

Rejoinder to Ven. Anālayo and a Short List of Corrigenda

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In the first instance, I want to apologise to Ven. Bhikkhu Anālayo if I have excessively levelled out and/or trivialised his position concerning the role of the *manomaya-kāya* and its relationship with the *iddhis* (and in particular with the act of levitating) in a way that led him to write me a reply. I am glad he wanted to reply and clarify his position. It is also gratifying to read that, despite the misunderstanding, he has appreciated my contribution, and an appreciation is even more welcomed when it comes from a scholar that I esteem and from whose articles I have learnt a great deal, and am indeed still learning. Of course, I cannot claim to know the author's thoughts better than the author himself, and thus I will limit myself to discussing the significant points that led me to quote Ven. Anālayo as a relevant example of the point I was making. This is also an opportunity to elaborate on some topics and textual passages to which Ven. Anālayo drew attention.

In my contribution (De Notariis 2019), I noted that some scholars assumed that the mind-made body (*manomaya-kāya*) was the body through which the *iddhis* were performed (240 fn. 35). However, the reasons for this kind of assumption were not always made explicit. Thus, in considering the rationality behind this assumption, I found clear statements concerning the sequentiality of the stages of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*'s Buddhist path of liberation made by Radich and Anālayo (240 fn. 36). This was, indeed, my point, namely the fact that this sequentiality might had been regarded as a proof to establish



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a strong connection between *manomaya-kāya* and *iddhis*. In quoting Ven. Anālayo, I had in mind the following passage:

The creation of such a mind-made body features in the same *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* and its parallels just before their description of the supernormal ability to levitate, etc., corresponding to the section translated above from the *Dirgha-āgama* parallel to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*. This gives the impression that the ability to create a mind-made body may have been considered a pre-condition for feats like levitation, just as the earlier mentioned four absorptions clearly serve as a pre-condition for the creation of the mind-made body, as well as for the other supernormal feats described subsequently. (Anālayo 2016, 16)

In his reply to me, Ven. Anālayo specifies that in this passage there is also a footnote referring to a scholar who made this suggestion,¹ and thus he was merely quoting a suggestion made by someone else, introducing it with ‘may’ to indicate the lack of certainty regarding the statement. It seemed to my mind that Ven. Anālayo was endorsing this view, or at least he was regarding it as a quite likely interpretation, considering that he was seemingly making a point, not just quoting it in an anecdotal way. In fact, I think that my main error was to not acknowledge that he was supporting his interpretation of the relationship between *manomaya-kāya* and *iddhis* with other evidence, and the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*’s Buddhist path of liberation was just one of the many (although the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* was actually relevant for its stages’ sequentiality). Here, I would like to provide some notes on the other textual accounts quoted by Ven. Anālayo. This, I hope, will enrich our discussion concerning the relationship between *manomaya-kāya* and *iddhis*. I want to specify that I am doing so in a non-polemical manner; simply for the sake of adding some more flesh to the bones.

Ven. Anālayo quotes two interesting passages from the *Mahāvastu* and **Vimuttimaggā* which seem to imply that many miraculous feats were performed by the meditator by remaining seated in the meditative position and, thus, as an example of how the mind-made body is involved in actions, such as touching the moon and sun (*Mahāvastu*)²

¹ “This has already been suggested by Franke” (Anālayo 2016, 16 fn. 21).

² “When he was seated cross-legged in his hermitage, touched with the hand the orbs of both the moon and sun” (*svayam āśrame paryamkena niṣaṇṇo candramaṇḍalaṃ ca sūryamaṇḍalaṃ ca pāṇinā parāṃṣati*; Mvu, I, 284). See also Vism, 401 in which many monks affect and influence the moon and the sun, but these latter remain unaffected in the reality. If not otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author.

or levitating (**Vimuttimagga*).³ However, we should note that, strictly speaking, neither passage mentions any Sanskrit or Chinese term that denotes the mind-made body. Ergo, it seems to me that the involvement of a mind-made body is inferred by the fact that both actions occur in a sort of mental dimension and, apparently, do not produce effects in reality. This would suggest the assumption that we know quite well what the mind-made body is and its significance in Buddhism, otherwise we would not be able to detect it in contexts in which it is implied and not mentioned. However, personally, I would be more cautious in assuming a clear-cut interpretation for the *manomaya-kāya* given the present state of our knowledge. Therewith, I do not exclude the implication of the mind-made body in the aforementioned passages, but nonetheless it seems to me that hitherto, the *manomaya-kāya* has been treated as a quite intuitive and self-explanatory concept. The reason behind it could be that the *manomaya-kāya* can be translated as ‘mind-made body’ or ‘body made of mind’ and this recalls in our culture an idea of what this means. As a matter of fact, many cultures around the world hold this idea concerning the existence of a subtle body, including ours.⁴ This indicates that we might already have an opinion, albeit vague, of what a subtle body could be. Although the existence of a subtle body is a trans-cultural phenomenon which assumes different nuances of meanings in each culture, it is arguably somehow naturalised in our conception of the world. This is also sustained by the fact that even though the *manomaya-kāya* (or *manomaya* in general) sporadically occurs in Buddhist texts, even in key passages, it has received few systematic treatments in academic literature.⁵ Hence, I analysed the idea sustained by some scholars that would see the body made of mind (*manomaya-kāya*) as the base and tool to perform *iddhis* and *abhiññās* through the lens of the Vedic evidence. Incidentally, my study partially corroborates a connection between *manomaya-kāya* and *iddhis* as assumed by the previous scholarship, although I highlight that we also have evidence that the mind-made body is not always mandatory to perform *iddhis* (De Notariis 2019, 256-7). My aim was not to belittle previous scholarship, but to just check whether we can have stronger presuppositions for some claims that were made mostly on

3 “Is it possible that the meditator in the empty sky would lose the meditative state and from the empty sky he would fall down to the earth? Not at all! He arises from the meditation seat and if he travels far and lose [the meditative state] he returns to the meditation seat” (問彼坐禪人於虛空或從禪退。彼從虛空轉當落地耶。答不然。是從其先坐處起若遠行。退者還至先坐處, T1648_32.0442a20-22).

4 E.g. Greek, Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, Islamic, and European cultures, in both ancient and modern times. In this regard, see the contributions in the volume edited by Samuel and Johnston (2013).

5 See De Notariis 2019a, 51.

the basis of conjectures, without any definitive proof, and sometimes based on deductions which were not entirely compelling. In the case of the *Mahāvastu* and **Vimuttimagga* it seems to me that even if the accounts would really involve a body made of mind, we cannot be certain that it is safe to read their interpretation into the old account of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*. Concerning the Theravāda tradition, it is worth noting that the *manomaya-kāya* has almost no place within the Abhidhamma, thus it seems to have escaped the first exegetical systematisation.⁶ We must wait till the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* to find an exegetical elaboration on the topic. This latter text introduces some developments when compared with the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* and, unsurprisingly, we can assume a relatively huge gap of time between the two texts.⁷ To my mind, it is possible that the *manomaya-kāya* in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* is closer to the Vedic lore than the Buddhist exegetical texts,⁸ although I cannot exclude that Buddhism may have developed its own early interpretation and that the latter was faithfully transmitted and came down to us in the exegetical texts. In essence, the *manomaya-kāya* is not a straightforward concept as it might seem *prima facie*, and some other different interpretative lines should be taken into account.

Much more compelling is the example of *manomayena kāyena iddhiyā* (e.g. A, IV, 229), in which an *iddhi* (the act of going up to the Brahmā world, a sort of levitation) is actually performed through a *manomaya-kāya*. I think it could be relevant and beneficial to also read this passage in light of *cātumahābhūtikena kāyena iddhiyā* (S, V, 282), which, similarly, suggests that the same act of levitation could be performed through the physical and material body.⁹ Indeed, there is enough evidence in Buddhist texts to suppose that the *iddhis* were regarded as real phenomena and not only as mere imaginative and mental acts. For instance, the Buddha is said to be able to prolong his lifespan through the mastery of the *iddhi-pādas* (D, II, 103; see Kv, 456-8 which uses *iddhi-bala* in the context of the prolongation of life). Let alone that these powers were subjected to legislative regulation and occur in many accounts as visible feats, just as when a

⁶ The only reference to the concept of ‘*manomaya*’ is within the *Vibhaṅga*, in a passage which does not mention it directly (Vibh, 384) but quotes D, I, 34 (which involves a mind-made self), replacing *dibbo rūpī manomayo* with *dibbo rūpimayo* (however, *dibbo rūpī manomayo* is actually the reading in Be).

⁷ Here, these ideas are mostly based on my still unpublished work on the diachronic development of the *manomaya-kāya* in Theravāda tradition. In this short reply to Ven. Anālayo, I have not the space to develop a full argument. However, I wanted to provide some hints on the data that drive my reasoning.

⁸ I am especially referring to my previous work, De Notariis 2019a.

⁹ I am aware that Ven. Anālayo (2016, 18 fn. 29) highlighted that this latter passage may have no parallels.

monk levitates in order to take a sandalwood bowl, an act that led to the regulation of these kinds of miraculous displays (Vin, II, 110-112). This position finds evidence in a clear statement within the latter *Nettipakaraṇa*, which reports:

And what things, monks, should be experienced by the body (*kāya*) and understanding (*paññā*)? The variety of the psychophysical power (*iddhividhā*) and cessation (*nirodha*) should be experienced by the body and understanding.¹⁰

Here, cessation (*nirodha*) seems to be the cessation of consciousness and feelings (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*), which is the result of a meditative practice and involves both mind and physical body.¹¹ Thus, we can similarly consider that the *iddhis* involve both body and mind as a unity, and can therefore be translated as ‘psychophysical power’.¹²

In summary, I am glad that Ven. Anālayo wanted to reply to me, as this has provided the opportunity to further discuss some topics. Whilst I still believe he was a relevant example for what I was arguing, I should admit that he in fact has a point in highlighting that his position is more sophisticated than what can be inferred by what I wrote. Therefore, I cannot but apologise once again. I hope that the few notes I have written concerning the other textual accounts reported by Ven. Anālayo may result to be interesting and could be useful in stimulating further reflections on these topics which are so dear to me.

With mettā
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10 *katame ca bhikkhave dhammā kāyena paññāya ca sacchikātabbā? iddhividhā nirodho kāyena paññāya ca sacchikātabbā* (Nett, 149). The forerunner of this passage occurs in some old strata of the Pāli canon, such as at A, II, 182: *katame ca bhikkhave dhamma kāyena sacchikaraṇīyā? aṭṭha vimokkhā bhikkhave kāyena sacchikaraṇīyā*.

11 While the involvement of the mind is evident, that of the body occurs, for instance, at M, I, 296. If we considered the fact that *Nettipakaraṇa* resembles A, II, 182, we should admit that according to the commentary on the latter, in this passage the term *kāya* means the mental *corpus* (*kāyenā ti nāmakāyena*; Mp, III, 167). However, we should also consider that the *Nettipakaraṇa* is quite aware that the term *kāya* as a unity includes both the mental *corpus* (*nāmakāya*) and the physical one (*rūpakāya*) (see Nett, 77) and, therefore, I regard significant the fact that *Nettipakaraṇa* uses *kāya* and not *nāmakāya*.

12 In De Notariis 2019, 235-9, I opted for ‘psychic power’ to translate *iddhi*. I think that ‘psychophysical power’ can be more accurate and there are some other reasons to sustain it whose exposition, however, would exceed the limits of this short rejoinder.

A short list of Corrigenda

Here, I would like to provide some corrections on some parts of my previous publications (2018; 2019). I should acknowledge that most of them were highlighted to me by Rupert Gethin. In what follows, I will not address typos or minor points but only conceptual errors.

- In De Notariis 2018, 190, concerning the simile of the *isikā* extracted from a *muñja*, I supposed that the translation made by Rupert Gethin of the term *muñja* as ‘reed grass’ implied that he had interpreted *muñja* as a group or multiplicity of reeds, assuming that this term implies a collectivity, and then the *isikā* was a ‘reed extracted from a group of reeds’. Gethin informed me that he understood the simile as “a single reed is extracted from a single blade of reed grass”.¹³ Therefore, I want to inform my readers of Gethin’s real understanding, although his translation could, to some extent, allow the interpretation I presented.
- In De Notariis 2019, 233-4, there occurs my translation of the pericope on the *cutūpapātāñāna*, which is worthy of some remarks. First, many scholars suggested to me that the translation of this *abhiññā* as ‘knowledge of degeneration and ascent of beings’ does not sound very good in natural English, therefore I wish to note that an alternative translation as ‘knowledge of the fall and rise [of beings]’ - which seems to ‘sound’ better - would convey the same metaphorical language that I wanted to stress. Second, the passage *ime vata bhonto sattā...*, which I translated as “Oh venerables, Alas! These beings”, could be translated in another way, assuming that *bhonto* is a nominative in apposition with *sattā*, and not a vocative as I translated. Therefore, another translation could be “These venerable beings...”; this, of course, is a minor point. A more interesting point that I did not address was my tentative and speculative translation of part of the pericope. I should highlight that the passage *so dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkanta-mānusakena satte passati cavamāne upapajjamāne, hīne pañite suvañṇe dubbañṇe sugate duggate yathā-kammūpage satte pajānāti*, which I translated as “He sees beings with the divine eye which is purified and far beyond the human one; he knows beings degenerating and ascending, reaching according to their *kamma* low [existences], excellent [existences], good conditions, bad conditions, good destinies, bad destinies”, can have a different translation (which is more in line with the ones commonly adopted): “With the divine eye which is purified and beyond the human one,

13 Private communication.

he sees beings passing away and arising; he knows how beings are inferior, excellent, of beautiful appearance, disagreeable, fortunate, unfortunate, according to their *kamma*". My translation was an attempt to bring out a new interpretation of some elements. I assume a more metaphorical interpretation for *cavamāne upapajjamāne* than the commonly accepted 'dying and being born', which affects the interpretation of the series of adjectives *hīne paṇīte suvaṇṇe dubbaṇṇe sugate duggate*. My translation is, therefore, tentative and aims to present the passage in a new light.

- In De Notariis 2019, 235 fn. 22, I quoted an article attributing the authorship to both Alexander Wynne and Richard Gombrich, although the real author is only the first one.
- In De Notariis 2019, 254, I wrote: "The suffix *-māna* used to create the present passive participle of the verbs *cavati* and *upapajjati* might indicate that the action occurs automatically, and the beings involved are just passive subjects of the action". I was wrong: the two words are inflected in the present middle participle and not in the passive.

Abbreviations

All Pāli citations are from Pali Text Society Editions, unless otherwise noted.

A	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya</i>
Be	Burmese Edition. Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka 4.0. Vipassana Research Institute 1995, Version 4.0.0.15
D	<i>Dīghanikāya</i>
Kv	<i>Kathāvatthu</i>
M	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī (Aṅguttaranikāya-aṭṭhakathā)</i>
Mvu	<i>Mahāvastu</i> . Senart, É. (1882-97). <i>Le Mahāvastu: Texte sanscrit publié pour la première fois et accompagné d'introductions et d'un commentaire</i> . 3 vols. Paris: Imprimerie nationale
Nett	<i>Nettipakaraṇa</i>
S	<i>Samyuttanikāya</i>
T	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> (大正新修大藏經). Digital Edition. http://21dtk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ . Database version 2015
Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

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