

AN 3.62: Tittthāyatana Sutta

Standpoints of Other Religions

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

“Monks, there are three standpoints of other religions which, if a wise person examines, probes, and questions, can be seen to result in a rejection of moral causality. What three?”

“Monks, there are some contemplatives and priests who express this doctrine and hold this belief: ‘Everything a person experiences – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – is entirely pre-determined.’”

“Monks, there are some contemplatives and priests who express this doctrine and hold this belief: ‘Everything a person experiences – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – is entirely caused by a creator-deity.’”

“Monks, there are some contemplatives and priests who express this doctrine and hold this belief: ‘Everything a person experiences – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – has no cause or condition at all.’”

“In that case, monks, regarding those contemplatives and priests who express this doctrine and hold this belief: ‘Everything a person experiences – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – is entirely pre-determined,’ I approach them and say, ‘Is it true that you venerables express this doctrine and hold this belief: “Everything a person experiences – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – is entirely pre-determined”?’ When asked, they affirm, ‘Yes.’ Then I say to them, ‘Therefore, if you kill, then it was pre-determined; if you steal, then it was pre-determined; if you break your celibacy, then it was pre-determined; if you tell lies, then it was pre-determined; if you speak divisively, then it was pre-determined; if you speak harshly, then it was pre-determined, if you speak uselessly, then it was pre-determined; if you covet, then it was pre-determined; if you have aversion in your mind, then it was pre-determined; if you hold wrong beliefs, then it was pre-determined.’ Monks, one who returns to pre-determination as the essence has no interest or engagement in knowing what is to be done and what is not to be done. Without any true and reliable sense of what is to be done and what is not to be done, they live mindlessly and recklessly, and cannot reasonably be called contemplatives. Monks, this is my first reasonable refutation of the doctrines and beliefs of those contemplatives and priests.”

“In that case, monks, regarding those contemplatives and priests who express this doctrine and hold this belief: ‘Everything a person experiences – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – is entirely caused by a creator-deity,’ I approach them and say, ‘Is it true that you venerables express this doctrine and hold this belief: “Everything a person experiences – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – is entirely caused by a creator-deity”?’ When asked, they affirm, ‘Yes.’ Then I say to them, ‘Therefore, if you kill... steal... break your celibacy... tell lies... speak divisively... speak harshly... speak uselessly... covet... have aversion in your mind... hold wrong beliefs, then it was caused by a creator-deity.’ Monks, one who returns to a creator-deity as the essence has no interest or engagement in knowing what is to be done and what is not to be done. Without any true and reliable sense of what is to be done and what is not to be done, they live mindlessly and recklessly, and cannot

reasonably be called contemplatives. Monks, this is my second reasonable refutation of the doctrines and beliefs of those contemplatives and priests.

“In that case, monks, regarding those contemplatives and priests who express this doctrine and hold this belief: ‘Everything a person experiences – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – has no cause or condition at all,’ I approach them and say, ‘Is it true that you venerables express this doctrine and hold this belief: “Everything a person experiences – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – has no cause or condition at all”?’ When asked, they affirm, ‘Yes.’ Then I say to them, ‘Therefore, if you kill... steal... break your celibacy... tell lies... speak divisively... speak harshly... speak uselessly... covet... have aversion in your mind... hold wrong beliefs, then it had no cause or condition.’ Monks, one who returns to non-causality and non-conditionality as the essence has no interest or engagement in knowing what is to be done and what is not to be done. Without any true and reliable sense of what is to be done and what is not to be done, they live mindlessly and recklessly, and cannot reasonably be called contemplatives. Monks, this is my third reasonable refutation of the doctrines and beliefs of those contemplatives and priests.

“Monks, these are the three standpoints of other religions which, if a wise person examines, probes, and questions, can be seen to result in a rejection of moral causality.

“However, monks, the Dhamma which has been taught by me is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests. Monks, what is the Dhamma which has been taught by me, and which is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests? The six elements, the six domains of sense-contact, the eighteen kinds of mental exploration, and the four noble truths: this is the Dhamma which has been taught by me, and which is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests.

“‘The six elements’ is a Dhamma has been taught by me, and it is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests. This is what was said; what does it refer to? Monks, these are the six elements: the earth-element, the water-element, the heat-element, the wind-element, the space-element, and the consciousness-element. ‘The six elements’ is a Dhamma has been taught by me, and it is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests. This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

“‘The six domains of sense-contact’ is a Dhamma has been taught by me, and it is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests. This is what was said; what does it refer to? Monks, these are the six domains of sense-contact: the domain of eye-contact, the domain of ear-contact, the domain of nose-contact, the domain of tongue-contact, the domain of body-contact, and the domain of mind-contact. ‘The six domains of sense-contact’ is a Dhamma has been taught by me, and it is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests. This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

“‘The eighteen kinds of mental exploration’ is a Dhamma has been taught by me, and it is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests. This is what was said; what does it refer to? Monks, these are the eighteen kinds of

mental exploration: having seen a sight with the eye, one explores a sight that is a basis for elation, a sight that is a basis for depression, and a sight that is a basis for equanimity. Having heard a sound with the ear... smelled a fragrance with the nose... tasted a flavor with the tongue... touched a tangible with the body... cognized an object with the mind, one explores an object that is a basis for elation, an object that is a basis for depression, and an object that is a basis for equanimity. The eighteen kinds of mental exploration' is a Dhamma has been taught by me, and it is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests. This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

“The four noble truths' is a Dhamma has been taught by me, and it is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests. This is what was said; what does it refer to? Monks, one who clings to the six elements enters a womb; then there is mind and body. Based on mind and body, there are the six senses; based on the six senses, there is sense-contact; based on sense-contact, there is feeling. Monks, it is for one who feels that I indicate 'This is suffering,' 'This is the arising of suffering,' 'This is the cessation of suffering,' 'This is the practice which leads to the cessation of suffering.'

“Monks, what is the noble truth of suffering? Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, grief, pain, depression, and anguish are suffering, not getting what one wants is suffering. Briefly, the five components of clinging are suffering. Monks, this is called the noble truth of suffering.

“Monks, what is the noble truth of the arising of suffering? Based on ignorance, there are conditional phenomena; based on conditional phenomena, there is consciousness; based on consciousness, there is mind and body; based on mind and body, there are the six senses; based on the six senses, there is sense-contact; based on sense-contact, there is craving; based on craving, there is clinging; based on clinging, there is existence; based on existence, there is birth; based on birth, decay, death, sorrow, grief, pain, depression, and anguish come to be. In this way there is the arising of the entire mass of suffering. Monks, this is called the noble truth of the arising of suffering.

“Monks, what is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering? When, through dispassion, there is complete cessation of ignorance, then there is cessation of conditional phenomena; from cessation of conditional phenomena, there is cessation of consciousness; from cessation of consciousness, there is cessation of mind and body; from cessation of mind and body, there is cessation of the six senses; from cessation of the six senses, there is cessation of sense-contact; from cessation of sense-contact, there is cessation of feeling; from cessation of feeling, there is cessation of craving; from cessation of craving, there is cessation of clinging; from cessation of clinging, there is cessation of existence; from cessation of existence, there is cessation of birth; from cessation of birth, decay, death, sorrow, grief, pain, depression, and anguish cease. In this way there is cessation of the entire mass of suffering. Monks, this is called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

“Monks, what is the noble truth of the practice which leads to the cessation of suffering? It is just this noble eightfold path - that is, right view, right attitude, right speech, right

action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Monks, this is called the noble truth of the practice which leads to the cessation of suffering.

“The four noble truths’ is a Dhamma has been taught by me, and it is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and unrejectable by wise contemplatives and priests. This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.”