SN 22.62 — The Scope of Definition

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 22.62

6. Involvement

The Scope of Definition

At Sāvatthī.

“Mendicants, there are these three scopes of definition, labeling, and description. They’re uncorrupted, as they have been since the beginning. They’re not being corrupted now, nor will they be. Sensible ascetics and brahmins don’t look down on them. What three? When form has passed, ceased, and perished, its designation, label, and description is ‘was’. It’s not ‘is’ or ‘will be’.

When feeling …

perception …

choices …

consciousness has passed, ceased, and perished, its designation, label, and description is ‘was’. It’s not ‘is’ or ‘will be’.

When form is not yet born, and has not yet appeared, its designation, label, and description is ‘will be’. It’s not ‘is’ or ‘was’.

When feeling …

perception …

choices …

consciousness is not yet born, and has not yet appeared, its designation, label, and description is ‘will be’. It’s not ‘is’ or ‘was’.

When form has been born, and has appeared, its designation, label, and description is ‘is’. It’s not ‘was’ or ‘will be’.

When feeling …

perception …

choices …

consciousness has been born, and has appeared, its designation, label, and description is ‘is’. It’s not ‘was’ or ‘will be’.

These are the three scopes of definition, labeling, and description. They’re uncorrupted, as they have been since the beginning. They’re not being corrupted now, nor will they be. Sensible ascetics and brahmins don’t look down on them.

Even those who were loud and bold advocates of the doctrines of no-cause, inaction, and nihilism, didn’t imagine that these three scopes of definition should be criticized or rejected. Why is that? For fear of being blamed, attacked, provoked, and faulted.”