve “incestuous” sexual intercourse with cows (Tull 30).

referring to patterns of behavior, sustained practices, rather than to single acts of imitating an animal. He exemplifies dark actions here as “harmful”—issuing in rebirth in a harmful world; bright actions as “harmless” giving rise to rebirth in a harmless, pleasant, world; mixed actions to rebirth in a mixed world.¹⁰ The impression here is that what makes actions *kusala* or *akusala* is whether or not they are harmful. Harm and harmlessness are indeed frequent exemplifiers of *kusala* and *akusala* acts, typically, though not here, specifying harm to oneself and/or to others (e.g., MN I 414). Here, we may take it that the harm because of which these ascetics risk rebirth in hell is to themselves rather than to others.¹¹

At this point, it would seem safe to say, making no prejudgments about priority and given the doctrine of *anattā*, that an agent’s actions build up and prefigure to a considerable extent the agent that he or she will become, both in terms of self (e.g., born healthy or sickly) and in terms of situation, “worlds” in which he or she emerges and acts.

Ethical Priority

“Harmful” and “harmless” are, again, quite often predicated of action and of *vipāka*. The law of karma posits an indissoluble unity between act

¹⁰ The final category, “actions neither bright nor dark conducting to the destruction of action,” is beyond the present scope.

¹¹ Given the importance of intention in defining a karmically significant act, it is tempting to say “intentionally harmful,” yet these ascetics surely intend no harm, just as those holding wrong views intend no harm. Nevertheless their respective actions are intentional, and in the Buddha’s view are harmful and of harmful *vipāka*.

and *vipāka*,¹² ensuring that “harmful” acts, even where no actual harm is done, for example in a failed theft, and *akusala* acts in general, whether intrinsically harmful or not, will be followed by analogical harm to the agent, inverted correspondingly for “harmless” acts. The law of karma thus answers to the perhaps universal intuition that, ultimately, good persons prosper and bad persons suffer. One cannot here avoid thinking of Kant’s proof of the existence of God and of C. A. F. Rhys Davids’s suggestion that the ancient Indians simply “could not conceive of any thought, word, or deed as being intrinsically good and yet bad in its results” (xci).¹³ Part of the difficulty in understanding this is the indissoluble link between events separated by lifetimes. Given the absence of a Kantian God to mete out rewards and punishments, or indeed, of an agent identical across lifetimes upon whom to visit retribution, the modern mind, I suspect, intuitively posits a *causal* process running from earlier to later. Assigning specifically causal priority to the earlier event implies a distinction between “causal” and “ethical,” opening up the question of *ethical* priority: might the later event not be ethically prior, thus resembling modern consequentialist theories? Or might the earlier be prior, thus moving Buddhist ethics closer to the deontological fold?

Taking a deontological position, Harvey writes, “Good actions are seen as leading to future happiness as a karmic fruit . . . because they are right; they are not right *because* they happen to lead to happy karmic fruits” (emphasis in original), noting the decisive role of intention (49). He argues that the *Kukkuravata Sutta*, cited above, asserts that, “good actions are those which are *themselves* ‘bright’ as well as ‘being with

¹² With the reservation that later tradition allows that the yield of mild *kusala* or *akusala* acts may “expire” if they haven’t issued in their *vipākas* after several lifetimes. These are technically referred to as *ahosikamma* (Bodhi *Comprehensive* 205).

¹³ To formulate it in this way implicitly assumes the ethical priority of act over *vipāka*.

bright result” (emphasis in original) (17). What that sutta says, however, is simply “there are, Puṇṇa, bright acts, bright *vipāka*,” *atthi, Puṇṇa, kammaṃ sukkaṃ sukkavipākaṃ*, proceeding to say that these are harmless acts and harmless *vipāka*, giving no indication of ethical priority (M I 389-390). Harvey is on firmer ground in noting that intention, not results, determines the ethical value of an act. Keown similarly notes that “the locus of good and evil is to be found in the human psyche—not in the consequences of actions in the world at large,” and that what makes an act virtuous “is the intrinsic (*kusala*) worth of the act itself” (179). But it is still possible to maintain that states of the “human psyche” are evaluated as *kusala* or *akusala* based on the *vipāka* that is associated with them. For example, agreeing that giving to a beggar is *kusala* because motivated by the *kusala* virtue of generosity, it may still be argued that the generosity is evaluated as *kusala* because of the pleasant *vipāka* issuing from the motivation.

Keown has a strong tendency to deny any ethical significance at all to the “results” of actions and may go too far in asserting that *vipākas* “do not act retrospectively to legitimate or condemn the moral quality of the action” (179). Rather, the Buddha invokes *vipākas* not as “contingent” but as necessary (Keown 125), and indeed as criteria for evaluating actions (Adam 69). As Cousins notes, *kusala* in many usages has “much to do with future consequences” (148).

Indeed, there are passages that may be read as implying the priority of *vipāka* over action in ethical valuations. In the *Ambalaṭṭhikārāhulovāda Sutta*, for example, the Buddha advises his son, Rāhula, to consider whether actions are harmful to himself and/or others, defining such as *akusala* actions having painful yield (*udraya* and *vipāka*) and defining the opposites as *kusala* actions having pleasant yield, evidently referring to both ordinary results and karmic yield (MN I 414). Velez de Cea understands this as injecting an element of utilitarianism

into Buddhist ethics (133). However I think a more natural understanding is that the Buddha is simply instructing his son to be mindful and to intelligently intend no harm.

A stronger case for the ethical priority of *vipāka* may be made from the *Kesamutti Sutta* (A I 188, popularly known as the *Kālāma Sutta*). In this discourse, the Kālāmas agree with the Buddha that one overcome by *lobha*, *dosa*, or *moha* takes life, steals, goes after married women, lies, and encourages others to do the same. They agree further that such behavior is long for one's disadvantage and suffering, again evidently referring to both ordinary results and *vipāka*. Only *then* do they assert, upon the Buddha's prodding, that such actions are *akusala*, and the Buddha famously says that when and if they come to know that certain attitudes and actions are *akusala* and to their disadvantage they should avoid them. A parallel argument is made for *alobha*, *adosa*, and *amoha* and accompanying actions leading to benefit and happiness. Again, the Kālāmas only then declare these attitudes and actions *kusala* and the Buddha only then encourages them to abide in them. It is not at all an unnatural reading that the Buddha is saying here that it is *because* of the results, both ordinary and karmic, that the roots and associated actions are *kusala* or *akusala*. This emphasis on *vipāka* in moral evaluation is hardly uncommon in the *Nikāyas*. For example, at A I 57, the Buddha, in answer to Ānanda's question why he teaches the avoidance of misconduct (*duccarita*), says that he teaches this *because (tasmim)* it is to be expected that the agent will come to blame himself, be condemned by the wise, gain a bad reputation, have a confused death, and be reborn in hell.

Still, the preponderance of material locating the *kusala/akusala* valuation with present attitudes, the roots, tilts the argument against giving the priority to *vipāka*. In the last example cited above, the Buddha is giving the reason for a certain teaching rather than explicitly

asserting ethical priority, and in cases like that of the *Kālāma Sutta* we might suppose, as Adam suggests, that *vipākas* function as criteria of evaluation with no implication of priority, rather as a fever is a criterion, not a cause, of illness (69). Fink makes an important distinction between explaining “why an action is right” (691) and explaining “Why be moral?” (692), opening up the possibility that *vipāka* is emphasized as a *motivation* for actions that are believed to be *intrinsically kusala*. Strictly speaking, assuming the disjunction of act and *vipāka*, the statement at M III 66-67 discussed below, that it is impossible that good conduct should issue in painful *vipākas*, implicitly gives priority to action, but we should not assume such logical entailments to be intended, and the sense seems more to be the indissoluble unity of act and *vipāka*. The strongest evidence that certain acts are evaluated as *kusala* independently of *vipāka* is perhaps that the acts of *arahants* are said to be *kusala*, yet to issue in no *vipāka*; that, however, would seem to be a special case.

A Deeper Unity

The ambiguities here may be due to the fact that there was no Socrates in ancient India and the question of priority was neither asked nor answered. What we can be sure of is that the *Nikāyas* posit a correlation, broken only by *arahants*, between certain kinds of action and certain kinds of event associated with the agent in a perhaps distant future. Even if we accept that actions are considered *kusala* or *akusala* in themselves rather than in virtue of those future events, we have no basis for asserting that the later events, *vipāka*, are pleasant or painful *because* of the ethical quality of the act, at least if “because” is read in any *causal* sense. Why there should be such a correlation at all? What sort of “link” or “unity” could account for it? Harvey writes that intention “sets going a chain of causes culminating in a karmic fruit” (17). But what could the

nature of such causes be? What conceivable chain of causes would *necessitate* that stinginess in this life results in poverty or hell in the next and for the very person who performed the initial acts?

I suggest suspending the assumption that *vipāka* refers to results or consequences in a causal sense, letting it appear rather as the “yield” of “processes” that are to us as yet mysterious. That, in turn, would potentially reframe the priority question. Writing of pre-Buddhist, but similar, Vedic assumptions, Jan Gonda notes that ritual acts bring about a “causeless virtue” that achieves, for example, rebirth in heaven, in a “mysterious manner” whose mechanism is unknown (124). In fact, the mechanism is at least partly determinable in that Gonda’s “causeless virtue” has a name: in Sanskrit *sukṛtaṃ* or *puṇyaṃ*, cognate with the Pāli *puñña*, which, in both the Buddhist and Vedic cosmos *awaits* one in a future life (129, 133). Gonda cites *Dhammapada* 120 for the Buddhist parallel, but this awaiting of karmic yield is, as we have seen, a common theme. As noted earlier, the apparent belief in the *Nikāyas* is that *kusala* actions generate a force, *puñña*, that accumulates until expended through future pleasurable experiences and/or fortunate rebirth; *akusala* actions similarly generate a negative force, *apuñña*, or *pāpa*, which accumulates and is expended in painful experiences and/or unfortunate rebirth. These, then, “account” for the correlation, but precisely “where” these forces are accumulated, how they remain associated with the agent, and by what mechanism they are expended, remain mysterious.

When Socrates posed the question of the priority of the “holy” versus “loved by the gods,” he helped Euthyphro to understand the question with an analogy: Is one in a *state* of being led because he is *being led*, or is one *being led* because he is in a *state* of being led? Euthyphro agrees that “being led” is prior to the “state of being led,” though this does not help them to resolve the original dilemma. If Euthyphro had been quicker of wit, he might have retorted—to both dilemmas—that

these are but two ways of saying the same thing. A similar solution may be open to us, the possibility that for the authors of the *Nikāyas*, to say that an act is *akusala* and to say that it yields painful *vipāka* are simply two ways of saying the same thing, and that it is all one whether one says that an action is *kusala* or whether one says that it yields pleasant *vipāka*.¹⁴ Something of the sort is very much suggested, for example, in the *Bhuddhātuka Sutta* where it is said that it is impossible, *aṭṭhānametaṃ anavakāso*, that misconduct (*duccarita*) would have pleasant *vipāka* and impossible that good conduct (*sucarita*) would have painful *vipāka*; the “impossibility” confirms belief in an indissoluble link or unbreakable unity rather than a causal chain (M III 66-67). *Puñña* and *pāpa* might then be conceived as the extension of the act over time through to its terminus in *vipāka*. Yet there must still be something like a “medium” through which the act “extends” across lifetimes,¹⁵ something to make the unity of these disparate events comprehensible.

I propose the hypothesis that the *Nikāyas* assume a deeper unity in which act and *vipāka* participate, a primordial structure of existence, conformity to which is by definition *kusala* and of necessity beneficial for the agent, lack of conformity having the opposite qualities. Harvey suggests something of the sort when he writes that “wrong” actions are “out of tune” with the real nature of things and thus “naturally lead to unpleasant results” (17). He does not, however, pursue the idea. The structure I postulate would be an all-embracing primordial cosmic order, underlying or grounding the ordinary experience of the world, in which

¹⁴ This does not entail that one who suffers necessarily committed a prior *akusala* act, there are other, more ordinary, non-karmic, causes of pleasure and pain recognized in the *Nikāyas*.

¹⁵ It is difficult to avoid such metaphors. “Medium” and “extend,” and earlier, “process” and “yield,” are only metaphors; the point is the incomprehensibility to many of us of the “link” between act and *vipāka*.

the individual person is implicated, of which he is part and parcel, in a way that is perhaps not completely at odds with the vision articulated in the early *Upaniṣads*, though certainly demythologized. In these *Upaniṣads*, correspondences, even identities, are asserted between the human person and cosmic entities: for example, the eye is the sun and sight itself is a primal deity identified with the sun (CU 1.3.11). At the deepest level, the essence of the human person, the “soul” we might say for convenience, is identified with the essence or soul of the cosmos. The correspondences simply proliferate, and one who “knows” them gains power (e.g., BU 3.9; CU 1.2-1.7). I have argued elsewhere that to “know” in these contexts means to comport oneself in a way appropriate to the correspondences and that what I called “transformative knowledge” connotes a mode of comportment towards the known as much as, or more than, the possession of true propositions (Evans “Epistemological” 131-133).¹⁶ Now, although the Buddha rejected the reality of these “souls,” both human and cosmic, and likely the specific correspondences as well, he in no way rejected the principle of deep interconnectedness between individual and cosmos, nor that liberating power was rooted in “knowledge of the way things really are,” that is, in modes of comportment toward/with world and cosmos. The law of karma, on my hypothesis, then expresses the manifestation of conformity or lack of conformity to that cosmic order.

¹⁶ Very briefly: Certain kinds of knowledge are said in the *Upaniṣads* to constitute the objective power of ensuring prosperity (BU 1.3.7; 10), immortality (BU 2.4; 28-30) and transformation (who “knows” becomes the Whole (BU 1.4.10; 15)). In the *Nikāyas*, wrong view is said to issue in *vipāka*, hence to be a kind of action, and certain kinds of knowledge are said not only to be personally transformative, but also to have the objective effect of breaking the bonds of *saṃsāra* and the otherwise unbreakable act-*vipāka* link. Knowledge, then, would seem to be a kind of action or at least incipient action like the roots, that is attitudes or orientations, or even ways of turning towards the world, what I call “modes of comportment.”

At first this may seem not so different from a modern scientific-technological point of view: we are creatures of natural biological, chemical, ultimately physical, processes; knowledge of natural processes confers power, allowing us to harness them to our desires, for example, to build flying machines. Violating those processes, for example, trying to fly without a flying machine, brings ruin. One difference between this modern view and the *Nikāyan* view is that the vision of the *Nikāyas* has a predominately *moral*, that is, *personal*, dimension that we might well call animist. What is at issue is not simply manipulation of processes, such as a computer may be programmed to carry out, but personal ways of being in the world including attitudes, orientations, and intentional actions. Stealing may lead to arrest, social censure, loss of friends, and so on. Or it may not. But the painful *vipāka* is inevitable—not because stealing violates social values or some rational imperative, not even *per se* because it harms living beings, but rather because it “violates” the primordial cosmic order, and what looks to us like a result is rather an integral feature of the structure of such a violation within that order. Incidentally, this suggests that what was “harmful” about the ascetics imitating animals mentioned earlier, is that in violating their proper roles, they somehow harmed the cosmic order. With this approach, we may begin to conceive *kamma*, *puñña/pāpa*, and *vipāka* as different aspects of the same thing, united in a deeper, “vertical” dimension which I shall call “the sacral.”

Any defense of this hypothesis must at the very least present, first, evidence of belief in such an order in the *Nikāyas* and second, evidence that the fate of individuals was thought to be bound up with that order. Although there are no explicit and unambiguous references to that effect, the authors of the *Nikāyas* did frequently articulate features of such an order. Major aspects of the career of a Buddha, for example, are said to be *dhammatā*, often translated as “general rule.” “Cosmic law,” one of several PED interpretations, would not be out of

place. In the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, the Buddha says that it is *dhammatā* that a *bodhisatta* entering his final lifetime descends from Tusita heaven, that *devas* attend his conception, that the mother has no sexual desire while carrying him, that she gives birth standing up and an inconceivable bright light appears, and that she will die seven days after the birth and be reborn in Tusita heaven (D II 13-15). The same sutta implies that the major events in the careers of all Buddhas follow an invariant pattern. It is striking that the Buddha of this sutta asserts that the Buddhas of the past, spanning multiple cycles of cosmic collapse and reemergence, were either *Khattiyas* or Brahmins and born into clans (*gottas*) that were known in the Buddha's own time. In other words, the very social structure, including the four great classes and major clans, was thought to be part of an invariant, recurring, feature of the cosmic order. Even towns, cities, and place names were said to recur, as it were, eternally. That the social structure was thought to be a cosmic invariant is confirmed in the many accounts of past life memories in which the adept is said to remember his name, class, and clan across multiple cosmic cycles (e.g., D I 81). To take just one other indication of belief in a primordial cosmic order, the *Bhuddhātuka Sutta* has it that a monk who is wise through investigation comprehends, among other things, "It is impossible, it cannot come to pass [*aṭṭhānametaṃ anavakāso*] that in one world-system [*lokadhātu*] two perfected ones who are Fully Self-Awakened Ones should arise simultaneously" (tr. Horner), or that a woman should be a Buddha or a major deity (M III 65-66). The cosmology of a fixed hierarchy of heavens, earth, and hells traversed through multiple lifetimes, and the cosmogony, whereby this same hierarchy collapses and reemerges in never-ending cycles, is well known and we need not belabor it here. Clearly, then, the *Nikāyas* assume an invariant cosmic order that includes human dimensions.

The *Bhuddhātuka Sutta* includes other "impossibilities" relevant to our concern. It is said to be impossible that one endowed with right

view, a *diṭṭhisampanno*, would commit a number of acts, ranging from approaching any *saṅkhāra* as permanent to murdering a parent, drawing the blood of a *tathāgata*, or causing a schism in the *saṅgha* (M III 64). It is difficult to understand why right view would make certain acts impossible. But if knowledge, right view, in such contexts connotes a mode of comportment, then it becomes natural to understand *diṭṭhisampanno* here as one so aligned with the cosmic order—in attitudes and orientations—that such actions, as violations of that order, are not simply inconceivable by the agent, but structurally impossible for these modes of comportment.

We noted above from the same sutta the impossibility that misconduct would have pleasant *vipāka* and that good conduct would have painful *vipāka* (66-67). The inclusion of these in a list of cosmic impossibilities suggests that the human agent is profoundly implicated in the cosmic order—that human actions are modes of participation in that order such that pleasant *vipākas* are somehow unified with *kusala* acts. The analogical resemblance, again, suggests that, far from the terminus of a causal chain, *vipāka* is something like a reflection of the act, or that the *puñña* or *pāpa* “awaiting” the agent has taken on something like the imprint of the act, imparting it finally upon the agent. The cosmic order provides a “place” for that imprint, a “medium” for the persistence of *puñña* or *pāpa* over lifetimes.

I would go further and suggest that the primordial cosmic order was seen not as the stage upon which we live and act and carry out our projects, nor as the worlds *within* which we move and have our being; rather our lives, acts, and projects *constitute* the stage, our actions *evoke* those worlds—and indeed ultimately the cosmic order itself (even as the worlds evoke and constitute *me*); the worlds are then, to some extent, an extension of myself, and undermining them, that is, with *akusala* actions, undermines myself; stealing is already my own diminishment which

“awaits” me in the form of poverty or time in hell. Conversely, building up worlds builds up myself so that in achieving *jhāna*, for example, I enter into a constitutive relation with the respective *brahmaloka*, at once entering and sustaining it, so that at death being reborn there is but the manifestation of an established reality (cf. Masefield 79).

This sense of the cosmos is clearly evident in the Vedic worldview, with action as the performance of sacrificial rites, *karman* in Sanskrit, playing the role of *kamma*. Those rites, and we note the centrality of the sacrificial fires, were believed to recapitulate the primordial sacrifice of the primal deity which constituted—or rather *constitutes*—the cosmos and which the cosmos *is* (Tull 30). But those rites also *participated* in the primordial sacrifice, thereby actively sustaining the cosmos (Gonda 50-51). Thus, sacrificing was seen as a duty and the sacrificer took part in the very event that created and creates both him and his world, and that *is* him and his world (Gonda 72). In a word, he participated in the sacral dimension. In doing so, he was believed to create/sustain the worlds, *lokas*, in which he lived in this life and to which he would ascend after death. Gonda writes that for Vedic humanity “The proper performance of rite was also of cosmic consequence . . . a change in position, or transformation of a sacrificer [which also] affects in some way or other the whole of which he comes to form an integral part” (113). The sense that present actions somehow constitute one’s future being, evident in the *Nikāyas*, is also evidenced in a strikingly Buddhist-like section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*:

What a man turns out to be depends on how he acts. . . . If his actions are good, he will turn into something good. If his actions are bad, he will turn into something bad [*sādhukārī sādhuḥ bhavati pāpakārī pāpo bhavati*]. . . . A man resolves in accordance with desire, acts in accordance

with his resolve, and turns out to be in accordance with his action. (4.4.5)¹⁷

The text goes on to say that desire and attachment are the drivers of repeated rebirth, and that one who eliminates all desire attains *Brahman* and becomes immortal. The action referred to here may well include acts outside ritual *per se*, but one of the themes of the *Upaniṣads* is that all acts participate in the primordial sacrifice, that is, in the sacral dimension.¹⁸

It may seem that the Buddha could not have shared such a world view, inasmuch as he rejected these very rites and insisted rather on the significance of ordinary, non-ritual, actions, what Gombrich refers to the “ethicisation of the universe” (51). But, again, the Buddhist shift from ritual performance to action in general was already anticipated in the early *Upaniṣads*. The way this is done is to extend the event of the rite to cover the whole of life—thus it is no longer restricted to performances bounded by space and time within the course of a lifetime, rather the whole of a human life is the rite (Tull 39). It is even said in an esoteric teaching that retiring to austerity in the wilderness is superior to conducting rites as such (CU 3.16). This move, be it noted, expands rather than displaces the belief that actions participate in primal creation, both of the cosmos as such and of personal “worlds.”

Although the *Nikāyas* may in many ways be deeply opposed to the Vedic/Brahminical tradition, the law of karma appears not so much a radical break as a further development, together with a demythologized background cosmogony—retaining the reflexive, participatory nature of

¹⁷ Translations from the *Upaniṣads* are from Olivelle (1996).

¹⁸ See, for example, Herman Tull, *The Vedic Origins of Karma* (esp. chapter two), the “Introduction” to Patrick Olivelle’s *Upaniṣads* (xli ff.), and Jan Gonda, *Loka: World and Heaven in the Veda* (72 passim).

being while jettisoning the myth of the primal sacrifice of a deity.¹⁹ Rather than ethicization, I see no reason not to consider the Buddhist shift of power from the confines of ritual to action in general as a sacralization of ethics.

There is only thin direct confirmation for such a worldview in the *Nikāyas*, but it makes sense of such statements as that “In this fathom-long body, conscious, endowed with mind, I proclaim the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world and the way to the cessation of the world,” that is, the world is “within” the conscious subject even as the subject is within the world (A II 48). The suttas of the *Sabba Vagga*, beginning with the well known *Sabba Sutta*, define “the all,” evidently meaning the totality of the cosmos, that is, the worlds of *saṃsāra*,²⁰ as the eye and visual form, the ear and sounds, and so on, thus as the instrumentality and objects of perception (SN IV 14). Putting the instrumentality of sense firmly within the cosmos, on an equal footing with the things sensed, eliminates the position of a subject wholly independent of the cosmos, acting on and within it, or indeed perceiving it objectively. Rather the subject is in some way constitutive of the cosmos, while the frequent insistence that consciousness cannot arise without objects—something to be conscious *of*—makes the cosmos also constitutive of the subject.

The Fire Sermon, the *Āditta Sutta* of the same *Vagga*, asserts that “the all” is blazing and, especially given that the same text occurs at V I 34 as a discourse to a group of recently converted fire worshipers, can be

¹⁹ Bronkhorst maintains that Buddhism emerged from the non-Brahmanized, non-Vedic religiosity of what he calls “Greater Magadha,” though the area would already have had contact with those movements (1-11). If he is right, and I tend to think he is, we should rather talk of mutual influence than any linear development. In any case, such influences are undeniable.

²⁰ Taking *nibbāna* as not a part of the cosmos.

understood in terms of the sacrificial fires of Vedic rites.²¹ The senses, objects, sense awareness, sense contact, and consequent feelings are all said to be blazing with the fires of *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha*; with birth, old age, death, and so on do they blaze. These then would be the “fires” that sustain the worlds, *saṃsāra*—displacing the literal fires of ritual in that role. The immediately following *Addhabhūta Sutta* says that “the all,” giving the same definition as the *Āditta Sutta*, is soiled by birth, old age, death, and so on, reinforcing the notion that the “all” refers to the worlds of *saṃsāra* and that the perceiving subject is in some sense constitutive of those worlds (S IV 21). In these suttas, the Buddha is instructing his *bhikkhus*, not in ethics, not in *kusala/akusala* actions as participation in the worlds; rather, he is instructing them in how to escape from those worlds and how to withdraw ultimately from participation in the cosmos. In just such a context it is not surprising that the outlines of the primordial order that is to be escaped should be sketched.²²

It may be noted that the interest in perception and its role in constituting reality is also a feature of the early *Upaniṣads* (e.g., BU 4.4.22), reinforcing the sense of a common, or at least profoundly overlapping, orientation. In this light, such Buddhist doctrines as *anattā* and *paticcaṣamuppāda* would appear to radicalize rather than reject the Vedic idea that the cosmos evokes *me* even as I play a role in creating and sustaining *it*; I now appear as this creatively active convergence of

²¹ We cannot assume that Kassapa and company were practicing specifically Vedic rites, yet there must have been some connection with the creative/destructive cosmic force of fire.

²² “Escape” and “withdraw” connote freedom from the cycle of rebirth and from the law of karma (the *arahant* generates no new *puñña/pāpa* and after death experiences no *vipāka*). I do not mean to imply the existence (or non-existence) of a transcendent realm to which the *arahant* goes upon *parinibbāna*.

possibilities and conditions rather than as an extrusion of an eternal *ātman/brahman*.

It may be objected that Buddhist ethics are, admittedly simplifying, an ethic of non-harming, with no need for postulating any metaphysical, sacral, cosmic order. That the Buddha's is largely an ethic of non-harming is undeniable. Again, however, that leaves unanswered the question why "harmless" actions should necessarily issue in "harmless" *vipāka*. Peter Harvey touches the issue when he notes, "The benefit of self and other are intertwined, because of the law of karma" (34), citing a number of texts to the same effect as, "Since the self of others is dear to each one, let him who loves himself not harm another" (S 47, tr. Harvey).

That the *Nikāyas* take the benefit of self to be intertwined with that of others is beyond question, but if our hypothesis is close to correct, it would rather be that the "intertwining" is not *because* of the law of karma, but rather that the law of karma is a manifestation of the intertwining; the act-*vipāka* correlation obtains *because* one's being is always already fundamentally intertwined with others. What I mean to suggest here is that, for the *Nikāyas*, "harming"/"non-harming" is the very stuff of participation in the cosmic order; thus, we find insistence that sacrificial Vedic rites in which animals were killed lead to hell rather than to heaven (A IV 42). That is to say, the cosmos is built up and sustained through relations with other conscious beings, and, this is an extension and explication of what has already been said, our *being-together* evokes the worlds even as they evoke *me*. Harming another *already* harms me inasmuch as I thus undermine the very relations in and by which I exist. I exist for and before the other, to some extent *in his eyes*, and killing another, for example, is already my own death, and that death remains *present* in the multitudinous structure of being until realized in my actual death, perhaps in a subsequent life, perhaps as an

extended sojourn in hell. The reverse would then be true: in preserving life, refraining from harm, I reinforce the web of relations that constitute my being even as I constitute that web, so that this life, this benefit, remains present²³ until realized in actual life, that is, if you will, on the “surface.” The understanding outlined here also gives concrete meaning of such well-known statements as “Protecting oneself, bhikkhus, one protects others; protecting others one protects oneself” (S V 169).²⁴ Wrong view might now be conceptualized as modes of comportment that are “incoherent” with the cosmic order, hence “harmful” to both my world and myself.

It is to be acknowledged that the way (“mechanism” is the wrong word) in which my acts remain present, according to this hypothesis, remains vague and “mysterious” and may well not have been thought out in any detail by the ancient Indians.

Nibbāna

Keown has convincingly shown that *kusala* actions—actions that yield happy *vipāka*—are just those actions that are conducive to/participate in *nibbāna*. Why should that be so? More specifically, given the present hypothesis, why should conformity to the cosmic order be conducive to “escaping” it? The same question is suggested by the rather cryptic passage at A I 263 that actions sourced in *alobha*, *amoha*, and *amoha*, that is *kusala* actions, conduce to the cessation of action, that is to *nibbāna*, not to the arising of action. I can only discuss this briefly here, and am

²³ “Present” in some as yet undefined sense. This may seem to resemble the Sarvāstivādin doctrine of the simultaneous existence of past, present and future *dharmas*, but that is not my intention and I do not mean “present” in the same sense, as far as I understand it.

²⁴ *attānaṃ, bhikkhave, rakkhanto paraṃ rakkhati, paraṃ rakkhanto attānaṃ rakkhati.*

hesitant in any case to hold forth on *nibbāna*. An immediate answer is given in the *Rathavinīta Sutta* where the Buddha says:

Purification of virtue is for the sake of reaching purification of mind; purification of mind is for the sake of reaching purification of view; ... purification by overcoming doubt; ... purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path; ... knowledge and vision of the way; ... purification by knowledge and vision; ... final Nibbāna. (M I 149-150; tr. Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi)

Similarly, the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* has the Buddha telling Ānanda (leaving several items out):

The purpose and benefit of wholesome virtuous behavior is non-regret; the purpose and benefit of non-regret is joy; ... concentration; ... knowledge and vision of things as they really are; ... disenchantment and dispassion; ... the knowledge and vision of liberation. Thus, Ānanda, wholesome virtuous behavior progressively leads to the foremost. (A V 2; tr. Bodhi)

These state that virtuous behavior is part of the path to *nibbāna* in that it can lead to mental calm and clarification as a prerequisite for knowledge. But what sort of “knowledge” has virtue as a prerequisite and why does such knowledge conduce to *nibbāna*? Indeed, it remains quite conceivable that the bounds of *saṃsāra*, entrapment in, or by, the cosmic order, would be broken precisely by violating social codes, by wanton destruction, sexual indulgence, intoxication, and the like. Again, why should *conforming* to the cosmic order be conducive to *escaping* it? Understanding “knowledge” in such contexts, again, as a mode of comportment towards the known rather than the possession of true

propositions about it, helps to clarify its dependence on virtue and the presentation of knowledge as issuing in *nibbāna*.

This immediately suggests a hypothesis that for now must remain on a rudimentary and metaphorical level: One who “knows” the primal cosmic order, including, as it were, its pathways, is in a position to leave it, rather as a spider knows its web *bodily* and is able to traverse it at will, benefit from it, and even walk away from it; other insects, lacking such knowledge, become trapped in the same web and become more deeply entangled the more they struggle to escape. The image is suggested by the many references to being “entangled” in *saṃsāra*. Facility in traversing the pathways of the cosmos is suggested in the *Mahāsihanada Sutta* where the Buddha says that “the Tathāgata knows as they really are all the pathways” (M I 70), and that he has approached hundreds of assemblies, those of deities as well as of men, with ease and confidence (M I 72). Again, in the *Tevijja Sutta* the Buddha asserts that he knows the path to the *brahmaloka* better than a man knows the roads of his own town (D I 249). What I have called conformity to the primal order would then appear as a “knowing,” as, one might say, a coherent mode of comportment in and towards that order, a kind of mastery of the “way things really are,” that perfected, enables *leaving*. What I have called violation, then, would not be non-participation, but modes of participation that create and sustain dysfunctional worlds for the agent in and with which he is less and less able to move about freely.²⁵ But if we understand *nibbāna* and *parinibbāna* not necessarily as going somewhere *else*, but rather as freedom, possibly *within*, that is, one “leaves” the cycle of rebirth and “escapes” the law of kamma rather than exiting the cosmic order, then we may want to replace the metaphorical spider that

²⁵ Cf. CU 7.25: One who knows that he is all the directions, extending over the whole world “becomes completely his own master; he obtains complete freedom of movement in all the worlds. . . . [Others] obtain perishable worlds.”

walks away with a trapped fly who becomes a spider freely traversing the web.

Another possible approach may begin with the Buddha's discussion of sacrificial fire in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* in response to an impending Vedic sacrifice in which hundreds of animals are to be slaughtered (A IV 41ff.). It will be remembered that these sacrifices were thought to participate in the cosmic order, itself a primordial sacrifice, and, properly performed, to sustain the cosmos and to generate/sustain "worlds" for the sacrificer, in this life and the next. *Nibbāna*, of course, means putting the fires out, at least one's personal fires of regeneration.

The Buddha tells the Brahmin who is about to conduct the rite that in kindling the sacrificial fire and erecting the sacrificial post—simply in the planning and preparation for the slaughter of animals—one raises mental, verbal, and bodily knives, actions that are *akusala*, causing harm (*dukkhudrayaṃ*) and with the fruit of suffering (*dukkhaviṭṭakāṃ*). The sacrificer, believing he is making (*karoti*) *puñña*, is actually making *apuñña*, believing his actions (*karoti*) are *kusala*, they are actually *akusala*;²⁶ seeking a path to a happy destination, he actually takes a path to a miserable destination (A IV 42). Then, evidently referring to the three ritual household fires that Brahmins maintained, the Buddha instructs the Brahmin that the "fires" of *rāga*, *dosa*, and *moha* should be abandoned and shunned, should not be served, as one who overly indulges any of them will commit acts of misconduct and be reborn in hell. Three other fires should, on the other hand, be happily maintained, properly giving them reverence, honor, and worship. These are the fires of those worthy of oblations, the household, and those worthy of offerings, explained by the Buddha respectively as one's parents; one's

²⁶ Note the ambiguity of *karoti* as well as of *puñña*. The first phrase could be: believing he is acting rightly, he is acting wrongly.

children, wife, slaves, servants, and workers; and renunciants. A wood fire, he advises, should be sometimes lit and sometimes extinguished, apparently denying it sacral significance (A IV 44-45). What this sutta does is to shift the locus of participation in the primordial order away from formal rites to social relationships. Again, this can be understood as the sacralization of the ordinary. *Akusala* then denotes modes of participation, “fires,” that generate/sustain “worlds” of destruction, of entrapment; *kusala* denotes modes of participation, “fires,” that (though this is not explicitly said in this passage) sustain “worlds” of relative freedom. Tamping down the fires of *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*, and, here, replacing them with the fires of service to certain others, it would seem, places one in a position to finally extinguish the personal fires, thus to transcend the continuing fires maintaining the cosmic order. The replacement of ritual with social relations is also the theme of the well-known *Sigālaka Sutta*. I show elsewhere that this sutta can also be understood as sacralizing those relationships, rather than merely as ethicizing—and secularizing—ritual (Evans “*Puñña*”).

I would note in passing that these reflections make sense of *kusala* as “skillful,” as a kind of mastery of the primal order, or perhaps as “proper” participation.

Conclusions

We began with a question an Indian Socrates might have asked: whether actions are *kusala/akusala* because of their pleasant/unpleasant *vipāka* or whether actions yield pleasant/unpleasant *vipāka* because they are *kusala/akusala*. Of course, there was no ancient Indian Socrates and such

questions were neither asked, nor, apparently, even thought about.²⁷ Exploring that question, however, has shed light on the act-*vipāka* relation. Suspending the assumption of a causal relation leading from act to *vipāka*, a review of texts, some of which would seem to support the priority of act and others the priority of *vipāka*, led us to suggest that for the authors of the *Nikāyas*, to say that an act is *kusala/akusala* and to say that it issues in pleasant/unpleasant *vipāka* are simply two ways of saying the same thing. That, in turn, led us to hypothesize that the unity of act and *vipāka* is grounded in an assumed all-embracing primordial cosmic order, which I called the “sacral dimension,” of which agents are part and parcel. Evidence for belief in such an order was found, with the order including not only the hierarchal cosmos of heavens and hells, but also the very structure of society, down to towns and clans that reappear with each cosmic cycle.

On the basis of the centrality of non-harming to Buddhist ethics, the possibility was then suggested that harming and non-harming are of the very stuff of participation in the cosmic order, such that harming others harms one’s self and one’s worlds *already*, though that “consequent” harm may become manifest only in a future lifetime. These reflections were supported in part by reference to the early *Upaniṣads*. Though these *Upaniṣads* almost certainly originated in the pre-Buddhist period, and though the region in which the historical Buddha flourished may well not yet have been “Brahmanized” (Bronkhorst 1-11), it seems certain that there was mutual influence during the period of formation of both sets of text, together with at least some shared background assumptions.

²⁷ Such distinctions “do not appear to have troubled Buddhism, early or late” (Rhys-Davids xci).

I noted that any characterization of the act-*vipāka* relation must be consistent with the fact that *kusala/akusala* evaluations for the most part match social convention, that *kusala* attitudes and actions are said to lead to social and psychological benefit as well as pleasant *vipāka*, and that *kusala* attitudes are conducive to *nibbāna*. The fact that the hypothesized primordial cosmic order embraces social structures would seem at least coherent with the correspondence of social convention with *kusala/akusala* valuations. More or less the same may be said of social and psychological benefit, or such benefits may simply be thought of as the results of social conformity. I have not, however, addressed the issue. The more difficult, and pressing, problem, it seems to me, is the association with *nibbāna*: why should conformity to the primordial cosmic order be conducive to escaping, or becoming free within, it? I have only offered a very tentative and metaphorical response here: as a spider knows, and in a certain sense conforms to, its web is able to walk away as well as to benefit from it, the *arahant*, having mastered the cosmic order through conforming participation, is able to “leave” the bonds of rebirth and the law of karma. These concerns need more attention if my hypothesis is to be fully supported.

Finally, I have referred to the hypothesized primordial cosmic order as the “sacral dimension.” This characterization may open new avenues for comparative studies *vis-à-vis* religions in which a sacred/transcendent/vertical dimension is more explicitly recognized. The concept as applied to Buddhism requires more specification. Some additional specification and defence of the idea is presented in “*Puñña* and *Sukṛtaṃ*: Vedic and *Nikāyan* Karma” (Evans).

Abbreviations

A	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
BU	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>
CU	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>
D	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
M	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
PED	<i>The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary</i>
S	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
SB	<i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
V	<i>Vinaya</i>

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