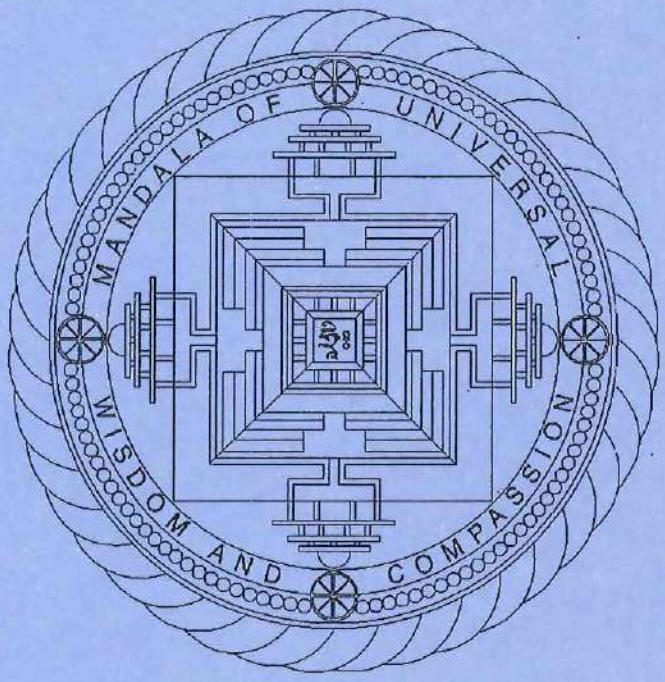
DISCOVERING BUDDHISM



Awakening the limitless potential of your mind,
achieving all peace and happiness

Mind and Its Potential

Required Reading

Geshe Rabten's Nine Round Breathing Meditation

Meditation is a mental activity. In order that we may use it to our advantage we must first calm the mind. Also, we must make an effort to purify the subtle energy channels in our body. We must attempt to clear them as much as possible so that they can function properly. There are thousands of these channels throughout our body but we shall be concentrating on the three main ones located near the spinal column.

When meditating, you should try to keep your back as straight as possible. If you do not, you wiII feel uncomfortable. We will begin this particular meditation by visualizing a thin, red channel within our body located on the right-hand side of the spinal column. These channels are composed of very subtle matter and should not be confused with physical arteries or veins. This red channel begins four finger-widths below the navel and travels upwards, just to the right of the spinal column, to the top of the skull, above the brain but below the bone. At this point, near where the skull is soft in a newborn child, it bends like the handle of an umbrella and ends at the opening of the right nostril. We should visualize this channel as being straight and smooth. In the same way we should visualize a white channel beginning four finger-widths below the navel and running upward along the left side of the spine, bending at the crown of the head and ending at the left nostril. We visualize the two channels as being about the size of the small finger, like two hollow tubes. In the right, red channel we visualize blood flowing and in the left, white channel, we visualize seminal fluid.

We will begin the meditation by visualizing the white channel as being inserted into the red channel at the point four finger-widths below the navel like a small, hollow tube fitting into a larger one. Having clearly imagined these two tubes joined four finger-widths below the navel one should then block the right nostril with the right index finger. We then inhale through the left nostril and visualize the air descending through the left channel. When it reaches the point at which the left channel is inserted into the right channel we then begin to exhale and simultaneously we remove the right index finger from the side of our right nostril and use it to block the left nostril. As we breathe out we visualize this inhaled air passing from the left channel into the right, rising up the right channel and being exhaled through the right nostril. As we do this visualization we imagine that the air flowing through the channels cleanses them of all impurities and that they are left clean and luminous, in much the same way as wind blows away dust. At the time of breathing out we can imagine that our right nostril is somewhat like a factory chimney pouring out the smoke of our impurities.

We should breathe slowly, calmly, and deeply both during the exhalation and inhalation. There is no need to force the breath. Breathe normally and as regularly as possible. At the outset there may be some difficulty because we tend to take shallow breaths, but gradually we shall become accustomed to the practice and our breath will naturally lengthen. We should do this cycle of inhaling through the left nostril and exhaling through the right three times. Imagine with each inhalation and exhalation that the rising air completely cleanses the right hand channel and that it becomes luminous like a channel of very subtle red light.

When we have completed this cycle three times, thereby cleansing the right channel, we should then reverse the process and cleanse the left. We now insert the end of the right, red channel into the white left channel at the point four finger-widths below the navel. We now block the left nostril by applying pressure to the left side of the nose with the left index finger and then slowly and gently inhale through the right nostril. As the breath reaches the point four finger-widths below the navel we then use the same finger to block the right nostril and

exhale slowly and gently through the left. We repeat this process three times. While doing so we imagine all the impurities of the left, white channel are expelled with the breath. The channel itself becomes pure and luminous like a radiant tube of subtle, white light. The channels themselves are supple and tender although they remain straight along the spine.

We now visualize a third, blue, channel located between the other two. It also begins at the point four finger-widths below the navel and runs up along and slightly in front of the spinal column. When it reaches the crown of the head it curves like the handle of an umbrella and ends at the point midway between the eyebrows. This third channel is slightly larger than the red and white channels. It is the most important of the channels in our body and we will now purify it in a similar fashion. We visualize the red and white channels entering the blue channel at the point four finger- widths below the navel, again like two tubes fitting into a slightly larger one. While we are meditating we should place our hands in our lap, the right hand facing upward upon the left palm with the two thumbs forming a triangle with the palm. The navel should be level with the space in the middle of the triangle. We inhale and exhale through both nostrils but, in this visualization, we imagine the impurities leaving the central channel at the point, between the eyebrows. We repeat this process three times. Having done so we imagine that this channel is completely purified and becomes of the nature of a subtle, radiant, blue light. Having completed this process we should continue to breathe slowly, gently and evenly, imagining our breath flowing freely through all the channels.

If we concentrate on this breathing practice it can be an excellent way to calm the mind and prepare ourselves for further meditation.

(From Geshe Rabten, *Treasury of Dharma*, Tharpa Publications, 1988, p.21-24)

The Three Channels

Before visualizing the channels, imagine yourself to be sitting in the east, facing west. Remember that the system of channels is an appearance of the mind and this visualization is not inherently existent.

There are three channels running side by side from the bridge of the nose up just below the bone of the skull to the crown of the skull and curving at that point downward, running just in front of the spine (toward the "back" of the body), squarely in the centre of the body. The channels end about four finger widths below the navel. These channels are very soft and supple, the nature of light. They are smooth and unobstructed inside. The side channels are approximately the diameter of a wooden pencil, hollow inside. The one on your right is bright red, and the one on your left is white. The upper openings of these two channels are at the top of the nostrils.

Between the two side channels is the central channel. It is slightly larger than the side channels. It is a deep blue outside and a dark slick oily red inside. The central channel is closed at the top but has an opening below. The two side channels curve out slightly near the bottom of the central channel and curve back into the central channel's opening, blocking it.

Block the right nostril and mentally counting one, inhale through the left. As you inhale imagine the air entering the left channel and passing down to the bottom of the central channel, where it enters the central channel and fills it. When the passage is comfortably full, block the left nostril while visualizing the air passing from the central channel into the right. Now exhale through the right nostril. Repeat this process three times, remembering to resume the count before the next inhalation begins.

Now block the left nostril and inhale through the right and imagine that as you inhale, the air enters the right channel and passes down to the bottom of the central channel, where it enters into the central channel and fills it. When the passage is comfortably full, block the right nostril while visualizing the air passing from the central channel into the left. Exhale from the left nostril. Repeat this visualisation three times.

Finally, inhale through both nostrils simultaneously, visualizing that the air passes down the side channels and enters the central channel, and with the exhalation through the nostrils, the central channel is cleared of the "foul" air and filled with clean fresh air. Do this three times.

(Adapted from Detong Choyin, *Waking from the Dream*, Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1996, p.159-160)

Geshe Gedun Lodro summarises the practice

The yogi breathes in through the left nostril and out through the right three times and then reverses this, breathing in through the right nostril and out through the left three times. The count begins with the inhalation. Then the yogi inhales through both nostrils and exhales through both, doing this also three times. For those who have not trained in this practice, it is suitable to press closed the nostril temporarily not being used, but for a trained practitioner such pressure is unnecessary. Some texts say to use the fingers in this way, but such advice is directed to beginners. This practice does not mainly rely on the exhalation and inhalation of the breath but on imagination of it. This system is called "the nine-cycled dispelling of wind-corpses" [that is, bad winds]. It is as though the coarse winds that serve as the mounts of impure motivations and coarse thoughts are expelled with them.

Q. It is said that in practising the nine-cycled dispelling of bad winds one relies not so much on the breath itself as on the imagination of inhalation and exhalation. Why is this?

A. This is because you are mainly cleansing your own motivation after making manifest your impure motivation. Thus the main point is the imagination. As much as you are able to withdraw the mind during this period of meditative stabilization on the breath, so great will be your ability to do as you wish in meditative stabilization.

The Nine Round Breathing Meditation is very relaxing. Your ability to relax and the visualization associated with this technique become essential skills that will contribute to your success later on the path.

(From Geshe Gedun Lodro & Jeffrey Hopkins, *Walking Through Walls*, Snow Lion, 1992, p.35 & 41)

Afterword: Buddhist Reflections

Due to the unusual brevity of this Mind and Life Conference, which lasted two days instead of the five days for all the other meetings in this series, Robert Livingston asked me to write a concluding essay providing further context and elucidation of the Buddhist topics raised here by the Dalai Lama. The following is my attempt to fulfil that wish, principally setting forth certain Buddhist perspectives on the mind/body problem, and at times viewing modern scientific assertions in light of the Buddhist worldview. My motivation in doing so is not to demonstrate the superiority of one view over the other, but to open up new avenues of theoretical and empirical research to scientists and Buddhists alike. For there are, I believe, an increasing number of people today who, like myself, feel that modern neuroscience and Buddhism have a great deal to learn from each other. Neither has sole access to exploring the true nature of the mind or body.

The Reality of Suffering

The fundamental structure of Buddhism as a whole is known as the Four Noble Truths. All Buddhist theories and practices are presented within the context of these four, namely the reality of suffering, the reality of the sources of suffering, the reality of the cessation of suffering together with its underlying causes, and finally the reality of the path to such cessation. The Buddha's injunctions regarding these four is that one should recognize the reality of suffering, eliminate the sources of suffering, accomplish the cessation of suffering, and follow the path leading to cessation.

Buddhism identifies two kinds of suffering: physical and mental. The two are not identical, for it is experientially apparent that one may be physically uncomfortable - for instance, while engaging in a strenuous physical workout - while mentally cheerful; conversely, one may be mentally distraught while experiencing physical comfort. This immediately raises the issue of the mind/body relationship. The fact that we have compelling grounds for not simply equating mental and physical degrees of well-being implies a kind of *affective* dualism between the body and mind. Buddhism explicitly accepts such dualism and no reasons were presented in this conference why this should be refuted by modern neuroscience.

Affective dualism may be included in the broader category of what may he deemed *experiential* dualism: our experiences of objective, physical phenomena are quite unlike our experiences of subjective, mental phenomena. An event like an apple dropping from a tree, or a thing like an apple itself, appears quite different from the event of losing hope, or the experience of confidence. Similarly, there are significant experiential differences between objectively observing brain processes and subjectively observing mental processes: the former have specific locations and are composed of material entities that have shape, colour, mass, and numerous other physical attributes; mental processes seem to lack those physical attributes, while possessing qualities of their own that are not apparent in brain processes. The fact that Buddhist contemplatives have observed the mind for centuries yet formulated no theory of the brain implies that introspective knowledge of the mind does not necessarily shed any light on the brain. Likewise, the studies of the brain alone, independent of all first-person accounts of mental states does not necessarily yield any knowledge of mental phenomena. Thus, experiential dualism, which maintains that physical and mental phenomena experientially seem to be different, is accepted by Buddhism as well as by at least some of the scientists in this meeting.

Experiential dualism also includes what may be called *causal dualism*, for the mind/body system, in Allan Hobson's words "is clearly open to interventions of two distinctive kinds. One is a biological intervention, the other is a conceptual intervention." Lewis Judd concurs when he comments that there "is evidence that there may be a synergistic effect between psychopharmacology and specific forms of psychotherapy." For with the combination of the two, the rate of relief for the clinically depressed is higher than if one administers medications alone. Likewise, Buddhism maintains that the mind is influenced by, and exerts its own influence upon, both mental and physical phenomena.

What shall we make of such mind/body dualisms, which are commonly accepted in Buddhism and in modern science? The Madhyarnaka view, which the Dalai Lama endorses and which in Tibet is generally considered the pinnacle of Buddhist philosophy, maintains that humans have an innate tendency to reify both the contents of experience as well as us as experiencing agents. According to this view, while it is useful to recognize the apparent differences between physical and mental events in the above ways, it is a profound error to conclude that nature itself - independently of our conceptual constructs - has created some absolute demarcation between physical and mental phenomena. Thus, the Madhyamaka view explicitly refutes Cartesian substance dualism, which has been so roundly condemned by contemporary neuroscientists. Madhyamikas, or proponents of the Madhyamaka view, declare that if the mind and body did each exist inherently, independently of conceptual designations, they could never interact. Thus, there is a deep incongruity between appearances and reality. While mind and matter seem to be inherently different types of independently existing "stuff," such appearances are misleading. This becomes apparent only by an ontological analysis of the nature of both types of phenomena.

The difficulty of providing any explanation for the causal interaction of the body and mind if the two are regarded as real, separate "things" has been clearly addressed in this conference, and it is a chief reason why the great majority of neuroscientists have adopted a physicalist view of the mind. From a Buddhist perspective, while this step eliminates the need for any causal mechanism relating a non-physical mind with the brain, it has the disadvantage of shedding no light on the actual nature of consciousness or its origins. Indeed, though modern neuroscience has discovered many elements of the brain and neural processes that are *necessary* for the production of specific conscious processes, it has provided no cogent explanation of the nature of consciousness, nor does this discipline have any scientific means of detecting the presence or absence of consciousness in any organism whatsoever. Over the years since this meeting, I have heard no more illuminating materialist explanation of consciousness than that offered here, namely that it is simply a natural condition of the activated brain. Nor have I heard anything more revealing concerning the origins of consciousness than the statement that it is something that arises when there are enough neurons with elaborate enough connections to support conscious activity. Such accounts actually explain nothing, and they can hardly be counted as scientific theories, for they do not lend themselves to either empirical verification or refutation.

Not only do Madhyamikas reject the notion that the mind is an inherently existent substance, or thing, they similarly deny that physical phenomena as we experience and conceive of them are things in themselves; rather, physical phenomena are said to exist in relation to our perceptions and conceptions. What we perceive is inescapably related to our perceptual modes of observation, and the ways in which we conceive of phenomena are inescapably related to our concepts and languages.

In denying the independent self-existence of all the phenomena that make up the world of our experience, the Madhyamaka view departs from both the substance dualism of Descartes and the substance monism - namely, physicalism - that is characteristic of modern science. The physicalism propounded by many contemporary scientists seems to assert that the real world is composed of physical things-in-themselves, while all mental phenomena are regarded as mere appearances, devoid of any reality in and of themselves. Much is made of this difference between appearances and reality.

The Madhyamaka view also emphasizes the disparity between appearances and reality, but in a radically different way. All the mental and physical phenomena that we experience, it declares, appear as if they existed in and of themselves, utterly independent of our modes of perception and conception. They appear to be *inherently existing things,* but in reality they exist as *dependently related events.* Their dependence is threefold: (1) phenomena arise in dependence upon preceding causal influences, (2) they exist in dependence upon their own parts and/or attributes, and (3) the phenomena that make up the world of our experience are dependent upon our verbal and conceptual designations of them.

This threefold dependence is not intuitively obvious, for it is concealed by the appearance of phenomena as being self-sufficient and independent of conceptual designation. On the basis of these misleading appearances it is quite natural to think of, or conceptually apprehend, phenomena as self-defining things in themselves. This tendency is known as reification, and according to the Madhyamaka view, this is an inborn delusion that provides the basis for a host of mental afflictions. Reification decontextualizes. It views phenomena without regard to the causal nexus in which they arise, and without regard to the specific means of observation and conceptualisation by which they are known. The Madhyamaka, or Centrist, view is so called for it seeks to avoid the two extremes of reifying phenomena on the one hand, and of denying their existence on the other.

In the Madhyamaka view, mental events are no more or less real than physical events. In terms of our common-sense experience, differences of kind do exist between physical and mental phenomena. While the former commonly have mass, location, velocity, shape, size, and numerous other physical attributes, these are not generally characteristic of mental phenomena. For example, we do not commonly conceive of the feeling of attraction for another person as having mass or location. These physical attributes are no more appropriate to other mental events such as sadness, a recalled image from one's childhood, the visual perception of a rose, or consciousness of any sort. Mental phenomena are, therefore, not regarded as being physical, for the simple reason that they lack many of the attributes that are uniquely characteristic of physical phenomena. Thus, Buddhism has never adopted the physicalist principle that regards only physical things as real. To return to the First Noble Truth, both physical and mental suffering are to be recognized, but according to the Madhyamaka view, neither exists as a thing-in-itself, and therefore the dualism between them is of a relative, not an absolute, nature.

The Reality of the Sources of suffering

Just as Buddhism recognizes two types of suffering - mental and physical - so does it affirm the existence of both mental and physical causal influences that give rise to suffering. Physical injury, for example, produces physical pain and it may also result in mental anguish. On the other hand, certain attitudes such as arrogance, insecurity, craving, hostility, and jealousy may also result in mental distress, and these mental impulses may also lead one into activities that produce physical pain as well. It is also apparent that physical illnesses and

injuries do not necessarily result in mental distress - they do not do so for everyone whenever such physical events occur - and mental suffering may arise even in the absence of any apparent physical influence. For example, one may feel deeply distressed by *not* receiving a telephone call from someone. This is not to say that there are no Neuro physiological correlates to such unhappiness - that is, that there are no brain events that may be necessary for the arising of unhappiness - but it is not evident that those physical processes are the primary causes of one's distress. Indeed, Tibetan Buddhism asserts that all the mental states we experience as humans do have physiological correlates in the body, but it does not reduce the subjectively experienced mental states to purely objective, bodily states.

As the Dalai Lama has affirmed many times, if elements of Buddhist doctrine, including the Madhyamaka view, are compellingly refuted by new empirical evidence or cogent reasoning, then those Buddhist tenets must he abandoned. Many neuroscientists today claim that mental processes are in fact nothing other than brain processes: all mental events are either identical to brain events or are solely produced by them and have no existence apart from them. This view is at variance with Buddhism, so if there are compelling grounds for adopting it, Buddhist doctrine should be revised accordingly.

The ever-growing body of Neuro scientific discoveries concerning the correspondence of specific mental processes to specific neural events can be reasonably interpreted in either of two ways. This evidence might suggest that mental processes are *identical* to, or at least *concomitant* with, their corresponding brain processes. If this turns out to he the case, this could he regarded as evidence in support of the materialist view that the mind is simply a function of the brain, but this is certainly not the only logical conclusion that could he drawn from such evidence. Alternatively, such correspondences between mental and neural processes might demonstrate that mental processes occur in *dependence* upon brain processes. This suggests a causal relation between two sorts of phenomena, which leaves open the possibility that there may be other causes - possibly of a non-physical, cognitive nature - that are necessary for the production of mental processes.

Common-sense experience suggests that mental and physical events exert causal influences upon each other. It has long been known that physical stimuli from our environment and from our body influence our perceptions, our thoughts, and feelings. And mental activity - including those same perceptions, thoughts, and feelings - influences the body. Buddhists take such causal interrelatedness at face value; neither physical nor mental causal agency is discounted due to any speculative presuppositions. Buddhism regards subjectively experienced mental events as being non-physical in the sense that they are not composed of particles of matter; it regards physical events as being non-mental in the sense that they are not of the nature of cognition. Given this limited kind of dualism, what kind of physical mechanism does it posit to account for the causal interaction between these two kinds of phenomena? This question presupposes that all causation requires physical mechanisms, but Buddhists have never held this assumption.

It is not evident to me that contemporary physics refutes the limited dualist view proposed by the Madhyamaka view. Modern cosmology suggests that the physical world may have arisen from space itself, which is not composed of particles of matter and hence is not physical in the above Buddhist sense of the term. Many physicists now regard time, too, as being very like a dimension of space, and even energy itself is not necessarily a purely objective, material entity. While neuroscientists have often posited the principle of the conservation of energy as a physical law that prohibits any non-material influences in the physical world, Richard

Feynman (himself an avowed physicalist) points out that this is a mathematical principle and not a description of a mechanism or anything concrete. He adds that in physics today we have no knowledge of what energy *is*, leaving open the possibility, as the Madhyamikas propose, that energy as we conceive it is not something that exists purely objectively as an independent physical reality. Given the interchange ability of mass and energy, this raises interesting questions concerning the ontological status of matter as well.

The contemporary theoretical physicist Euan Squires explicitly claims that the conservation laws of physics should not be posited as compelling grounds for refuting dualist hypotheses of mind and matter. "Until the work of Newton, physicists believed that all forces were simply 'push/pull' effects of material bodies, but Newton's law of gravitation countered that the presence of an object at one place could influence the behaviour of another at an arbitrarily large distance away, without any intervening medium or mechanism. Thus, as Squires points out, 'materialism' in its narrowest interpretation died in the seventeenth century. Similarly, until the late nineteenth century, most scientists viewed the world from the perspective of mechanistic materialism, which required a material medium for the propagation of light. But this principle of mechanism also became obsolete when Maxwell mathematically demonstrated that no such medium was necessary, and Michelson and Morley empirically demonstrated the absence of any physical evidence for such a medium. Thus, the classical principle of mechanism died in the nineteenth century and was even more deeply entombed by twentieth-century discoveries in the field of quantum mechanics." In the examples cited above, speculative preconceptions have been dispelled by advances in knowledge, in the best spirit of scientific inquiry.

To return to the Buddhist account of mind/body interactions, if mental and physical processes do not influence each other by means of some mechanism, how do they interact? Buddhism begins by affirming the validity of our common-sense conclusion that mental and physical phenomena influence each other - a point that the scientists in this conference explicitly confirmed. This affirmation is made on the basis of a very straightforward, Buddhist definition of causality: A can be regarded as a cause of B if and only if (1) A precedes B, and (2) were the occurrence of A to have been averted, the occurrence of B would have been averted. Thus, this phenomenological theory of causality does not necessarily require mechanism. As the Dalai Lama pointed out, there is a simple, twofold classification of causality that has a strong bearing on the nature of consciousness. A may be a *substantial cause of* B, in which case it actually transforms into B, or A may be a *cooperative cause* of B, in which case it contributes to the occurrence of B, but does not transform into it. Now if mental states are in fact nothing other than brain states, then there is no problem in asserting that prior neurophysiologic events transform into mental states, and thereby act as their substantial causes. But to conclude with certainty that mental events *are identical* to their neural correlates - or that those mental events are simply a function or state of the corresponding brain states - it would have to be demonstrated empirically that the two occur simultaneously and not sequentially. This would entail knowing the precise moment when a mental event takes place and the precise moment its neural correlate take place, and ascertaining whether those two moments are simultaneous or sequential. To the best of my knowledge, this has not yet been done, and it is not clear to me how it could he done with sufficient precision. If mental events are produced from prior neural events, the two cannot be identical, in which case it is valid to ask: Do physical processes act as substantial causes or as cooperative causes for mental processes?

If physical events, in causing non-physical mental events, were to transform into them, the mass/energy of those physical events would have to disappear in the process; this is a position rejected by Buddhism and science alike, albeit for different reasons. Buddhism therefore proposes that physical processes may act as cooperative, but not substantial, causes for mental processes. In the meantime, physical events commonly act as substantial causes for subsequent physical events. But this raises the question. If preceding physical processes act only as cooperative causes for mental events, what, if anything, are the substantial causes of mental events? If mental processes had no substantial causes, this would imply that they arise from nothing; Buddhism rejects this possibility, just as it rejects the notion that physical events can arise from nothing.

The conclusion drawn by Buddhism is that prior mental events act as the substantial causes of subsequent mental events. At times, specific mental states enter a dormant state, as, for example, when visual awareness is withdrawn as one falls asleep. But the continuum of the mind is never annihilated, nor does it ever arise from nothing.

The whole of Buddhism is concerned with identifying the nature and origins of suffering, and with exploring means to eliminate suffering from its source. Relying chiefly on contemplative and logical modes of inquiry, it is concerned chiefly with mental afflictions, as opposed to physical illness, and it has attended more to the mental causes of distress than to physical causes. In its pursuit of understanding the physical causes of mental suffering, Buddhism has much to learn from modern neuroscience. There is nothing in Buddhism to refute genetic influences, electrochemical imbalances in the brain, and other types of brain damage as contributing to mental dysfunctions, but in the face of such compelling evidence, a Buddhist might ask such questions as: if two people are genetically prone to a certain type of mental disorder, why is it that one may succumb to the disease and the other not? Likewise, two people may be subjected to very similar kinds of trauma, yet their psychological responses may be very different. To limit the pursuit of such questions solely to physiological causation seems unjustified, regardless of one's metaphysical orientation. The identification of a physical cause of a mental disorder does not preclude the possibility of important psychological factors also being involved. Thus, counselling someone to avoid or more successfully manage certain kinds of circumstances that may lead to mental problems may be sound advice. However, Buddhism is more concerned with identifying and healing the inner mental processes that make one vulnerable to such outer influences. Rather than trying to control or avoid outer circumstances, Buddhism recognizes that many difficult outer circumstances are uncontrollable and at times unavoidable; therefore it focuses primarily on exploring the malleability of the mind, especially in terms of making it less prone to afflictions regardless of one's environment.

In short, Buddhism places a greater emphasis on controlling one's own mind rather than on controlling one's environment. This may be why the Dalai Lama expressed such an interest in the range of causes of such mental disorders as chronic depression, for Buddhism is concerned with counteracting the principal causes of such disorders and not simply with treating their symptoms. For all the medical advances in understanding chronic depression, Lewis Judd candidly acknowledged that antidepressants do not 'cure' these disorders; they 'treat' or 'manage' them as clinicians 'try to remove the symptoms.' This may be immensely useful in the short term, but for the long term, Buddhism stresses the importance of identifying the necessary and sufficient causes of all kinds of mental disorders with the hope that they may be eliminated and the individual may be utterly healed.

Why is it that medical science so often confines itself to explanations involving physical causation and so swiftly relegates other influences to the euphemistic category of 'placebo effects' (bearing in mind that a placebo is defined as something that has no significant medical effects)? I suspect this is largely due to the fact that for the first three hundred years following the Scientific Revolution, there was no science of the mind in the West, and for the first hundred years in the development of psychology, the nature, origins, and causal efficacy of consciousness were widely ignored, with the brief exception of a few introspectionists such as William James. As James commented, those phenomena to which we attend closely become real for us, and those we disregard are reduced to the status of imaginary, illusory appearances, equivalent finally to nothing at all. While the brain has become very real for scientists observing the objective, physical correlates of mental activity, with no comparable development of sophisticated techniques for exploring mental phenomena firsthand, such subjective phenomena as mental imagery, beliefs, emotions, and consciousness itself have been widely regarded as mere illusory epiphenomena of the brain.

Buddhist contemplatives, on the other hand, have long ignored the brain's influence on the mind and therefore attribute little if any significance to it. But they have developed a wide array of introspective, contemplative methods for training the attention, probing first-hand into the nature, origins, and causal efficacy of mental events, including consciousness itself, and for transforming the mind in beneficial ways. Centuries of experience derived from Buddhist practice suggest that the mind may be far more malleable and may hold far greater potential than is now assumed by modern science. However, as the Dalai Lama has commented elsewhere, these claims are like paper money. If we are to attribute value to them, we must be able to verify that they are backed by valid experience. Only that is the gold standard behind the currency of these Buddhist claims.

Does modern cognitive science know enough about the brain and mind to safely conclude that the hypothesis of a non-physical mind is useless? When asked what percentage of the functioning of the brain we presently understand, neuroscientist Robert Livingston replies, "Half of one percent," and Lewis Judd concurs, "we have barely scratched the surface." Nevertheless, one may still hold to a physicalist view of the mind on the grounds that there is no scientific evidence for the existence of any non-physical phenomena whatsoever, so the hypothesis of a non-physical mind should not be entertained even for a moment. This would be a very cogent conclusion if science had developed instruments for detecting the presence of non-physical phenomena and those instruments yielded negative results. However, to the best of my knowledge, no such instruments have ever been developed. Thus, the statement that there is no scientific evidence for the existence of anything non-physical is unsubstantiated. If neuroscientists had a thorough understanding of all the necessary and sufficient causes for the production of consciousness, and if all those causes turned out to he physical, then all dualist theories of the mind and brain would have to be rejected. But contemporary neuroscientists agree that they are very far from that goal.

It is pertinent to point out here that, strictly speaking, there is still no scientific evidence for the existence of consciousness! Scientists know of its existence only because they are conscious themselves, and they infer on that non-scientific basis that other similar beings are conscious as well. But how *similar* to a human being must another entity be to be deemed conscious? When it comes to the presence or absence of consciousness in unborn human foetuses and in other animals there is no scientific consensus for the simple reason that there is no scientific means of detecting the presence or absence of consciousness in anything whatsoever. This accounts for the current lack of scientific knowledge concerning the nature,

origins, and causal efficacy of consciousness. With this in mind, we now turn to the topic of the cessation of suffering and the possibility of the cessation of consciousness itself.

The Reality of the Cessation of Suffering

Once the full range of suffering has been identified and its necessary and sufficient causes discovered, Buddhism asks: Is it possible to be forever freed from suffering and its sources? Many scientists would respond with a swift affirmative: when you die, all your experiences stop, for consciousness vanishes. In other words, the cessation of suffering occurs due to personal annihilation. While this is often promoted as a scientific view, from a Buddhist perspective, the present state of Neuro scientific ignorance concerning the origins and nature of consciousness lends little credibility to any conclusions scientists may draw about the effect of biological death on consciousness.

Tibetan Buddhism asserts that during the process of dying, our normal sensory and conceptual faculties become dormant. The end result of this process, when all our normal mental faculties have withdrawn, is not the cessation of consciousness, but rather the manifestation of very subtle consciousness, from which all other mental processes originate. The presence of this subtle consciousness, according to Tibetan Buddhism, is not contingent upon the brain, nor does it entail a loss of consciousness. Rather, the experience of this consciousness is the experience of unmediated, primordial awareness, which is regarded as the fundamental constituent of the natural world. When the connection between this subtle consciousness and the body is severed, death occurs. But this consciousness does not vanish. On the contrary, from it temporarily arises a 'mental body' akin to the type of non-physical body one may assume in a dream. Following a series of dreamlike experiences subsequent to ones death, this mental body also 'perishes,' and in the next moment one's next life begins, for example in the womb of ones future mother. During the development of the foetus, the various sensory and conceptual faculties are developed in reliance upon the formation of the body. But mental consciousness is said to be present from the moment of conception.

What are the empirical grounds for this theory of metempsychosis, presented here only in outline? Many highly trained Tibetan Buddhist contemplatives claim to he able to *recall* the events of their previous death, the subsequent dreamlike experience, and the process of taking birth. In many cases they also recall detailed events from their past lives, for the memories are stored, according to this theory, in the continuum of mental consciousness that carries on from one life to another. Other people, too, may have the sense of recalling their past lives, as in the example the Dalai Lama gave of the two girls in India who purportedly recollected the names of people that they had known in previous lives. However, most people do not remember their previous lives, according to Buddhism, for those experiences are eclipsed by the more recent experiences of this life, just as most adults have few memories of their infancy in this life.

In this conference, the scientists' difficulty in understanding the Buddhist concept of subtle consciousness may appear odd, for the notion of subtle physical phenomena is common in science. For example, the electromagnetic field of a single electron is a subtle phenomenon, which can be detected only with very sophisticated instruments. Likewise, the light from galaxies billions of light years away is very subtle and can he detected only with very powerful, refined telescopes. Similarly, Buddhism posits the existence of subtle states of awareness and mental events that can he detected only with very sensitive, focused, sustained attention. Ordinary consciousness is too unrefined and unstable to detect such phenomena, but Buddhism has devised numerous techniques for training the attention, unknown to modern science, so that it can ascertain increasingly more subtle mental and physical phenomena.

While subtle states of awareness can he detected only with very refined awareness, even the grossest mental states, such as rage (which can be ascertained firsthand by an ordinary, untrained mind), cannot be directly detected with the physical instruments of modern neuroscience: they detect only the neurophysiologic correlates of such mental states and other related physical behaviour. Thus, all states of consciousness may be regarded as too subtle for modern neuroscience to detect.

Whereas belief in an afterlife or the continuity of consciousness after death is often regarded as an optimistic act of faith in the West, Buddhism counters that the belief in the automatic, eternal cessation of suffering at death due to the disappearance of consciousness is an optimistic act of faith, with no compelling empirical or rational grounds to support it. Buddhism does indeed propose that suffering, together with its source, can be radically, irreversibly dispelled, but this requires skilful, sustained refinement of the mind and the elimination of the root cause of suffering - namely, ignorance and delusion - through the cultivation of contemplative insight and knowledge. The means for developing such insight are presented in the Buddhist path to liberation.

The Reality of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering

According to Tibetan Buddhism, the fundamental root of suffering is a type of inborn ignorance regarding the nature of one's own identity, one's own consciousness, and the world of which one is conscious. This tradition claims that all but highly realized people are born with these, but they can be attenuated and even eliminated entirely. Specifically, under the influence of such inborn ignorance we grasp on the absolute duality of self and other, which leads in turn to the reification of all manner of mental and physical phenomena, as well as the division of mental and physical itself. According to the Madhyamaka view, such ignorance is to be countered by realizing the manner in which all phenomena, including oneself, exist as dependently related events as described earlier in this essay.

In addition to such inborn ignorance, human beings are subject to a second type of mental affliction known as speculative ignorance. No one is born with this kind of ignorance, rather it is acquired through false indoctrination and speculation. Buddhism maintains that as a result of adopting unfounded, speculative presuppositions, we may become more confused than we would have been without receiving any formal education whatsoever.

Thus, the proper task of Buddhist training is not to indoctrinate people into a given creed or set of philosophical tenets. Rather, it is to challenge people to examine and re-examine their own most cherished assumptions about the nature of reality. By repeatedly putting our presuppositions to the test of critical examination by way of careful observation and clear reasoning, we empower ourselves to discover and eliminate our own speculative confusion. Once this is cleared away, we are in a much more effective position to detect and vanquish the underlying, inborn ignorance and its resultant mental afflictions. In Buddhism, mental health and spiritual maturation may he measured in direct relation to one's success in overcoming these two types of mental afflictions.

With this twofold classification of ignorance in mind, let us examine the interface between Buddhism and modern science in terms of two quite disparate ways of confronting reality. One is by means of adhering to an ideology and the other is by pursuing scientific inquiry. The eminent anthropologist Clifford Ceertz comments in this regard, "Science names the structure of situations in such a way that the attitude contained toward them is one of disinterestedness.... But ideology names the structure of situations in such a way that the

attitude contained toward them is one of commitment." Ceertz regards religious belief as a paradigmatic example of an ideology, and he remarks that this involves a prior acceptance of authority, which transforms experience. In short, with respect to any ideology, one who would know must first believe.

The problem of adopting an ideology arises when there is a discrepancy between what is believed and what can be established by compelling evidence. But what constitutes compelling evidence and for whom? Scientists who are committed to physicalism are extremely sceptical of any evidence that is incompatible with that view. As Allan Hobson comments, their minds must he open about such evidence, but that opening is quite narrow. On the other hand, Tibetan Buddhists who are committed to the theory of metempsychosis are extremely sceptical of neuro-scientific claims that the mind is simply an epiphenomenon or function of the brain. Thus, with the same neuro-scientific evidence presented to them, physicalists find compelling evidence for refuting the non-physical existence of the mind, whereas traditional Tibetan Buddhists and other non-materialists do not.

Most scientists would acknowledge that they do not *know that* consciousness is nothing more than a function of the brain, and most Buddhists, I believe, would acknowledge they do not *know that* consciousness is something more than a function of the brain. And yet convictions run strong in both ways, indicating that both sides are committed to disparate ideologies. If this is true, then scientists, together with Buddhists, may he equally prone to ideologies - or to use Robert Livingston's term, 'speculative suppositions.' While the history of science is largely an account of disabusing ourselves of mistaken speculative suppositions, as Robert Livingston points out, Buddhism also places a high priority on dispelling such ignorance in order to eliminate the deeper, inborn ignorance that lies at the root of suffering.

Perhaps in order to explore this commonality, the Dalai Lama cited a threefold classification of phenomena that is made in Buddhism. The first of these categories includes phenomena that can be directly apprehended, or empirically demonstrated. The second includes those that are known by logical inference, but not directly. The third includes those that are accepted simply on the basis of someone else's testimony or authority. He hastened to add that these are not qualities inherent to different types of phenomena; rather, they are related to the limitations of our own knowledge. An event that is known to one person solely on the basis of someone else's testimony may be inferentially known by a second person; the same event may be known directly by a third person. Everyone agreed that it is the task of science to reduce the number of phenomena in the third category, and to move as many phenomena as possible from the second to the first category. This, in fact, is the goal of Buddhism as well.

Since it is widely regarded in the West simply as a religion, Buddhist doctrine is still widely regarded as an ideology, in contrast to scientific knowledge. Indeed, many Buddhists do uncritically adopt the tenets of their faith simply as a creed, without subjecting it to either empirical or rational analysis. Ideologies are commonly based not on immediate experience or on cogent, logical analysis, but on the testimony of someone else, such as the Buddha, whom one takes to be an authority. If the words of the Buddha are not accepted as authoritative, then the basis for this ideology vanishes into thin air. Even though many Buddhists do accept Buddhist doctrine in this way, the Buddha admonished his followers: "Monks, just as the wise accept gold after testing it by heating, cutting, and rubbing it, so are my words to be accepted after examining them, but not out of respect for me". Thus, unquestioning commitment to an ideology is not only unnecessary in Buddhism, it was explicitly condemned by the Buddha himself.

While scientific knowledge is commonly equated with empirical discoveries, with an ever-decreasing reliance upon inference and others' testimony, I believe even a cursory examination of the history of science demonstrates that this view is far from accurate. With the enormous specialization among the sciences and the vast amount of research that has been conducted throughout history and through-out the world today, no single individual can hope to empirically confirm the findings of the rest of the scientific community. Moreover, empirical scientific research relies upon the sophisticated tools of technology, and few scientists have the time or inclination to check the engineering of every instrument they use. For scientific knowledge to progress, scientists must rely *increasingly* on the claims of their scientific and engineering colleagues of the past and present. In most cases, I believe, that trust is well earned, but in most cases that is indeed reliance upon others' authority, not upon one's own observations or rigorous logic. As this is true within the scientific community, it is all the more true for the public at large, which provides the funding for scientific research - people regard scientists as authorities in their respective fields and accept their words on the basis of such trust. This trust is warranted by the belief that *if one were to engage in the necessary scientific training and perform a specific type of research for oneself, one could, in principle, verify other's findings empirically or at least by logical analysis*. It is with this same kind of trust that Buddhist contemplatives receive formal training in Buddhism and try to put to the test the Buddha's own purported discoveries about the nature of suffering, the source of suffering, its cessation, and the path to that cessation.

Buddhist inquiry into the above three types of phenomena proceeds by way of four principles of reason, to which the Dalai Lama referred only briefly in this meeting. To expand briefly on his comments here, the principle of dependence refers to the dependence of compounded phenomena upon their causes, such as the dependence of visual perception upon the optic nerve. It also pertains to the dependence of any type of phenomenon upon its own parts and attributes, or upon other entities, as in the interdependence of 'up' and 'down' and 'Parent' and 'child.' The principle of efficacy pertains to the causal efficacy of specific phenomena, such as the capacity of a kernel of corn to produce a stalk of corn. The principle of valid proof consists of three means by which one establishes the existence of anything: namely, direct perception, cogent inference, and knowledge based upon testimony, which correspond to the above threefold epistemological - and explicitly not ontological - classification of phenomena. The principle of reality refers to the nature of phenomena that is present in their individuating and generic properties. An individuating property of heat, for instance, is heat, and one of its generic properties is that it is impermanent. The Dalai Lama cites as examples of this principle the fact that the body is composed of particles of matter and the fact that consciousness is simply of the nature of luminosity and cognisance. These facts are simply to be accepted at face value: they are not explained by investigating the causes of the body and mind or their individual causal efficacy.

Let us apply these four principles to the materialist understanding of consciousness. According to this view, consciousness is simply a natural condition of the activated brain, much as heat is a natural condition of fire (the principle of reality). As such, consciousness vanishes as soon as the brain is no longer active (the principle of dependence), and it has no causal efficacy of its own apart from the brain (the principle of efficacy). These conclusions are based on the direct observations of neuroscientists investigating mind/brain correlates; they are inferred by philosophers who know of such correlates; and they are accepted as fact by many people who accept scientific materialism without knowing for themselves its supporting empirical facts or logical arguments (the principle of valid proof).

According to the Buddhist view, in contrast, consciousness is simply of the nature of luminosity and cognisance, much as fire is of the nature of heat (the principle of reality). Specific states of consciousness arise in dependence upon the sense organs, sensory objects, and prior, non-physical states of consciousness (the principle of dependence); and they, in turn, exert influences on subsequent mental and physical states, including indirect influences on the outside physical world (principle of efficacy). These conclusions are purportedly based on the direct observations of contemplatives who have thoroughly fathomed the nature of consciousness; they are inferred by philosophers on the basis of others' experiences; and they are accepted as fact by many Buddhists who accept Buddhist doctrine without knowing for themselves its supporting empirical facts or logical arguments (the principle of valid proof).

In evaluating these two radically different ways of understanding consciousness, the central question arises: which people are deemed to be authorities on consciousness due to their privileged, direct knowledge? Modern Westerners may look with deep scepticism upon anyone claiming to be an authority who is not an accomplished neuroscientist. Traditional Tibetan Buddhists, on the other hand, may look with equal scepticism upon anyone claiming to be an authority on consciousness who has not accomplished advanced degrees of meditative concentration by which to explore the nature of the mind introspectively. By what criteria does one judge who is and who is not an authority who can provide reliable testimony? In other words, whose direct observations are to be deemed trustworthy? I strongly suspect that answers to these questions must address the role of ideology, and perhaps it will turn out to he true that one who would know - either through inference or on the basis of authoritative testimony - must first believe. These questions certainly deserve to be examined in much greater detail, especially in the context of such cross-cultural dialogue. Before closing, I would like to raise one final issue that is central to Buddhism and to the Dalai Lama himself, and that is compassion. As the Dalai Lama has commented many times, philosophical and religious theories vary from culture to culture, and scientific theories are subject to change over time, but the importance of love and compassion is a constant throughout human history. The Tibetan Buddhist path to liberation and spiritual awakening likewise places an equal emphasis on the cultivation of insight and compassion. Indeed, the experiential knowledge sought in Buddhism is said to support and enhance one's compassion, and any view that undermines compassion is viewed with extreme scepticism. It was perhaps with this in mind that at one point in this conference the Dalai Lama asked the Western participants whether they, - who asserted the identity of the mind (and implicitly the person) with the brain-could feel affection for a brain. Antonio Damasio perhaps best expressed the general response among the neuroscientists: "What I can feel affection for is a particular individual, a person whom I know... I don't feel any affection whatsoever [for brains]." Lewis Judd commented in a similar vein, "the physician is dedicating his or her knowledge and skills on behalf of the patient as a totality, as a person, not to some fractional part or organ system.... The patient is not just a diseased liver or diseased brain, or whatever. The patient is an integrated, whole person.' But where is this 'particular individual' or 'whole person' to be found? According to physicalism, is this anything more than a baseless illusion, in which case, doesn't this ideology critically undermine love and compassion?

According to the Madhyamaka view, a person cannot he identified with the mind alone or with the brain or the rest of the body. But no individual can he found under analysis apart from the body and mind either. No 'I', or self, can be found under such ontological scrutiny, so Madhyamikas conclude, like many neuroscientists today, that the self does not exist objectively or inherently, independently of conceptual designation. However, the

Madhyamikas add that while none of us exist as independent things, we do exist in interrelationship with each other. Thus, we do not exist in alienation from other sentient beings and from our surrounding environment; rather, we exist in profound interdependence, and this realization is said to yield a far deeper sense of love and compassion than that which is conjoined with a reified sense of our individual separateness and autonomy.

Whatever fresh insights may be arise from the collaboration of Buddhists and neuroscientists, it is my hope that these may lead us to become more and more 'warm-hearted persons.' I would like to conclude this essay with the Dalai Lama's own concluding words: "Whether compassion has an independent existence within the self or not, compassion certainly is, in daily life, I think, the foundation of human hope, the source and assurance of our human future."

(From B. Allan Wallace et al., *Consciousness at the Crossroads*, Snow Lion, 1999, p.153-173)

The Initial Level of Mahamudra Meditation

The Definition of Mind

Having discussed the preliminaries, let us now turn to the actual practice of mahamudra - meditation on the nature of mind. When we raise the topic of the nature of mind, we of course need to explore first what we mean by 'mind.' This is because if we are asked to focus and meditate on the nature of mind or on mind itself, we may find it not very obvious what we are intended to do.

To investigate this, we must look closely at the definition of 'mind' in Buddhism. As soon as we look at the standard definition, we discover that Buddhism is talking about something quite different from what we mean by any of our corresponding Western words. Even in Western languages, there is no consensus on the meaning of 'mind.' If we speak just in terms of English and German, there is a great difference between the English word 'mind' and the German word 'Geist.' 'Geist' also has the connotation of 'spirit,' which is not included in the English concept of 'mind.' The classical Asian Buddhist languages of Sanskrit and Tibetan speak of something quite different from both, and the difference between what they refer to as 'mind' and what the corresponding Western terms refer to is much greater than that between the referents of the equivalent English and German terms. The problem of how to translate the Buddhist concept into a Western word is, obviously, very challenging.

In Western languages we differentiate clearly between mind and heart, or intellect and feelings. We think of the intellectual, rational side as 'mind' and the emotional, intuitive side as 'heart,' something quite different from mind. Many Westerners would say that although a dog has emotions, it has no mind. In Buddhism, however, we do not make such a large gap between intellect and emotions. We incorporate the functions of both under the rubric of one word – 'chitta' in Sanskrit or 'sem' in Tibetan - and include as well in the scope of its meaning all sense perception, such as seeing, hearing, smelling and so on. Thus, although we translate 'chitta' or 'sem' with the English word 'mind' or the German word 'Geist,' the Sanskrit and Tibetan Buddhist terms encompass a much larger scope of meaning than that of either the English or German renderings of them.

The problem is not limited to Western languages. Mongolian also differentiates between the intellectual and emotional sides, but, unlike English, uses the term for the latter, 'setgil,' in Buddhist texts. The Chinese translators as well chose a word meaning heart, 'xin,' which the Japanese also accepted and used. The issue of what is mind brings to the surface many fundamental differences in cultural world views.

If we want to find a better synonym for the Indo-Tibetan terms in European languages, perhaps the closest equivalent is the word 'experience,' although this word, too, is not quite precise. We do not include in its meaning here experience in the sense of familiarity and expertise through repetition, as in: "This doctor has a great deal of experience." Furthermore, in Western languages, to experience something often implies to feel emotions about it, either positive or negative. We feel we have not really experienced something deeply unless we have consciously been moved by it on an emotional level. This is also not included in the Buddhist notion. Nor is there any connotation of evaluation, as in: "I learned a lot from that experience." In the Buddhist context, experience is merely whatever happens to us, whatever occurs.

In the Buddhist discussion of mind, then, we are not talking about some sort of 'thing' or organ that is in our head, like the brain. Nor are we talking about a space, as is implied by the Western expression, "Imagine in your mind this or that" - as if mind were a stage or room in our head through which thoughts parade or in which memories are stored. Rather, we are talking about some sort of occurrence that is happening on the basis of the brain and nervous system.

What is happening when we see, hear or think something? Although we may be able to describe the occurrence biochemically or electro-chemically, we can also describe it subjectively. This latter is what we mean by 'mind' in Buddhism. When we see, hear, think or emotionally feel something, there is an experience from moment to moment. This is what is happening. Furthermore, experience always has contents. An equivalent way of saying that is: "Mind always has an object." In fact, 'mind' in Sanskrit and Tibetan is also called "that which has an object."

The Non-dualism of Subject and Object

Buddha taught the non-duality of that which has an object and its object - usually translated as the "non-duality of subject and object." We must understand this point correctly, otherwise we may mistakenly think that Buddha contradicted himself when he also taught that mind always has an object. We may think this implies that since the two are different, they are dual. If we become angry with the table, the non-duality of subject and object, however, does not mean that my anger is the table. Non-duality does not render mind and its objects totally identical - one and the same thing.

Experience always has contents. We cannot have an experience without experiencing something. A thought does not exist without a thinking of the thought, and no one can think without thinking a thought. Non-dual, then, means that in any moment, these two things - mind and its object, or experience and its contents - always come together as one entity. Putting this in simple, everyday language, we can say they always come together in the same package. There cannot be one without the other. Therefore, in Buddhism 'mind' always refers to experience and the contents of experience.

Clarity – The Arising of the Contents of an Experience

The standard Buddhist definition of mind or experience contains three words: 'clarity,' 'awareness' and 'merely.' It is usually rendered as "mere clarity and awareness." As each word of the definition is significant, we need to explore carefully each of their meanings. Let us look first at the term 'clarity.'

The most crucial point to note is that this word needs to be taken as a verbal noun with an object, not as a quantitative noun referring to something that can be measured. Clarity is not some sort of light in our head that has varying intensity. Rather, it is the action, or occurrence of the action, of being clear about something or making something clear. Making something clear, however, does not imply a conscious act of will. It merely happens. Furthermore, the word 'clear' itself is also misleading. Let us examine its meaning as well.

'Clarity' is glossed in Tibetan as 'arising' - the same word used for the rising or dawning of the sun. "Being clear about something" or "making something clear," then, actually refer to the "arising of something" or the event of "making something arise," although, again, with no implication of passivity or lack of responsibility on the one hand, or conscious will on the

other. The expression, "giving rise to something," perhaps minimizes the connotation of these two extremes.

What occurs when we experience something? There is the giving rise to something. For ease of expression, we need to say, "mind gives rise to something." This is preferable to saying, "something arises." "Something arises" puts too much emphasis on what is happening from the side of the object, whereas the accent needs to be more on the subjective side. The phrase, "mind gives rise to something," however, also has its shortcomings. It is just a convenient manner of expression. Mind is not an entity or 'thing,' so there is nothing that is actually an agent giving rise to anything. The word 'mind' is simply a term mentally labelled onto the occurrence of the subjective event of the giving rise to something.

When we experience something, mind gives rise to a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, a tactile or bodily sensation, a thought, a feeling, an emotion or a dream. Even when we are asleep with no dreams, mind gives rise to a darkness. Subjectively, there is always the arising of something. What arises, however, does not necessarily have to appear directly. When we hear that the fat lady does not eat during the day, we know that she must eat at night, because she is fat. Our mind does not give rise to the sight of her eating at night, however, although there is the arising of the understanding of that fact.

The major shortcoming of using the word 'clarity' in this context is that 'clarity' implies that whatever is clear is in focus if it is visual, or understood if it is conceptual. But that is not necessarily the case. When we take off our glasses and look at someone, our mind gives rise to a blur, and when we do not understand what someone says, it gives rise to confusion. In both cases, there is the arising of something. Conventionally, it would be awkward to say that a blur or confusion is clear.

Awareness – An Engaging with the Contents of an Experience

Arisings, namely of images, also occur with mirrors, photographic plates and computer screens. Therefore, in order to differentiate mind from a mirror, the next word, 'awareness,' is added to the definition. Again, this is a verbal noun with an object, not a quantitative one. It is "being aware of something" or "making something an object of awareness," but not necessarily as a conscious act of will.

The English term 'awareness,' however, is also misleading. The Tibetan term is explained as an engaging with or relating to an object. Unlike the English words 'engagement' or 'relation,' however, the Tibetan carries no connotation of an emotional bond. Being detached about something is also a form of engagement with it or a way of relating to it. The Tibetan word translated here as 'engagement'' or 'in relation'' literally means an "entering into something." It connotes doing something cognitive with an object. It can be, for example, seeing, hearing, thinking or feeling it. That is what is happening when we experience something. There is an arising of something and an engaging with it in a cognitive way. There is the arising of a sight and the seeing of it, the arising of a thought and the thinking of it, and so on. For ease of expression, and with all the previously mentioned qualifications, we would say that mind gives rise to something and apprehends it.

The English word 'awareness' is misleading here in the sense that it implies that we understand something and are conscious of it. But that is not necessarily the case. Not understanding something is just as much a form of engaging with an object as is understanding it. Whether we are conscious or unconscious of something, we can still experience it. For instance, we can be talking to somebody with unconscious hostility. Even

though our hostility is unconscious, it still exists. We still experience it and it produces an effect. Thus the scope of the Buddhist concept usually translated as 'awareness' is much larger than that of the equivalent English word.

In every moment, then, there is an arising and a cognitive engagement with something. These two do not occur one after the other, however. It is not the case that first a thought arises and then we think it. The process is not of two events happening consecutively, but of two functions occurring simultaneously. Mind gives rise to a thought and thinks it simultaneously. This is going on each moment for every being with a mind. This is the experience not only of life, but even of death.

Merely

The third word of the definition, 'merely,' sets the basic minimum that needs to occur for there to be experience. Mind needs merely to give rise to something and cognitively engage with it in some manner. 'Merely,' then, excludes the need for there to be any significant strength of attentiveness to the contents of an experience - in Western terminology, consciousness of them. It also excludes the need for there to be any significant level of understanding, emotion or evaluation. An experience is simply a cognitive event.

Thus deep sleep with no dreams is also an experience. We cannot say that when we are asleep with no dreams we do not have a mind anymore, or that the mind is no longer functioning. If the mind were turned off during sleep, how could it ever perceive the sound of the alarm clock so that it could turn back on again? The experience of deep sleep, then, entails mind giving rise to a darkness and engaging with it in the manner of being absorbed with only minimal attention to sensory perception.

Furthermore, the word 'merely' also excludes there being (1) a solid, concrete 'me' or 'mind' inside our head that is experiencing or controlling experience as its agent, (2) a solid, concrete object as the content 'out there' that is being experienced, and (3) a solid, concrete 'experience' that is occurring between the two. Cognitive events merely occur. Conventionally we can say "I am having the experience of this or that," and subjectively it appears like that, but none of the items involved can exist independently of each other. In other words, the three spheres involved in an experience - a subject (either a person or a mind), a content and an experience itself - are all devoid of this impossible way of existing. 'Merely,' however, does not deny that experience actually occurs and is always individual. Just as Tsongkapa has emphasized in his presentation of voidness that we must be careful not to refute either too much or too little, likewise we must be cautious with the word 'merely' also not to exclude either too much or too little.

Summary of the Buddhist Definition of Mind

In summary, mind in Buddhism refers to experience, namely the mere arising and cognitive engaging with the contents of experience. The continuity of experience is known as the mind-stream, or 'mental continuum.' It is always individual, with each moment of experience following from previous moments of experience according to the karmic laws of behavioural cause and effect. There is order in the universe, and 'my' experience is never 'your' experience. If I experience eating a meal, I and not you will next experience the physical sensation of being full. Buddhism does not posit a universal or collective mind.

The never-ceasing, moment-to-moment event of arising and engaging that constitutes experience, then, refers to the arising of a sight and merely seeing it, the arising of a sound

and merely hearing it, the arising of a thought and merely thinking it, the arising of an emotion and merely feeling it, and so on. This is the conventional nature of mind - it gives rise to things and apprehends them. Its deepest nature is its voidness, namely that it is devoid of existing in any impossible manner, from being a physical entity itself up to involving a solid, concrete subject, content or experience. Such a mind, then, with these two levels of true nature - or "two levels of truth" - is the topic of mahamudra meditation.

(From H.H. the Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyu Tradition of Mahamudra*, Snow Lion, 1997, p59-65)

The Nature of Mind
By B Allan Wallace 2001
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The topic for today's lecture concerns the nature of the mind. Simply put, the essential nature of the mind is luminosity and cognizance. In fact I feel there will be great value in long-term dialogue and collaboration between Buddhists and neurobiologists, those who are studying the nature and functioning of the brain. In this regard, topics for collaborative research and discussion might include the relationship between the body and mind and the ways in which memory operates. Another topic is the manner in which habitual propensities in the mind manifest in experience. Up till now, I have been able to participate in dialogues with various groups of cognitive scientists on a number of occasions, and I have found my understanding increasing with each such opportunity. Both neuroscientists and Buddhists may benefit from such collaboration. I have derived benefit from these conversations, and the neuroscientists themselves also appear to have gained some fresh perspectives and ideas as a result of these dialogues.

Now I would like to address the nature of the mind and related issues as they are understood within Tibetan Buddhism. As I am sure all of you know, the root, or foundation, of the whole of the Buddhist teachings is known as the Four Noble Truths. Among the Four Noble Truths, the First Noble Truth, the Truth of Suffering, introduces the nature of suffering. The reason for this is because we are averse to suffering, and this subject is taught in terms of feelings. Among the three types of suffering, the first, called blatant suffering, is that very feeling of pain or suffering itself.

Secondly, that which is called suffering of change is in fact the tainted feeling of pleasure. The third form of suffering known as the ubiquitous suffering of conditioning pertains to the feeling of indifference, which is neither pleasure nor pain. Now all these three types of suffering pertain to feeling as it is directly related to consciousness. So the First Noble Truth, the Truth of Suffering, has a deep relevance to the nature of consciousness.

The Second Noble Truth, the Truth of the Origin of Suffering, pertains to mental afflictions and to karma, or the actions induced by mental afflictions. There are some Buddhist schools that assert that some voluntary karmas are in fact of a material nature. But on the whole, Buddhist theory asserts that the nature of karma is a mental factor pertaining to volition. Therefore, karma, being of the nature of volition, is of the nature of consciousness. And mental afflictions are certainly expressions of consciousness as well.

As for the Third Noble Truth, the Noble Truth of Cessation, although cessation itself is not consciousness, it is an attribute of consciousness. The Fourth Noble Truth, the Truth of the Path to Cessation, involves excellent qualities of the mind, or of consciousness, specifically those qualities that lead to liberation. In terms of the presentation of samsara, the cycle of existence, and nirvana, liberation, if the mind is not subdued, there is samsara, and if the mind is subdued, there is nirvana.

Given the tremendous importance of the mind, certain philosophical schools within Buddhism maintain that all phenomena are of the nature of the mind. They maintain that external objects‹in the sense of phenomena that are totally independent of the mind‹do not exist. But the most predominant philosophical school within Tibetan Buddhism does not take that position. Rather, it says that physical, external entities, different in nature from the mind, do exist. In short, among Tibetan Buddhists there are some who deny the existence of eternal entities that are not of the nature of the mind; but for the most part, Tibetan Buddhist philosophers do assert the existence of such external entities. There is a great deal of debate about this point.

Regarding the Buddhist classifications of the five psycho-physical aggregates, the twelve sense-bases, and the eighteen elements of existence, the mind is included among the twelve sense-bases and the eighteen elements. Among the five psycho-physical aggregates, the aggregates of feelings, recognition, and consciousness are all aspects of the mind. The aggregate of compositional factors includes both mental and non-mental phenomena. So among the five aggregates, most are of the nature of consciousness. So if each of these aggregates could vote, those that are of the nature of the mind would win by a landslide! (His Holiness says with a chuckle.) I should add that the fifth aggregate is the aggregate of form. So the five aggregates are form, recognition, feelings, compositional factors, and consciousness. Among those five, only one is completely non-mental, while feelings, recognition, and consciousness are of the nature of the mind, and compositional factors are of two sorts‹some of the nature of consciousness and some not.

The Lord Buddha said that if one trains the mind, there is joy, and if the mind is undisciplined, there is suffering. In this way, the Buddha placed great emphasis on the mind. Thus, the basis which is to be purified is the mind. If it is trained, there is nirvana, or liberation, and if it is not trained, one continues in the cycle of existence know as samsara. The principle things that must be purified are the contaminations of the mind, and these also are mental. That which purifies the mind is excellent qualities, or states, of the mind. The results of having purified the mind also consist of excellent qualities, or states, of the mind.

The fundamental criterion for determining what does and what does not exist hinges on whether or not something is apprehended by valid cognition. It is not sufficient for something to be merely cognized or merely to appear to the mind; rather when the mind apprehends something, this cognition must be incapable of refutation. That is, when an object is apprehended by the mind, it must be incapable of being invalidated by some other sound knowledge. Thus, the criterion for existence itself pertains to the mind, specifically to valid cognition. Therefore, some Westerners interested in Buddhism maintain that Buddhism is actually not a religion, but a science of the mind. I think there are some grounds for such a claim.

Now what is the nature of the mind? First of all, the Tibetan term for consciousness, *shepa*, is actually a verb used in such expressions as "One knows," or "I know," so it indicates an activity. Thus, one speaks of consciousness on the basis of the ability to know. In terms of the internal classifications of consciousness, we designate two categories of consciousness. The first of these is sensory consciousness, which has for its dominant contributing condition something physical. Secondly, there is mental consciousness, whose dominant contributing condition is not physical. Another

classification distinguishes between the mind and mental factors. The mind apprehends the sheer presence, or nature, of its object, whereas mental factors apprehend specific attributes of the apprehended object. The Vaibashika school of Buddhist philosophy asserts that consciousness apprehends its object nakedly, or without mediation, implying the existence of "image-free" consciousness. In contrast, the Sautrantika philosophical school and all of the higher philosophical systems [namely, the Yogacara and Madhyamaka schools] assert that consciousness apprehends its object by way of images. Therefore, they state that consciousness arises with images. Another classification is made in terms of conceptual and non-conceptual cognition. Conceptual cognitions apprehend their objects by way of generic ideas, whereas nonconceptual cognitions, such as perception, apprehend their objects experientially more directly, which is to say, not by way of generic ideas.

In terms of the ways in which consciousness apprehends an object, first of all there is false cognition, which simply misapprehends its object. It is totally mistaken. Secondly, there is doubt, or uncertainty, in which cognition waivers between two options. Then there is belief, which is simply an opinion, without any compelling rational or empirical basis. Next, there is inference which is based upon conclusive reasons or evidence. And finally, there is perception, which apprehends its object experientially. So we have many types of cognition.

It is extremely important to distinguish between mistaken cognition and valid cognition.

For the most part, those types of cognition that lead to suffering are mistaken cognitions, which do not accord with reality. Many states of consciousness that lead to suffering are out of accord with reality and are mistaken. The remedies for those states of consciousness are valid cognitions that do accord with reality. So it is very important to investigate the distinction between cognitions that are delusive and those that are accurate. How is this to be done? Both mistaken and valid cognitions are alike insofar as they both do exist, both arise and are experienced. Now our task is to investigate those which are and are not mistaken. This needs to be done with reference to reality, to those phenomena that are apprehended by the mind.

The question of the relationship between reality and appearances arises everywhere, for there can be a disparity between how things appear and how they exist. This must be examined closely. In light of the importance of investigating the nature of reality and not simply relying on appearances, within the context of the Buddha's own teachings, it is also crucial to investigate rationally whether or not a certain teaching is to be taken literally.

Such investigation is to be done with the mind, of course, and not simply with the instruments of technology. In order to counteract a completely mistaken cognition, one pursues logical consequences in order to bring about valid inference, or one may use conclusive syllogisms. Syllogisms entail reasoning’s sometimes used to affirm the existence of a given entity or the validity of a given proposition and sometimes to refute the existence of something or to show the fallacy of a certain proposition.

That is, at times one may infer the existence of a given entity, and sometimes the nonexistence of something may be inferred. Given that twofold distinction, the

syllogisms are sometimes negative in the sense that they demonstrate the absence of something, and sometimes they are affirmative in the sense of affirming the existence of the given object. Therefore, analysis is central to logical reasoning. Because of the centrality of logical analysis and investigation within Buddhist philosophy, I think there is a great potential for dialogue and collaboration between Buddhist philosophy and Western philosophy.

I have had conversations with some philosophers who have told me that according to some schools of thought, the very existence of universals is refuted, for the distinction between universals and specifics is rejected. I have also heard there are others who deny the Law of the Excluded Middle. In Buddhism we assert that if one apprehends the opposite of an affirmative entity, this refutes the existence of that entity. In contrast, it seems in some philosophical systems; the Law of the Excluded Middle is not accepted. This is definitely a topic for further discussion and collaborative investigation. If there is disagreement between Buddhist and Western philosophers on this point, we don't simply want to leave it at that and say, "Oh, they're different." Rather, we need to investigate the reasons why philosophers take the positions that they do. So this calls for further investigation. If, upon careful investigation, it turns out that there are compelling reasons for dispensing with the Law of the Excluded Middle, this would call into question many of the pivotal reasoning's within the Buddhist philosophy. In that case, I would have to sit back and scratch my head a bit (His Holiness remarks with a chuckle).

From a Buddhist perspective, the reason for engaging in such investigation is not simply to gain greater knowledge about the world. Rather, our goal is to bring about a transformation in the mind. This doesn't occur simply by prayer or by wishing that the mind will change. The mind isn't transformed with that alone, is it? The mind is transformed by ascertaining various facets of reality. For example, if you have a certain assumption about reality and you subject this assumption to investigation and consequently find evidence that invalidates your prior assumption, then the more you focus on this evidence, the more the previous assumption will decrease in power, and the power of your fresh insight will increase. Thus, most good qualities of the mind accord with reality, which is to say, they are reasonable. They are grounded upon sound evidence. The mind is transformed when one ascertains and thoroughly acquaints oneself with fresh insights into the nature of reality that invalidate one's previous misconceptions or false assumptions. For example, within Buddhism, we speak of faith, or confidence. If one's faith is based simply upon authority‹because the assertion one believes was stated by an authoritative person or scripture‹such faith is not very stable or reliable. In contrast, there is another type of faith that arises in dependence upon careful, sustained investigation. Such faith is based upon knowledge. Qualities, such as faith and compassion that are to be nurtured as one follows one's spiritual path are to be cultivated on the basis of reasoning and knowledge. They are actually supported by wisdom even though they themselves are not wisdom. By means of such investigation, one's mistaken cognitions are decreased and one's valid cognitions are increased. On the other hand, it is all right if some people want to approach the study of Buddhism purely academically in order to increase their erudition.

Within Buddhist Tantra, or Vajrayana, there are classifications of different degrees of subtlety of consciousness. For example, there is a threefold classification of waking

consciousness, dreaming consciousness, and the consciousness of dreamless sleep. All of these are investigated. More subtle than any of those is the state of consciousness when one has fainted. Finally, the most subtle form of consciousness occurs during the dying process. I believe that it would be very fruitful to investigate the relationship between the mind and brain in relation to these various degrees of subtlety of consciousness.

It may be more appropriate to speak of these more subtle mental states as types of potential consciousness. It seems that accounts of these more subtle states of mind do not refer to consciousness having a clearly apprehended object or to which some object appears and is discerned. When the more coarse forms of consciousness (the five sensory consciousnesses and mental consciousness) manifest, these more subtle states of mind remain latent. But when the appropriate conditions or catalysts arise, these more subtle states of mind may become manifest and fully conscious. In Vajrayana Buddhism the most subtle state of consciousness is known as clear light. In terms of categories of consciousness, there is one type of consciousness that consists of a permanent stream, or an unending continuity; and there are other forms of consciousness whose continuum comes to an end. Both these levels of consciousness, one consisting of an endless continuum and the other of a finite continuum have a momentary nature. That is to say, they arise from moment to moment, and they are constantly in a state of flux. So the permanence of the first kind is only in terms of its continuum. The most subtle consciousness consists of such an eternal continuum, while the stream of the grosser states of consciousness does end. Within Buddhist philosophy there is another point about which there is considerable debate. On the one hand, if one looks at a stream of moments of consciousness, it is asserted that one moment of consciousness may apprehend another, preceding moment of consciousness. But Buddhist philosophers raise the further question as to whether it is possible for a single moment of consciousness to apprehend itself. There is a lot of discussion and investigation into this point.

That is a general overview of Buddhist theories concerning the nature of the mind. Since you are establishing a program for Tibetan Buddhist studies here, you will have the opportunity to research and investigate these matters at greater length. I believe there will certainly be much benefit in that. I wish to thank you all for making this program of study possible.

As there are issues that have remained unresolved concerning the nature of the mind after more than two thousand years of Buddhist investigation into these matters, I suspect that some of these may still remain unresolved even after your program of studies is established (His Holiness closes his lecture on a note of laughter). But finally, whether we really solve these problems or not, I think in this life we should have a more open mind, or warm heart. That is, I think, more practical, or useful. Thank you very much!

With Natasha Mitchell
Sunday 14 September 2003, repeated the following Wednesday

Meditation and the Mind: Science Meets Buddhism

This week the Dalai Lama joins behavioral scientists and other Buddhist intellectuals at MIT in Massachusetts - in what has become a regular meeting of minds. Can modern science make use of Buddhism's 2,500 year investigation of the mind? Mathieu Ricard, a buddhist monk at Shechen Monastery in Kathmandu and French interpreter for the Dalai Lama, and neuroscientist Richard Davidson both think so. And they both join Natasha Mitchell to discuss destructive emotions, the science of subjective experience, and the latest on the neuroscience of meditation.

Transcript:

Natasha Mitchell: Hello, welcome to All in the Mind, Natasha Mitchell with you, thanks for joining me. Well this weekend some of the world's leading behavioral scientists and Buddhist intellectuals are getting together with the Dalai Lama at MIT for the 11th Mind and Life Gathering. It's become a regular talk fest of sorts between the two camps based on the question of whether modern neuroscience can make use of Buddhism's two and a half thousand year investigation of the mind through meditation practice. The goals are similar but the approach is radically different. Is Buddhism really a contemplative science as it's sometimes called? And what do each have to say about destructive emotions like hate or jealousy?

A few weeks ago we heard from Nobel Laureate psychologist Daniel Kahneman who alluded to his collaboration with leading neuroscientist Professor Richard Davidson in their efforts to locate neurological markers in the brain for happiness. Well, Davidson is one of the big figures at the gathering, he's Director of the Laboratory for Effective Neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and a meditator himself, he's been scanning the brains of novice mediators and monks and published some very interesting results this year.

Mathieu Ricard is at the meeting too, French born, he's been a Buddhist monk for more than 20 years based in Kathmandu and he's the French interpreter for the Dalai Lama. His books include The Quantum and the Lotus, and The Monk and the Philosopher, but his career started in science with a PhD in cell genetics.

I caught them both last month before they headed off to this weekend's conference, Mathieu on a rather crummy line from Nepal and Richard Davidson in a studio in Wisconsin.

Richard Davidson: In some sense for me as a scientist working with individuals who have spent quite a bit of time training their mind is actually a more vigorous and scientific way to proceed in looking at relations between brain events and mental events because we are working with individuals whose minds, if you will, are as well calibrated as our instruments, as our physiological instruments. In those individuals we should expect to see more robust associations between specific neural events and reports of their mental experiences than we would see in individuals who are untrained.

When I spend time with these people it reinforces my belief that there is something important and very positive that can be derived from these kinds of practices and it transforms our notion of the mind as not a fixed entity but rather as something that

can be sculpted and shaped through the systematic cultivation of these kinds of practices.

Natasha Mitchell: It's a rich liaison. Mathieu Ricard this engagement with science is certainly no stranger to you as a Buddhist monk for more than 20 years either because you started of as molecular biologist with a PhD in cell genetics all those years ago.

Mathieu Ricard: Yes I think for me it was also a continuation, I was investigating genetics and mapping the chromosome of some bacteria and then for me it was just a straight line to continue in what I call 'contemplative science', because science is about discovery, but here the domain is the mind looking at itself. We always imagine science with a lot of complicated apparatus but if it is the mind trying to investigate itself - by looking how the thoughts arise, how the emotions form, how they multiply, how they invade your mind, how you could possibly disengage your mind from being a slave of those emotions - so in that you have the best apparatus since you are born and until you die.

And it's just because precisely because of the meeting in the last 10-15 years between cognitive scientists and meditators that suddenly it turns out that it's just not like a 'nice relaxation' but is something that with a sustained effort really leads to permanent and profound change which is actually positive.

Natasha Mitchell: Mathieu you've described Buddhism as a contemplative science, another Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman has described Buddhism as "an inner science, an empirical discipline fulfilling our minds' potential", and yet this is something that very much interests me because science prides itself on its objectivity. So central to its method of investigating the natural world is this notion of objectivity and yet so central to Buddhism is the key role of subjectivity, actually using the mind to investigate itself. Surely this must produce a deep schism in a sense between science and Buddhism from the very beginning?

Mathieu Ricard: OK so yes, well you see it turns out at the end of the 19th Century psychologists tried introspection found it's a highly unreliable subject because no two people will report the same thing, and they dropped that out. And the reason seems that the tool, that is the mind itself, was not properly trained.

I think that 'subjectivity', it's not such a negative term, it simply means the first person experience. It's subjective in the sense that if the mind is precisely looking at all its mechanisms - how a thought will arise - and usually we don't attend to that with very accurate mindfulness, we're not vigilant to the way thoughts arise, we just let them arrive and then we watch the result. But now if we very precisely look at when a thought arrives, what it does, how could it possibly vanish instead of multiplying - all that is very empirical. It can be reproduced because if people describe the same process again and again, so all that is something that has the character of science because it's experimental, you can reproduce it, you can hypothesize if I do this, I do that, what will happen and then you have results which contemplatives reproduce among each other.

Natasha Mitchell: Richard Davidson, let's come to some of the work that you've been doing which really is an extension of your many years of work looking at our expression of emotions and the role that emotions have in our well being and in our essential nature as humans. You have actually been putting monks and meditators under brain scans.

Richard Davidson: Yes, we've been doing two kinds of research on meditation, one is work with individuals who in fact are naïve to meditation, where we train them with a short term program of meditation based on certain Buddhist meditation practices and then look at changes that occur over a relatively short period of time, just over the course of several months. What's actually remarkable is that we find any changes over such a short period of time, but in fact, we've recently published an article showing significant changes in certain measures of both brain and immune function that were produced by this very short-term course of mindfulness meditation.

The second kind of work we've done is work with experts, people who have spent many years in contemplative practice who have really very finely honed their skills in these practices, and that work is still very much ongoing. And it really represents I think a radical experiment in cross cultural and trans-disciplinary science because here the Buddhist practitioner becomes not a subject but a collaborator, given their expertise in contemplative science in helping us to understand the nature of the data that we're collecting, helping us to design appropriate experiments to capture some of the specific qualities of mind that maybe produced. One particular domain of work that has I think been extremely influential is work on plasticity of the brain, which indicates that the brain really is the organ that is built to change in response to experience. That gives a solid foundation for asking how meditation might change the brain in ways that maybe helpful.

Natasha Mitchell: Let's come to some of your results with people that you trained up over a period of time in mindfulness meditation and part of that process will also be tapping into some of the incredible observations you've been making over the years about how emotions reside in the brain, and how there's a variation in how emotions work in the brain across the two hemispheres of the brain.

Richard Davidson: That's right, and so one of the questions that we were interested in examining at the outset was whether meditation might change a specific pattern of activation in the pre-frontal cortex which we have previously associated with different emotional dispositions.

We have evidence to suggest that individuals who exhibit at base line - just in their resting state so to speak - greater activation in certain regions of the left pre-frontal cortex, those individuals have a more positive dispositional mood, that is they are happier people and there's a whole constellation of characteristics that we've discovered which is associated with that pattern.

And what we wanted to see is whether a short intervention of meditation, in this case it was two month course, whether individuals would show a change over that period of time in this direction compared to a control group of people that were not engaged in this meditation.

Natasha Mitchell: And what did you find?

Richard Davidson: And what we found is that individuals who participated showed a significant increase in activation in left pre-frontal regions of their brain. That was associated with a reduction in the amount of anxiety that they reported. And we also found remarkably that there was a change in the immune system in these individuals, compared to individuals who were in our control group. We found that to be particularly remarkable.

Natasha Mitchell: It's extraordinary.

Richard Davidson: Given the brevity of the training, it suggests that meditation was producing systematic changes in both the brain and the body in directions that were positive.

Natasha Mitchell: And just to clarify this last finding a flu vaccine was given to the control group and the meditating group after the course. The meditators produced more anti-bodies in response to the vaccine; their immune response was significantly more robust.

Neuroscientist Richard Davidson and Buddhist monk Mathieu Ricard are my guests this week. Natasha Mitchell with you for All in the Mind and you're tuned to ABC Radio National coming to you internationally also on Radio Australia and the web.

Well, a critical issue in applying science to meditation is how do we differentiate between meditating and just sitting still? Is there a difference? Here's Richard Davidson.

Richard Davidson: Well in terms of that question there are other kinds of research which have addressed that and certainly in the studies that we've been doing with expert practitioners we have them sitting still not in formal meditation and we compare that to when they are in formal meditation. They serve as their own controls. I can tell you with a lot of confidence from the inspection of our results so far that sitting still versus being in meditation does produce very clear difference in the brain.

Natasha Mitchell: Well this really suggests preliminarily at least that meditation does actively change in an ongoing way the emotional content of our minds. Mathieu; can I just come to you, what has traditionally been the Buddhist view about the role of our various emotions and certainly destructive emotions? Certainly Buddhist practice in my mind is about eliminating destructive emotions.

Mathieu Ricard: Well, you see we don't differentiate emotion in the same way as modern scientists.

So, for instance a strong desire or craving could be by some modern psychologists a positive in the sense that you are drawn to want something. But from the Buddhist perspective craving will eventually lead to frustration, inner conflict, inner torment and therefore we've consider as negative, or destructive or whatever, depending on the amount of it.

And so we basically distinguish emotions by the change of mind induced within, whether it's a more peaceful, or serene, or constructive and then we call them positive emotions. And if they destroy your inner well-being and then also that of others, then we call them either negative, or afflictive, or obscuring, or destructive. And so if the goal is precisely to remove one's own and other's suffering, so, it turns out that if you gradually cultivate positive emotions like loving kindness and so, openness, or rejoicing in others instead of being jealous, and then gradually your temperament will also change. There is a point where naturally, because it's second nature not to have all hatred in your mind.

Natasha Mitchell: Mathieu, Richard has really made some fascinating observations about the role of meditation in effecting change in the neuroscience of the emotions. What do you see as the role of meditation in working with destructive emotions and negative emotions? That seems to be so core to Buddhist practice?

Mathieu Ricard: I think we should actually use different words because the Tibetan

word is much more accurate, instead of meditation we say "familiarization".

You "familiarize" yourself with a new way of being; a new way of thinking. Familiarization over years of practice is like a musician that becomes so well trained in his instrument. In the beginning you have to be very attentive but then, after some time it becomes second nature, you are the helm of your own mind, to be much less vulnerable to, say, thoughts of animosity instead of letting it grow, and after a while it becomes so strong that you are compelled to act in a destructive way, and then you look at it and then somehow you let that thought vanish and disappear and therefore you are no more a puppet in the hands of your thoughts.

Natasha Mitchell: Do negative emotions have an intrinsic functional purpose then in Buddhism? In a way they are perhaps there to challenge us as the focus of Buddhist practice?

Mathieu Ricard: Well if you notice that, you know, those thoughts bring torment to yourself and suffering to others, and the goal is to get rid of those, and then you will first know how to distinguish them from positive emotions. And there are many different ways you could antagonize negative emotions. You could directly antagonize anger with patience or love, or you could also try more subtle ways, like try to just let them unfold and then after a while then your temperament has changed because you are no more say, an angry person, or jealousy is no more part of your mental landscape.

Natasha Mitchell: Richard Davidson, science has traditionally boxed emotions as somehow irrational expressions and as being produced by the more rudimentary parts of our brains; and somehow in conflict with our rational cognitive selves. But also science has suggested that destructive or negative emotions have an evolutionary role - that in a sense they are hardwired into our brains. How do you respond to the evolutionary purpose of negative emotions, they’re not always pathological?

Richard Davidson: Right, well this is one area of tension between the Buddhist perspective and one of the dominant perspectives in the modern research tradition on emotion. And it’s something that we’ve explored in our dialogues together and it has, I think, been a tremendous benefit in understanding at a deeper level the nature of what may be part of our evolutionary heritage.

And let me give you just one example in the case of anger in particular. So anger is typically regarded as a destructive emotion and also regarded as an emotion that seems to be part of our evolutionary repertoire. What is it that really is part of our evolutionary heritage? Can anger, and this really goes for other emotions as well, be deconstructed into its more elementary constituents, and can we identify a core characteristic that may in fact be part of our evolutionary heritage but other characteristics may be part of culturally learned baggage?

And in particular, one component of anger is a quality of mind that arises when we are thwarted in the pursuit of certain kinds of goals. One of the insights that we are led to is that what maybe at the root of anger is a disposition to overcome an obstacle, but that the destructiveness of anger, that is the propensity to want to destroy the object that maybe thwarting the goal maybe something that is very much a culturally learned component that is superimposed upon what may be part of our evolutionary heritage.

It’s a very difficult question to address in empirical science but this is one example of

the tremendous fruitfulness of the exchange that has occurred between science and Buddhism because it really has led to a different way of conceptualizing, in this case, what maybe at the core of anger and to help us understand what maybe part of our evolutionary heritage.

Natasha Mitchell: It's interesting I mean as Mathieu has pointed out Buddhism is partly a process of working with and removing destructive emotions from our psyche I guess, emotions like anger and desire perhaps, and I wonder whether in your work, you see yourself making head roads to somehow measuring whether that's possible? Whether your brain scans and imaging of monks who have been meditating for many years has revealed anything about that?

Richard Davidson: Well, we don't know the detailed answer to that question at the present point in time, but it's something that we are directly probing. And so one of the things that we're doing for example is presenting certain kinds of emotional stimuli to the monks who've participated in our experiments that elicit a normative response, for example fear or anger in individuals who are untrained, to determine whether the way a monk who has been practicing these contemplative practices for decades may respond.

And our prediction is that they will respond differently and one of the things that is of great interest to us is examining the expression in the brain of compassion and how negative stimuli which in untrained individuals typically elicits emotions like fear and anger may be the occasions for the elicitation of compassion in individuals who have had this kind of systematic training.

Natasha Mitchell: Mathieu you yourself have had your brain scanned I understand by Richard Davidson and his observations that meditators have...the part of the brain associated with positive emotion is more activated in people who do meditate. It seems to be a more active conception of meditation, which, I guess, to non-meditators has traditionally been viewed as a very passive activity.

Mathieu Ricard: Yes that's exactly why I do so; I try to bring that word "familiarization". Because meditation again is not just sitting in a neutral state and waiting for what happens. I think now if we see meditation in terms of emotional education and slowly, gradual changes, profound changes in your way of being. And so if our goal is to find more happiness, to be less tormented, less frustrated and then become a better person. Then if it turns out if eventually the results show with 10 to 15 years of meditation there is definite and long term and lasting change in the brain in the way you are responsive to negative emotions, so those positive emotions become a more durable part of your mental landscape, cultivating an emotional balance.

So that the main contribution I think from this collaboration is precisely that one takes seriously the idea of mental training over the years as a major contribution to becoming a better person, and therefore to the well being of children and those who become adults afterwards.

Natasha Mitchell: Can I get a comment from both of you on this one? We're talking here about the convergence of Buddhism and science, which is not without its skeptics for sure but the Dalai Lama has said that "science on its own cannot prove Nirvana; a real understanding of the nature of the mind can only be gained through meditation". Richard Davidson.

Richard Davidson: Well as someone who is a practicing scientist as well as

someone who also practices meditation, what is clear to me is that to get a full understanding of the nature of the mind from both the third person perspective, that is from the external observer, as well as from within one's self, will require both science and well as contemplative practice. For me they both are synergistic and are fundamentally not at all incompatible.

Natasha Mitchell: Mathieu, what about you?

Mathieu Ricard: Well I think exactly the same way, I mean you can describe so well the workings of the mind from what you see from the *outside* - but it seems to me completely obvious that you know the mind knowing itself is irreplaceable, the first person experience is something that nothing can describe from outside, you need that description from *within* otherwise you have no access to it. It's a primary experience; it is indispensable to combine the two.

Natasha Mitchell: And my guests today were Professor Richard Davidson, Director of the Laboratory for Effective Neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. And Mathieu Ricard, a Buddhist monk and author of many titles including the *Quantum and the Lotus: A Journey to the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet* and I'll put more details on the web about the investigating the mind conference that they are both attending with the Dalai Lama this weekend.

- Sutras Related to the Buddist Psychology

Buddhist Psychology

What is Buddhist Psychology

Goal of Buddhist Psychology

Buddhist Psychology as a Science of Consciousness

Five Insights of Buddhist Psychology

What is Buddhist Psychology

Buddhist psychology is primarily about self-knowledge- finding out more about who you are, understanding your decisions, actions, thoughts, feelings, etc. It is an expression of the Delphic dictum *Know Thyself* and the injunction that transformative spiritual paths throughout time and geography have demanded as the central ingredient in authentic happiness.

Buddhist psychology is 'radical,' as it aims to challenge your world-view (as all authentic spirituality and psychology does). It is radical in that it addresses the basis or foundation of our psychological functioning, our sense of who we are, and our relationships with others and with the world. As a result, the fruit of applying the psychological insights of the Buddha requires diligence, perseverance and discernment as they will naturally encounter the resistances and obstacles inherent in our conditioned nature.

It is not a coincidence that Buddhism finds itself so welcome in the western world since the last decades of the preceding century. While the appeal certainly includes those who have converted to Buddhism as a faith and have adopted the practices, liturgies and meditations of whatever form of Buddhism speaks to them, the more unique and far-reaching impact of Buddhism, as a psychology, has taken place in academia and among clinical researchers, who have observed that the Buddhist understanding of consciousness, mind, behaviour, motivation, personality and psychopathology bear a close resemblance to perspectives held in western psychology and psychotherapy. While the Buddha was not a psychiatrist or psychologist in the formal sense of the word, the vast majority of his recorded teachings, are explicitly concerned with the sources of emotional suffering and their amelioration. No doubt there is much, much more to Buddhism than the psychology he elucidates. Yet, an argument will be made that these more 'religious' elements, for the want of a better word, or possibly 'experience-far' aspects, are of appeal to those who seek a religious Buddhism, a Buddhism that provides for a level of faith and understanding that speaks to the needs of their heart, but which can be separated out, and set aside, for those who do not seek such a religious experience (possibly content with their own existing faith, or with none at all) but who rather wish to deepen their self-knowledge and happiness. It is these experience-near or psychological Buddhism that speaks loudly in the West and which may be anticipated to be the legacy of the Buddhist encounter with the West.

Let's examine some of the confluences of Western and Buddhist psychology. There is certainly a high degree of overlap in goals and content areas of both disciplines that focus directly on understanding human behavior, the source or conditions for unhappiness and ways to reduce, attenuate or even eliminate such unhappiness. Indeed the Buddhist corpus has extensive psychological writings- very explicit and detailed- and not found in other religious traditions. Thus it is not surprising that some aspect of Buddhist psychology has been of interest to those professions in the west dedicated to alleviating human suffering: medicine, psychiatry, psychology, nursing, social work. The professional journals for each of these disciplines have published so much

scientific research (especially related to mindfulness practice) that to fully describe the studies would require a book in itself. The Dalai Lama has explicitly encouraged interaction between western disciplines to further establish links with science and clinical practice. The Mind and Life Institute is an expression of this venture of cooperation. Elements of Buddhist psychology have been integrated into psychotherapeutic practices for a variety of psychopathological conditions, including depression, anxiety, addiction and stress. Scientific writers from the entire range of clinical psychology and psychiatry, ranging from psychoanalysis to cognitive to behavioral to humanistic theory, have all addressed aspects of Buddhist psychology. Not surprising, the Buddhist traditions that have been of greatest appeal to western science and psychology have been those that appear to contain a higher proportion of experience-near aspects (Theravadin, Zen) because they carry much less religious baggage and more easily translated into Western concepts. Less impactful has been the teachings of Mahayana and Tibetan or tantric Buddhism which include a strong element of experience-far teachings and thus are more difficult to translate into concepts that are digestible by the western mind. Nevertheless, even these traditions reflect a more esoteric psychology that does find resonance in the West and which full certainly continue to attract significant interest

Goal of Buddhist Psychology

Buddhist psychology, simply put, is concerned with the alleviation of human suffering, distress, and dissatisfaction. However, the Buddhist idea of suffering much broader than what is usually the focus of western psychology. The notion of suffering includes the entire range of human dissatisfaction and anguish and not the clinical disorders described by psychiatry. And it is also important to note that for the most part the Buddha is referring to emotional suffering rather than physical suffering, per se. The emphasis is on the mental aspects of physical pain rather than the pain itself. The Buddha's practical project of the understanding and relief of human anguish was also a potent counterforce to metaphysical speculation which the Buddha eschewed. The pursuit of metaphysical, logical or theoretical issues for their own sake was avoided. Such questions could not be answered and spending time on them simply distracted from the urgency of the message the Buddha wished to share. This could also be understood as the Buddha's advice to leave questions about the nature of the universe, matter, and reality to those disciplines equipped to study and address them (e.g., science). The domain of science was the area of human endeavour which could answer such questions. The Buddha was primarily concerned with the human mind and its activity.

Much of what the Buddha taught could eventually be empirically and personally evaluated by those who were diligent and persistent. This is an important consideration for those who distinguish experience-near (psychological) and experience-far (religious) aspects of Buddhism. While the former could be realized and experienced anyone who put in the requisite effort, that did not mean it would be easy. Any profound and transformative understanding of mind would require dedication and perseverance and could not learn from simply hearing about it or reading it. The Buddha's was approach empirical and scientific- it did not draw on dogma, philosophy or received wisdom. Analytic and experiential investigation worked together to provide the transformative knowledge the Buddha wished to teach us. The Buddha does not ask that his claims be taken on blind faith, although some faith is necessary to even begin self-exploration. Examine his words on the basis of your reason, experience, and intuition. All of us have the seed of Enlightenment, of authentic happiness, bliss waiting to 'blossom' if nourished.

Buddhist Psychology as a Science of Consciousness

We pay extreme attention to our physical bodies (vanity, cosmetics, clothes). We can invest incredible amounts of time towards achievements such as careers, sports, art, money and social standing. We pursue social relationships as a key aspect of our happiness. One can make the

argument that our sciences and technologies are devoted to increasing comfort, convenience, pleasure, and so on. There is no doubt that we are highly focused on preserving our physical lives, our social status and relationships, and our sensory and lifestyle. Our education system can be said to be geared to achieving all of these aims, all of which are admirable and good. But little attention is paid to mind or consciousness. It is not taught in school, by caregivers, or friends. This may reflect the Western ambivalence towards mind. Many psychologies have either denied the existence of consciousness or have diminished its influence in our lives; modern neuroscience research has reduced consciousness to brain activity that may have not have any causal agency. Yet, consciousness is precisely the focus of Buddhist psychology.

Andrew Olendzki has done an excellent job at describing the key components of Buddhist psychology and it would be valuable to reiterate some of his conclusions here. Buddhist psychology focuses on the direct experience, consciousness, awareness, mind, subjectivity, of the individual. Buddhist psychology can be descriptive phenomenology of mind, a science of experience. Its contribution is the Buddha's advice to explore the dynamics of subjectivity as it unfolds in the present moment through the practice of mindfulness meditation. Modern scientific views of mind and behavior have tended toward reductionist explanations, explaining mind in terms of physical structures and brain processes. Olendzki has argued that the reductionist approach doesn't explain lived human experience, the qualia of experience. The absence of the brain in the Buddha's account of mind leaves a place for the contribution of western science but also suggests that to understand the mind, in the manner that the Buddha discusses, does not *require* contributions of neuroscience. The Buddha, through his advocacy of a meditative approach to wisdom, points to a process view of experience consisting of several interdependent processes, functions, and events (i.e. dharmas).

As Olendzki has shown, the core Buddhist insight is this: the mysteries of human condition can be explored in the subjectivity of the present moment. The stream of consciousness is a field of investigation. By studying the mind, we come to know ourselves.

Five Insights of Buddhist Psychology:

(i) **Centrality of consciousness/ subjectivity**

The radically psychological nature of Buddhist psychology is evidenced by the need to explore the mind through meditation and other forms of contemplation. It is not necessary to explain it, where it comes from, which part of the brain and so on, which is a major focus of many western scientific disciplines. Our subjectivity consists of moments of awareness that appear seamless but with attention placed on it, within the present moment, can reveal how our cognitive processes culminate in the mental phenomena we experience. Investigating this moment, right here, right now, is where wisdom can arise.

(ii) **Human experience manifests through 6 sense systems**

Along with the 5 senses and their corresponding experiences, mind is considered to be a sense organ, and cognitive events are sense objects. The traditional account of consciousness describes its emergence from interaction of sense organ (e.g., eye) and sense object (e.g., visual object) creating sensory experience (e.g., visual consciousness). Everything we know depends on the activity of these 6 senses. While later developments in Buddhist philosophy posits additional senses, the traditional scriptures focus on these six.

(iii) **All experience is constructed**

The radically psychological nature of Buddhist psychology can be observed in the emphasis on what appears. What appears is a transformation or translation of the external environment into an internal language of consciousness (e.g., photons >> sight; chemicals >>taste, smell; vibration >>> hearing; pressure >> touch; brain activity >>> cognition). The transformation of raw sensory

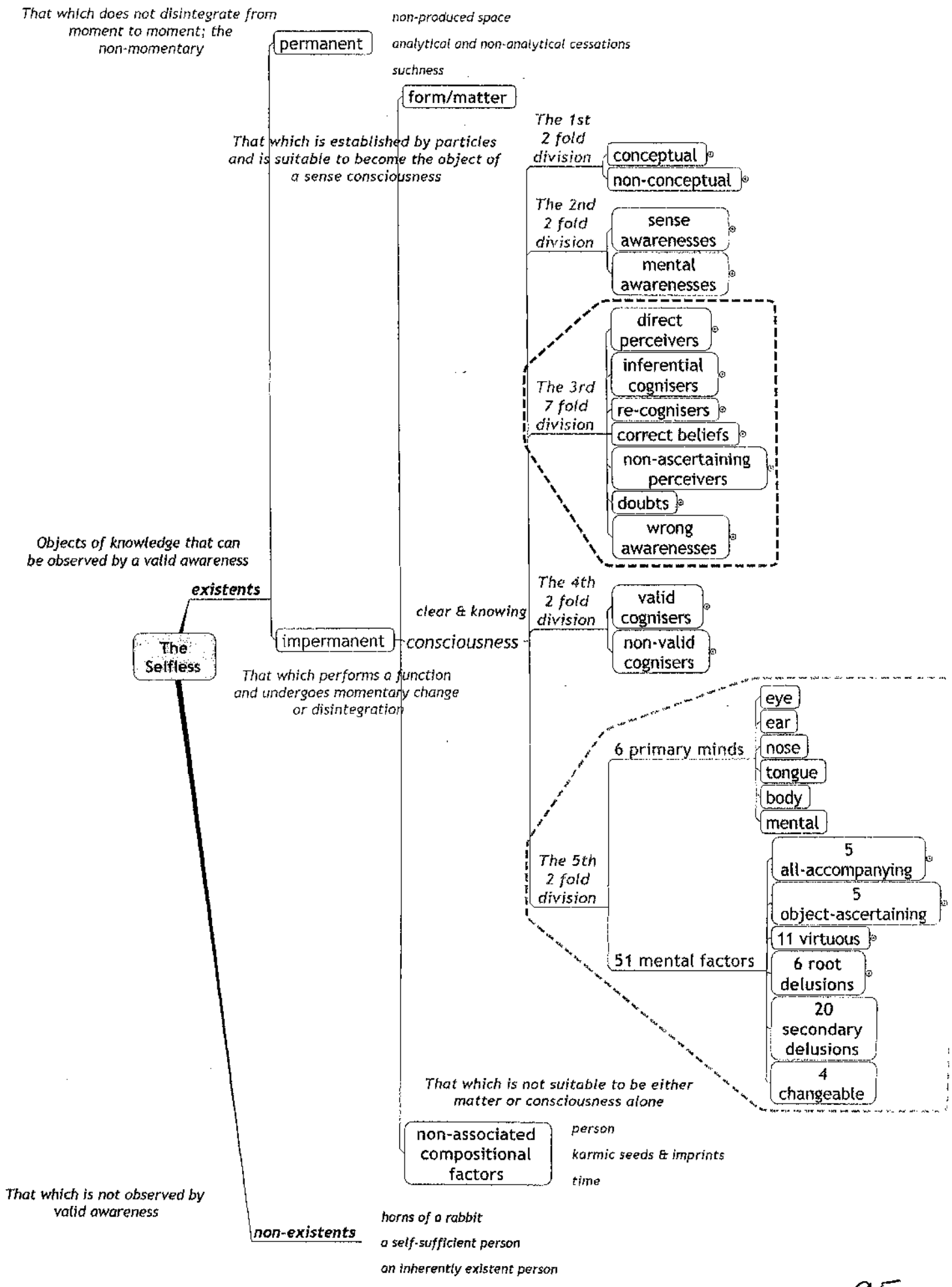
activation into sensory experience is so radical that no way to know what pre-constructed reality is. All we can know is our own subjectivity. Any discussion of what 'reality' is will always be limited by what our senses will permit and what our mind can conceive. The study of reality is the study of the human construction of experience. And whatever such reality may be is irrelevant to the real purpose of the Buddha's message, to transform delusion into wisdom. This project requires us to explore our inner world. Of course, each individual has their unique, subjective, constructed reality.

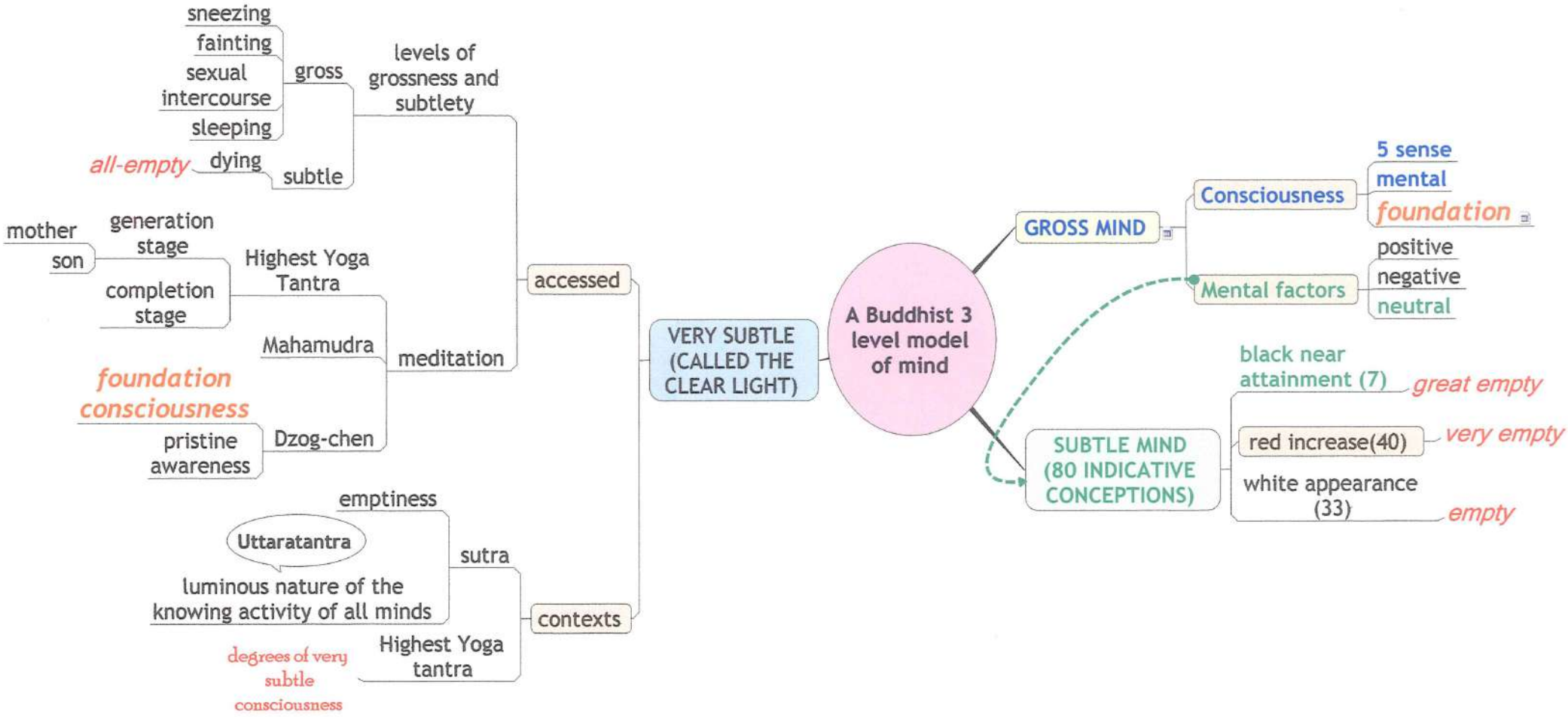
(iv) **Experience is constantly changing- an incessant succession of events**

Each perception, sensation, cognition, image, memory, feeling is a process that can never be experienced identically again. Every moment is unique. Our brains have evolved to reduce our awareness of such flux to increase our ability to survive. For reasons of adaptation sensory reality is filtered thus distorting our experiences. Three major forms of perceptual distortion are described by the Buddha: perceptions of permanence (perceptual-linguistic), satisfaction (cognitive) and self (metacognitive) are examples of this distortion-tendency.

(v) **Mind/body (the self) revealed through 5 inter-dependent processes**

Five processes or 'aggregates' define the self (i.e., mind/body). These five processes consist of physicality, consciousness, perception, affect, and habit. The Buddhist posits a view of self an interaction among these five processes to produce the coherent sense of identity and 'I'-ness that defines who we are. It is not accurate to claim that there is no self within Buddhist psychology. This would be absurd. What the Buddha clarifies is that the self we experience has no essence or substance but consists of these 5 constantly arising, abiding and subsiding.


That which does not disintegrate from moment to moment; the non-momentary
permanent
non-produced space
analytical and non-analytical cessations
suchness
form/matter
That which is established by particles and is suitable to become the object of a sense consciousness
The 1st 2 fold division
conceptual
non-conceptual
The 2nd 2 fold division
sense awarenesses
mental awarenesses
The 3rd 7 fold division
direct perceivers
inferential cognisers
re-cognisers
correct beliefs
non-ascertaining perceivers
doubts
wrong awarenesses
Objects of knowledge that can be observed by a valid awareness
existents
The Selfless
impermanent
clear & knowing
consciousness
The 4th 2 fold division
valid cognisers
non-valid cognisers
That which performs a function and undergoes momentary change or disintegration
6 primary minds
eye
ear
nose
tongue
body
mental
The 5th 2 fold division
51 mental factors
5 all-accompanying
5 object-ascertaining
11 virtuous
6 root delusions
20 secondary delusions
4 changeable
That which is not suitable to be either matter or consciousness alone
non-associated compositional factors
person
karmic seeds & imprints
time
That which is not observed by valid awareness
non-existents
horns of a rabbit
a self-sufficient person
an inherently existent person


A Buddhist 3 level model of mind
GROSS MIND
Consciousness
5 sense
mental
foundation
Mental factors
positive
negative
neutral
SUBTLE MIND (80 INDICATIVE CONCEPTIONS)
black near attainment (7)
great empty
red increase(40)
very empty
white appearance (33)
empty
VERY SUBTLE (CALLED THE CLEAR LIGHT)
accessed
levels of grossness and subtlety
gross
sneezing
fainting
sexual intercourse
sleeping
subtle
dying
all-empty
meditation
Highest Yoga Tantra
generation stage
mother
son
completion stage
Mahamudra
Dzog-chen
foundation consciousness
pristine awareness
contexts
sutra
emptiness
Uttaratantra
luminous nature of the knowing activity of all minds
Highest Yoga tantra
degrees of very subtle consciousness

DB Mind Brief Review

We have previously given a Buddhist definition of mind which was that mind is "MERELY CLEAR AND KNOWING". This definition describes the nature and function of both the conventional and deepest truth of the mind. What we call "mind" is simply a term mentally labeled onto the occurrence of the subjective event of the arising of something and the engaging with it in a cognitive manner. In brief, mind is "experience"; it is simply whatever happens to us and it always refers to experience and the contents of experience.

- CLEAR can be understood in several different ways; it can refer to either the non-physicality of the mind or its ability to reveal things.
  - Clarity is the nature of the mind; it is the appearance of the object to awareness.
    - A natural capacity to experience things as they are without distortion
    - Like a mirror holding reflections
  - The nature of the mind is luminous - nothing stains the mind. It has always been so, and will always fundamentally be so. At present it is obscured by delusion and ignorance, like clouds in the sky. Our mistake has been to identify with the clouds of disturbing thoughts and emotions instead of the spaciousness and clarity of the sky-like mind.
- KNOWING describes the capacity of the mind to apprehend things that appear to it.
- The term "MERE" refers to the deepest nature of the mind, its emptiness of inherent existence which means that the mind does not exist in any impossible manner, from being a physical entity itself, up to and involving a solid, concrete subject, content or experience.
  - We're unable to find the mind we're searching for because by nature all experience is a mere dependent arising. Experiences are not things we can see or find; they are all mere appearances, empty of intrinsic identity. Consciousness or mind is not an entity or a thing so there is no intrinsic thing that is actually an agent giving rise to anything.
  - The luminous nature of mind is the emptiness of the mind itself and this is referred to as the intrinsic nature of the mind. (MWC position)
  - It is because the mind is in the nature of clear light that afflictions are not ingrained within it. Because the mind is dependent upon causes and conditions and the collection of its parts that transformation is possible.

Traditionally there are six types of mind with five of them being types of sense awareness.

- Mind-Only proponents however posit two more primary minds: a consciousness basis of all and a deluded mentality. According to them the consciousness-basis-of-all is a stable consciousness that does not cease at death but maintains the continuity of the person from one life to the next. It is the repository of karmic potentials and the source of all other consciousnesses. The deluded mentality observes the consciousness-basis-of-all and mistakenly apprehends it as a self-supporting substantially existent self.
- The Middle-Way Consequentialists conclusively refute both these two minds. There are only six types of primary mind because there are only six types of object - forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects and phenomena. Here 'phenomena' means that which appears only to mental consciousness.

They are 'thought-free', which means they cannot create thoughts, and each sense consciousness is related to a specific part of the body. We also learnt that a sense consciousness is generated in dependence upon the three conditions of a sense faculty, a prior moment of consciousness and an object.

We also determined that the mind is produced through specific causes and conditions so that it is impermanent; it changed from moment to moment. All products disintegrate because their very existence is a result of causes, conditions and the collecting together of various parts which do not have the power to sustain themselves permanently. The very conditions that brought them into being also cause their disintegration. Any thing or event that comes into being as a result of other factors does not require a secondary condition for its disintegration. The moment it comes into existence, the process of disintegration has already begun. In other words, the mechanism for cessation is built into the system itself. It is as if things & events carry the seed of their own eventual demise. Impermanence at its most subtle level reflects the fact that nothing can remain identical to itself for even the shortest conceivable moment.

We then identified the substantial and contributory causes of mind. The previous moment of mind is its substantial cause and I put forth the proposition that the most subtle mind has a beginningless continuum inferring the possibility of past lives.

From the point of view of function mind can be divided into main minds and mental factors. The definition of a MAIN MIND is a cognizer that principally apprehends the mere entity of an object. Main minds are passive, whereas the mental factors

associated with them are active. Main or primary minds are traditionally divided into six types; the mental factors into fifty-one. The quality of each primary mind depends on the mental factors that accompany it. The definition of a MENTAL FACTOR is a cognizer that principally apprehends a particular attribute of an object. If the mental factors are virtuous the primary mind is virtuous, but if the mental factors are non-virtuous or neutral the primary mind is too.

Every main mind has five mental factors that all ways accompany it. Because these five mental factors are always-present they are called the FIVE ALL-ACCOMPANYING mental factors. The five are (1) contact, (2) discernment, (3) feeling, (4) intention and (5) attention. The five OBJECT-ASCERTAINING mental factors are called that because they each realize a particular object. The five are (1) Aspiration, (2) Appreciation (perseverance/firm apprehension), (3) Recollection (mindfulness), (4) Concentration and (5) Intelligence (wisdom).

We then spoke about non-virtue and delusion. The definition of NON-VIRTUE is a phenomenon that functions as a main cause of suffering. There are five types of non-virtue (1) natural (2) by association (3) by motivation (4) by subsequent relation and (5) ultimate non-virtue. The definition of DELUSION is a mental factor that arises from inappropriate attention and that functions to make the mind unpeaceful and uncontrolled. There were six factors that stimulate the disturbing emotions to arise. Three were causes (the seed, object and inappropriate attention) that when assembled delusion necessarily arises while the second three were conditions (Society, habit and media) that encourage the development and increase of delusions.

The following week we looked at a THREE ZONES presentation of decreasing subtlety that was a modification of the traditional division between main and derivative afflictions. The FIRST ZONE encompassed the afflictions on the deepest level of mind. The mental afflictions of this zone are the most difficult to understand and to eliminate. They are the cause of the mental factors in the SECOND ZONE, which in turn are the cause of the mental factors in the THIRD ZONE, the most superficial level of mind. In the first zone the very root of all the afflictions was the fundamental confusion of self, things and events; ignorance.

A broad definition of ignorance is a mental factor that is confused about the nature of an object and that functions to induce wrong awareness, doubt and other delusions. Accordingly, ignorance is a lack of knowing or understanding. The second definition is of a specific type of ignorance – the ignorance that is the root of samsara, a mental factor that is the opposite of the wisdom apprehending

selflessness. According to this system, ignorance is necessarily self-grasping of persons or self-grasping of phenomena. Because of beginningless familiarity with ignorance, as soon as an object appears to the mind of an ordinary being it is apprehended as truly existent. The appearance arises naturally in our mind through the force of imprints and it is manifest in the minds of ordinary beings all the time, even during sleep. This true-grasping mind itself obscures the real nature of phenomena and it is this innate view that is the root of samsara.

We talked about the conventionally existent person that is imputed in dependence upon any of the five aggregates and how the true-grasping mind obscures the real nature of persons so that 'desirous' attachment, the second of the three main afflictive minds arises. Desirous attachment superimposes some non-existent qualities to persons, over exaggerates existing pleasing aspects and then focuses only on those pleasing aspects. We then cling to persons and yearn to possess what we have embellished with our own imaginations.

Although we are at present controlled by afflictive mental states, these disturbing mental states are adventitious. Afflictions are not ingrained within the essence of the mind. They are not always present and depend upon other causes and conditions to arise which opens up the possibility for freedom. The total freedom from the afflictive mental states such that they never return and the complete development of the minds positive qualities is Buddhahood. That potential abides in every creature with a mind.

When discussing Buddha nature we discovered that every sentient being possesses the potential to become a Buddha and the potential had two divisions. There was (1) the naturally present potential, the basis that is the emptiness of a mind with taints which is suitable to transform into a nature body and (2) the potential to be developed; the based that is a Buddha potential which is suitable to transform into a produced Buddha's body. The naturally present potential is unchanging (permanent) while the potential to be developed is changeable and impermanent.

In essence, afflictions are not ingrained within the nature of the mind because the nature of the mind is clear light – the nature of mind is to be empty of true existence so that transformation can take place when the correct causes and conditions are present. Freedom from an uncontrolled mind with its resultant birth states is possible. This is the potential of the mind.

The Buddhist Perspective on Origins: Beginninglessness

"We have heard a wonderful and fascinating story of the origin of the universe and different theories on the arising of consciousness," Mathieu began. "There is a linear gradation, beginning with a kind of extraordinary primordial fire, and then the slow formation and aggregation of heavy molecules. Then matter appears in different ways and allows for more complex molecules, leading to life, and then life becomes more and more complex, leading up to sentient beings.

"If what we have been looking at is the complete story in time and space, then that vision is a perfect description. It will be refined and made more precise, but the basic story is there. But if that story is an episode, a chunk of time and space, then the complete picture could be quite different. The story of science is based on the notion of a beginning, and this is assumed by our basic theory of the universe as we know it. Of course, in Western religions also, we mostly find cosmologies that speak of a beginning.

"The Buddhist perspective puts that notion of a beginning into question, and in a very logical way. A true beginning implies that nothing becomes something; otherwise we're not speaking of a beginning. So how can nothing become something? The Buddhist literature says that a billion causes cannot make something that doesn't exist come into existence. The reason for this is that the supposed quality of nothingness would have to disappear if it were to become something. Nothingness has to shed or get rid of its quality of nothingness to become something, which is impossible, because nothingness has no existence whatsoever. It is only conceived as a mental idea as opposed to existence. You cannot get rid of something that is purely a concept. Changing from nothing to something cannot happen; so observable phenomena, the form of our existence, cannot have come from nothing.

"What would cause a beginning to ever happen? A beginning definitely assumes a first cause, whatever that cause might be. So we need to examine what that cause could be. Is it a permanent cause? Is it its own cause? Does it come from something else again, in which case it is not the first cause? If that very initial cause – and there has to be one- were its own cause that also doesn't work. Something that is its own cause is already there. It doesn't need to be created. Also, if something is its own cause; that means it doesn't

rely on anything else. It has everything included in itself, all the causes and conditions for the next step it's going to produce. The law of causality says that if something does not happen, then the causes or conditions for it to happen are missing. When all the causes and conditions are there, it cannot help but happen. It has to happen. So something that is its own cause would have to produce the same thing forever, constantly and permanently, because as the first cause it is not lacking anything. So that also doesn't work.

"A permanent and immutable cause cannot give rise to something transient. That cause will not be immutable and unchanging because the process of creation is happening, which inevitably modifies it before and after the creation, or the beginning. Causelessness – something happening without cause – would mean anything could happen as a result of anything. Obscurity could come from life; life could come from obscurity. If there is no cause, then there is no law of causality, and there is no reason absolutely anything – a flower growing in the sky – could not happen.

"So you have a situation where, however you examine the notion of first cause, you bump into many kinds of illogical, unacceptable situations, whether it is nothing becoming something, or something that is its own cause causing something else. There are a number of great difficulties in accepting the notion of a first cause.

"What other solution is there? Beginninglessness; what is the problem with beginninglessness? It's purely mental. We feel that we can accept going back fifteen billion years to find a beginning, because there's a story for that. But the story should begin sometime; we cannot just go back in time forever. The Western philosopher Bertrand Russell said, 'There's no reason to suppose that the world has an origin at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is due to the poverty of our imagination.' Basically we find it very difficult to think of beginninglessness. But in fact, from the logical point of view, that's the only thing that stands up to analysis. Every other possibility has deep flaws.

"If we accept beginninglessness, of course we still have local stories. We have the big bang and the evolution from matter to life. But that's such a small piece of the story. Given the nature of beginninglessness, we should not try to introduce a new kind of beginning within it, saying that matter came before consciousness, or consciousness before matter. All aspects of

the phenomenal world have to be beginningless. Otherwise we are again trying to bring small beginnings into the vast beginninglessness.

"Buddhist cosmology never spoke of a small, limited universe at the centre of which we stand. The Buddha spoke of billion-fold universes. He spoke of universes that were like curtains of light, like winds of fire, like horse's mouths spouting fire, swallowing fire, all the similes we find beautiful in the photographs from the Hubble telescope. Buddhist cosmology has a very vast vision of time and space. If life, matter, and consciousness don't have a beginning, they are coexistent since forever, in different ways, with different histories, with episodes. There are some local stories where you don't find life, like during the heat of the big bang. But in the vastness of time and space, there is no reason to exclude consciousness and life somewhere else or at other times."

By Matthieu Ricard from "Mind and Life – Discussions with the Dalai Lama on the Nature of Reality" by Pier Luigi Luisi with Zara Houshmand pp101-103

CHAPTER FOUR

Buddhist Answers to Big Questions

At an interfaith meeting in India, I was with a Jew and a Sufi Muslim. We were each posed three questions. What is the self? Does the self have a beginning? Does the self ever end? Different traditions give different answers to these questions.

In answering the first question, we arrive at the real demarcation between Buddhist and non-Buddhist thought. Non-Buddhist Indian traditions-whether theistic or non-theistic - all accept some sort of soul theory, some notion of an independent self that owns the body and mind. The Buddha teaching emphasizes that there is no independent soul or independent self. That is, Buddhism rejects any notion of self that is independent of the physical and mental elements of the individual. We accept a conventionally existing self that is designated in relation to the mind and body. Of course, when it come to identifying the exact nature of the self, there is a wide range of positions even within the Buddhist tradition.

Every Event Is Caused

When we turn to the second question, whether there is a beginning, we are dealing with the question of the existence of God. In Christianity, there really is a beginning-God created everything, so this very life is created by God. I think this is a wonderful concept, a great teaching, because the purpose, the very heart, of Christianity is love, affection. So knowing that this very life was created by God brings a powerful feeling of intimacy with God, a sense that God is your own mother. We know that our bodies come from our mothers; they come from our parents, but particularly from our mothers. Even animals feel so close to their mothers. In that same intimate sense, when you feel that this very life is a gift from God, then you are for that reason very, very close to God. And through this sense of intimacy you become more willing to listen to God's advice. You really want to know what God wants.

In non-theistic religions, including Buddhism, there is no divine Creator; we have instead the law of causality. Things arise in dependence upon causes and conditions. Causes are the creator of the result-and each cause is also the result of previous causes. As far as Buddhism is concerned, it is illogical to conceive of a beginning without a cause. Every event must have its own cause.

When teaching the twelve links of dependent origination, Tsong-kha-pa explains the Buddha's understanding of the origination of things. There he cites the Buddha's teaching of dependent origination wherein the Buddha states (1) because this exists, that exists and (2) because this has arising, that arises. In the first statement, the Buddha points out that things come into being from their causes and conditions. The notion of conditioning indicates the lack of prior intelligent design. Things do not come into being as a result of some

divine intelligence, some earlier intelligence that designs them and brings them forth. Rather each thing comes into being from its own causes.

Then, when the Buddha says, "because this has arisen, that arises," the point is that not only do things originate from their causes, but that causes themselves are impermanent. The causes of things are themselves products of their own corresponding causes. In this way, there is a chain of causation. Events arise from transient causes, causes that in turn have arisen from *their* causes, and so forth.

When you chase back the chain of causation from the Buddhist point of view, you run into problems if you try to posit a beginning. When you posit a beginning, you have to accept that this beginning itself is either caused or uncaused. If you say that the beginning is totally uncaused, then you have a problem. How will you account for the fact that everything begins at one particular point in time rather than another? That is, at some point - and not at another - the whole chain of causation starts up. What is the difference between one circumstance and the other? This seems to force us to accept the presence of some cause, some condition, that makes a difference in the case when there *is* a beginning.

So if you say there is an absolute beginning, a first event, you will probably have to accept that this beginning does have a cause – a permanent cause, an eternal and unchanging Creator. Here again, from the Buddhist point of view, the problem with a permanent or eternal cause is that you will then have to maintain that this cause either (1) can never produce an effect at all, or (2) should produce the same effect continuously. One cannot say that something is a permanent, eternal, unchanging cause if it sometimes does and sometimes does not give rise to its effect. If you have a cause that sometimes does and sometimes does not give rise to effect, then clearly it is not permanent. It is not unchanging. It is changing in dependence upon the presence or absence of some other condition.

On these considerations, Buddhism rejects any notion of a beginning to the causal chain. An absolute beginning would have to be either uncaused or caused by a permanent entity – and neither option is logically tenable.

The Buddha taught that because of ignorance, karmic activity arises. As we have seen, things come into being from their causes and conditions – and these causes and conditions are themselves impermanent. But beyond that, it is *not* the case that just any thing produces any other thing or that each thing produces every other thing. Rather there is a commensurate relationship between causes and effects so that the specific characteristics of the effects are dependent upon the specific characteristics and qualities of the causes.

In the case of the twelve links of dependent origination, the first cause in the chain is ignorance. At the natural level, no one loves suffering and wishes for it- but just the same, we keep creating the conditions for suffering. So the root cause of our suffering is ignorance. It is the first link in a cycle of conditions.

We Have No Absolute Beginning

Buddhists accept a conventionally existing self, a self that is designated in relation to the combination of body and mind. Therefore. In order to say whether the self has a beginning, we have to decide whether we can posit a

beginning for the stream of physical and mental aggregates. This stream or continuum is the actual basis in relation to which the notion of self arises. In terms of a person, the aggregates *(skandhas)* are from- e.g., the body-which has material properties, and four mental aggregates that are not physical and have the nature of subjective experience.

While there is also a very subtle level of form, the word "form" usually refers to the material body of this life. Each persons body changes from lifetime to lifetime. While there are many different kinds of physical objects, if we consider the stream of elementary materials that make up their existence, it is very difficult to posit a real beginning. Our current scientific perspective is that the source of all of the material phenomena in the natural world, including the material of our physical bodies, can be traced back to the very beginning of the universe. It has been suggested that this beginning was a Big Bang.

But even here, we have to ask, where did the Big Bang come from? What set the stage for that event? There must have been a tremendous energy for such an explosion to happen. Is that energy associated with some substance? What causes and conditions brought it about? Therefore, I think it is very difficult to accept an absolute beginning to material existence. Things arise from causes that are earlier moments in continuum, a stream of change.

We can also consider whether consciousness has a beginning. Since our bodies change from lifetime to lifetime, the more enduring continuum for our individual existence involves the mind, the mental aggregates. When we say that the person or the self is designated in relation to the continuum of the aggregates, we mainly mean that the person is designated on the basis of a stream of subjective experience. The continuum of consciousness has no form. It has no shape and no color. Yet is does have definite effects; our choices clearly lead to experiences of happiness and suffering.

When we seek to understand consciousness, we attribute its existence to the preceding stream of experience with the same characteristics. We can trace the source and continuum of our physical body back to our parents' regenerative fluids, but we cannot likewise trace the source of our consciousness, our mind, back to out parents' consciousnesses. The main cause, the substantial cause, of our consciousness must be a prior moment of consciousness in that very continuum. If we wanted to posit an absolute beginning to our consciousness, we would have two choices. We could say that the very first instance of consciousness came from nowhere as a totally uncaused phenomenon. Or else we could admit that at some point consciousness arose from a cause that did not share its same nature and had very different characteristics. Either way, it seems very difficult to posit an absolute beginning to consciousness.

It is not just Buddhists who accept the notion of previous lives, the idea of rebirth; many philosophical traditions subscribe to this idea. One of the key arguments for this view is the empirical evidence of individuals who recall their experience in past lives. I personally met a very young Indian girl whose memory of her past life was extremely convincing. In effect she had four parents - the two of this life, and also the parents of the immediate previous life. Her parents from the previous life also accepted the young girl as their daughter. Such cases give some clear indication that there are past lives. I was told of another case in which a Tibetan boy was able to read before being taught. And we heard of a case where a young person had very clear memories

of a past life, recognized friends, recalled his own name, and even recalled specific items from his house, including books - even though, in that case, he could not actually read. We need further investigation of such cases. Is there is some way to understand these situations in terms of genetic disposition? I really don't know. But the answer from the Buddhist point of view is that *there is no beginning* to the continuity of the mind.

Is There an End?

The third question is: Is there and end? Within the Buddhist tradition there are two very different positions on this. There is one school of thought that maintains that when one attains the final nirvana, the great nirvana, this is a *nirvana without residue*. By that term they mean that the individual - the continuum of the self - completely ceases to exist. It is like the flame of a butter lamp just burning out. However, this is not Tsong-kha-pa's view.

A Buddhist is one who goes to the three jewels for refuge. When the objects of refuge are described in the texts the Buddha is described as 'the supreme among bipeds' (e.g., humans). The Dharma is described as the supreme teaching or the supreme truth. It is a truth that is free from attachment; it is tranquil. It is peace. The Sangha is described as the supreme assembly. However, if we understand the nature and characteristics of the three jewels only at that level, it is not necessarily unique to Buddhism. Other spiritual traditions take refuge and such qualities of the object of refuge may be present in those other traditions. Most-maybe all-spiritual traditions see their own original teacher as supreme among human beings. They will probably say that their spiritual teacher represents a truth that is peaceful and being attachment. Likewise, they also have some notion of a spiritual community.

Thus, if you understand the three jewels only on that level, your understanding is not so deep. How can you even say that going for refuge in the three jewels is what defines someone as a practicing Buddhist? People do say this, but how can they explain it? We have to cultivate a deeper understanding of the nature of the Buddha and the nature of Dharma. What is the nature of the Buddha to whom we go for refuge? And what is the particular nature of the Sangha that we as Buddhists perceive to be the supreme community?

With respect to the Buddha, there is a divergence of opinion within the Buddhist tradition. As I mentioned, some maintain that when the Buddha attained final nirvana, the entire continuum of the Buddha's existence came to an end. The other view, which Tsong-kha-pa shares, involves understanding buddhahood in terms of four embodiments. Here, the idea of an absolute end the continuity of the Buddha's existence is rejected.

Nagarjuna, particularly in his *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning*, makes a very explicit argument against the idea that the Buddha's final nirvana constituted the absolute end of the Buddha's existence. Nagarjuna says that if that was the case, then the whole concept of someone attaining nirvana without residue would be incoherent. When the person is alive, nirvana without residue is not yet present; yet when the nirvana without residue is reached, the person is no longer there. Thus, the idea of someone's attaining nirvana without residue is incoherent if it involves an absolute end to the continuity of the individual.

The tremendous differences between arhats and buddhas make it untenable that the entirety of the path to buddhahood could be included within the thirty-

seven aspects of the path to enlightenment. Buddhas cannot simply be those who have done these same practices for a longer period. The outcomes attained by arhats and by buddhas are so vastly different that, in addition to the thirty-seven aspects, the path to buddhahood must also include other practices such as the six perfections.

We have many mental sates that are distorted due to being grounded in a false way of understanding and perceiving the world. These mental states can be stopped, brought to and end, by powerful antidotes to this false way of understanding. However, the essential quality of mind itself is *clear and knowing*. Unlike the case of ignorance or delusion-which can be eliminated-there are no forces or reasons that would block this continuum from going forward. There isn't anything that undermines the continuing existence of the essential quality of the mind itself.

Furthermore from the highest yoga tantra point of view, when we understand how consciousness operates at a very subtle level, we find two characteristics. One is the *knowing* aspect. And right with it there is a moving, dynamic aspect; we could call it energy. These two aspects are inseparable in that neither can exist without the other. So consciousness continues to exist at this very subtle level right together with this energy.

What happens when a person gains full enlightenment? Then consciousness itself, being dependently arisen, is fundamentally empty; emptiness is the ultimate nature of the mind. When one attains buddhahood, this emptiness is the natural body of a Buddha, a buddha's body as the very nature of reality. While the ordinary person's mind is pure and unpolluted in its essential nature, it is still tainted by adventitious pollutants and stains. When one attains buddhahood, these adventitious pollutants are removed, so the natural purity if the mind is accompanied by a purity attained through the cultivation of the path. Therefore, the emptiness of the mind, the very nature of the person's mind - becomes the natural embodiment of a buddha.

At that point, the person's consciousness becomes a Buddha;s embodiment of truth and wisdom *(yeshe chogu)* and the energy accompanying that wisdom-mind becomes a buddha's embodiment as form *(zug-gu)*. Within the buddha's embodiment as form, there are the speech and physical qualities of a Buddha. Buddhahood is thus a state in which body, speech, and mind have become totally inseparable, a single nature, because they are all immediate expressions of the unity of the very subtlest mind and subtlest energy.

The effort to attain buddhahood is fundamentally motivated by an altruistic intention to for the welfare of an infinite number of living beings for as long as space remains, to the furthest reaches of space. Once buddhahood is attained, that Buddha does not cease to exist. The motivation for practice on the bodhisattva path comes to final fruition in an enlightened being who goes on acting for the benefit of all living beings for as long as space remains.

Understanding buddhahood in this manner changes your understanding of the Buddha as an object of refuge. Maitreya's *Sublime Continnum* tells us that a key quality of the Dharma is that it is not just freedom from attachment – it is beyond any concept, beyond anything we can imagine, beyond any verbal expression. The Sangha is a community of practitioners who embody a Dharma that has these inconceivable characteristics. When you have that kind of understanding of the three jewels, it transfigures your understanding of that to

which you go for refuge. Implicitly, then, going for refuge to the three jewels becomes an affirmation of the four seals of the Buddha's teaching. Becoming a Buddhist in philosophical terms converges with the act of going for refuge.

Mind, Karma, and Ego-formation in Tibetan Buddhism

H.H Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche

We live in illusion and the appearance of things. There is a reality, and we are that reality, but we don't know it. If we should ever wake up to that reality we would realize that we are nothing, and being nothing, we are everything. That is all.

All of us have a vague or naive understanding of the mind. We all know that we have a mind, and we think in terms of "my mind." We have the idea that "I have a mind" and so we say "my mind." But how much do we understand about the nature of the mind and the nature of our experience? Actually there is a great deal of ignorance and a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion as to what exactly is going on. What exactly do we experience? What exactly do we mean when we use the word, "mind?" When we look at our mind, rather than finding control, precise understanding, and insight, we find that there is emotional confusion in the mind. There are all kinds of passions which arise in the mind, such as attachment, aversion, stupidity, anger, jealousy, pride, and so on. All of these things are continually boiling up in the mind as a result of this emotional confusion and thus we experience a great deal of frustration, suffering and pain.

Understanding the nature of the mind is something that has great calming and cooling effect on all of that boiling turmoil in the mind. It is as if we had a pot of boiling water and into it we threw a cup of cold water. The boiling ceases immediately. The activity immediately calms to a certain extent. Even mere intellectual understanding of the nature of the mind can be very beneficial in helping one to sort out the emotional confusion and eliminate the suffering that it causes.

To begin with, let us take, for example, the eyes we see with. The eyes are situated in the face and with these eyes we can see anything in the outside world. That is the function of the eyes – to see clearly. But the one thing that the eye cannot see clearly is the face itself, even though it is so close to the face. It simply does not work that way. There is a fundamental lack of recognition, a fundamental inability of the eye to see the face in which it is situated. In the same way, what we, as sentient beings or limited beings, now experience is this fundamental lack of recognition. The mind simply

does not directly experience its own true nature. So this fundamental ignorance or this fundamental unknowing of the mind is the root of all problems – the mere fact that there is this lack of direct experience.

Perhaps we should define terms. What do we mean by mind? When we speak of mind we mean *that which is aware*. That which give rise to thoughts, emotions, feelings, such as "I'm happy or I'm sad." That which experience all the thoughts, states, and emotions that arise is what we mean when we speak of the mind. Not content but that which experiences the content.

The nature of mind itself is what we term "emptiness" in Buddhism. Mind itself has no color, form, shape, or size. Mind has no limiting characteristics that one can ascribe to it. So, in speaking about the mind, one is speaking about that which is intangible. Mind is completely empty or devoid of these kind of limiting characteristics. We must use the example of open space when talking about the nature of mind. Because mind is intangible as the space around, you cannot describe it. The space is simply space.

If the space represents mind, then we need to take into account that in this particular space there is also a kind of illumination. We can see perfectly clearly. Mind has its own kind of illumination, although not in a visual sense. It is the inherent ability of the mind to experience. The fact is that the mind is experience. Mind, being no thing in and of itself, even so experiences everything. That potential to experience is the illuminating potential of mind – the illuminating nature of mind. So in speaking about the mind, we can make reference to the fundamental intangibility of the mind and the illuminating potential which it demonstrates.

On a practical level, this illuminating potential of mind, this ability of experience, is something we encounter when we sit quietly by ourselves and think of a place. We can call that place to mind immediately. There is the possibility of thinking of, remembering or recalling that place. This is an example of this illuminating potential of mind.

The space and the illuminating are not two things that we can separate. They are two different aspects of a unitary experience. In the same way, when we refer to the intangible nature of mind, the essential emptiness, and the clarity or illuminating nature of the mind, we are not speaking of two

separate things, but of two aspects of one experience.

We have not yet completed our description of mind itself. We have space which we can use as an analogy of emptiness, and we have illumination. But we do not have an effective consciousness. We do not have anything other than empty and illuminated space. With mind we have something more. We have the actual awareness that can decide –"this is form," "this is sound," "this is such and such a shape." We can make judgments and we are conscious of the particular details of a situation. That is the unimpeded manifestation of mind, which is also the dynamic intelligence or awareness of mind as well.

So by describing mind in and of itself rather than the contents of mind, we are speaking of something which is essentially intangible. By this we also mean the illuminating potential, the dynamic unimpeded manifestation of awareness.

Perhaps at this point we could use a kind of approach to allow oneself to experience this fundamental nature of mind rather than the particular content of mind. We must consider that most of us have the idea that the mind is located in the brain or in the heart region or some other fixation of where the mind is. This is not particularly helpful at this point: Mind has no particular location; it is not in any particular part of the body. This state of bare awareness or fundamental awareness is prior to a state of any attachment to any particular state. It is not a particular place in the body nor a particular locality or object in the environment. It is simply the intangible, clear, unimpeded nature of mind itself.

This fundamental nature of mind as intangible emptiness, illuminating clarity, and dynamic unimpeded awareness is what we call buddha nature; the seed or potential for enlightenment. It is that inherent nature of mind which emerges as the fully enlightened experience. This is something that is shared by each and every living being. Anything that is sentient – anything that has consciousness – inherently has this fundamental purity or nature of mind in its make-up. There is not a single sentient being that does not have this as part of its make-up.

If we think of clear, transparent, pure water before any pollutants or sediments have been added, we note the water is pristine in its clarity and transparency. Or perhaps you might think of a sky totally free of any clouds

and the sun shining brilliantly in the sky. There is no obscuration and nothing in the way – nothing obscuring or limiting the experience at all. Now given that there is this naturally pure, positive nature of mind, then where has all this negative conditioning come from? Where have the negative aspects of confusion and suffering arisen from? How has the clear, pure, transparent water been polluted by sediment?

First and foremost there is the lack of direct experience that we mentioned previously –the fundamental ignorance or unknowing, which we call the obscuration of knowledge, the fact that the mind does not see itself, is not directly aware of its own nature. In Buddhism this is not something to which ascribe an origin. We do not say that at a certain point it happened that mind could nor see itself, that mind lost this direct experience; but rather, when we speak of the beginningless cycle of existence, we say that mind has always been obscured by this ignorance. It is co-emergent with or co-existent with consciousness itself.

This fundamental lack of direct experience and understanding of the nature of mind is the basis of all the other problems and levels of confusion and obscuration which we now experience. As mind arises, so does this ignorance. Practically speaking, it is impossible to speak of the mind separate from this ignorance in our present state, and so it is co-emergent with mind itself.

This co-emergent ignorance has always been there in the same way that the eyes have always been unable to see the face. From the moment that we are born and begin using our eyes up to the present time, we have never yet seen our face directly. It simply does not work that way. It has always been the case that mind can experience anything but its own nature. This fundamental ignorance is built in, so to speak.

Given that this is the case, a further distortion takes place. The essential intangibility or emptiness of the nature of mind in and of itself, is distorted into what we experience as the self or subject – something solid, real, or existent in and of itself, something tangible which we experience as the self or the subjective pole in our experience. Then the illuminating potential of the mind, which can and does give rise to all of these appearances and experiences that mind undergoes, is distorted into the objective pole of our experience, into the phenomenal world and the sensory objects that we

experience as separate from the self. At this point a dualistic split has already taken place. We experience the distortion of the essential intangibility and illuminating potential of mind itself in a subject/object frame of reference that we think of as the basis of our on-going experience. Again we are going to label this and give it the name, obscuration of habitual tendencies. From beginningless time, just as there has been ignorance of mind, there has also been this habit of experiencing in terms of subject and object.

This is a state or condition that will continue if we do not attain enlightenment. If one does not transcend the ignorance and obscuration which lead to this distortion, then this state is permanent. One cannot expect such a fundamental habitual tendency to simply wear itself out and disappear. Instead, it continues to reinforce itself and will do so as long as the individual does not attain enlightenment.

Even in the dream state, when we go to sleep and have a dream, we can see this fundamental dualism as part of our experience, as an on-going experience of something which carries over from waking consciousness. Even though one goes to sleep and dreams and experiences an entirely different realm than the physical waking state of existence – with all sorts of projections of mind playing themselves out in the dream - there is still the fundamental perception of "I" and "other." It is still that basic dualistic split that permits all the other more complex aspects of the dream state – such as pleasure, happiness, pain, and so on, to take place, because there is that underlying on-going dualistic element in our experience.

In the future when each and every one of us comes to die, that is, when the physical body dies and is disposed of, the mind goes on to experience a totally formless non-physical state of experience, a totally disembodied state, in that there is no physical basis for the consciousness at that point. There is however, a continued impression in the mind of some kind of embodiment, some kind of mental body. There is still a fundamental split, in that the appearances that arise in the mind are projected on to the environment and experienced as something other than mind itself. So even in the in-between state, the after-death state between physical death and physical rebirth, there is the on-going habitual tendency of mind to experience self and other.

We have the distortion of this essential, intangible nature of mind into something solid and tangible – the ego or subject. The illuminating potential of mind is distorted into something other, which is projected as separate from the self. Now based upon that, and given that there is this dualistic framework, emotional reactions develop between subject and object. So an emotional complexity of mind, which we call the obscuration of afflictive emotions, or the obscuration of kleshas, develops based upon this dualism.

Initially, there are the patterns of either attraction, or aversion and repulsion. In other words, there is a love/hate relationship between subject and object that mind perceives in the world around it. That is the beginning of the most basic level of emotional confusion in the mind. And so given that there is this fundamental split in the first place – the subject/object split of the self and other – then the situation arises where the subject or the object is pleasing to the self, and there also arises the situation where the object is threatening or repulsive. As well, there is an element of stupidity, mental dullness or apathy in the situation, in that one is simply not aware of what is really taking place. Instead, one is caught up in the superficial appearance of the emotional situation.

In seeking the basis of emotional confusion in the mind, we first distinguish three patterns: attraction or attachment, aversion, and stupidity or dullness. These are the three basic emotional patterns in the mind. The question then is: what experiences this dualism? What is experiencing self and other and all the emotional reactions between self and other? Mind itself, due to its inherently intangible, illuminating, dynamic, and unimpeded nature, is experiencing dualistic mind.

The unenlightened being we have examined so far has a fundamental lack of direct experience. Mind does not experience its own essential intangibility, its illuminating potential, or its dynamic and unimpeded awareness. Because of this fundamental lack of direct experience, our experience has been distorted into a subject/object frame of reference. And a certain level of emotional confusion has set in based upon this dualistic frame of reference. We are caught up in emotional reactions due to the syndrome of subjects being attracted to or repelled by objects which is based on the basic misunderstanding of what exactly is taking place.

Further development of emotional complexity takes place in the following way: From the attachment syndrome, an emotion of greed (avarice or grasping) develops. Based upon aversion, anger and jealousy develop. Based upon stupidity, pride develops.

Because of this emotional complexity based upon fundamental confusion, we behave in certain ways: physically, verbally, and mentally. We react to emotional confusion through these three gates, the body, speech and mind. The actions, be they physical, verbal or mental, by repetition become tendencies and these tendencies become reactive habits. These reactive habit-tendencies, once they are established, lead to specific results in our experience later on. There is a causality between one's reactions and one's experiences. This is the level of obscuration that we call the obscuration of karma. The karmic level of these tendencies reinforced by the physical, verbal, and mental actions or thought patterns is based upon this confusion. Therefore, this confusion itself is directly or indirectly harmful both to oneself and to others, because it perpetuates the confusion.

These four levels of confusion or obscuration are dependent one upon the other. Not that one is arising after the other, but simply that one is based upon the other. The confusion in the mind is first and foremost the lack of direct experience of mind's essential purity, the inherent transcending awareness which is the nature of mind itself. Due to this fundamental ignorance in the mind, the dualistic frame of reference – the fixation of self and other as separate and independent entities develops. This is the second level of confusion which is based upon this primary lack of direct experience of the true nature of mind.

Based upon this dualistic clinging to self and other, a mass of complex emotional confusion, the 84,000 afflictive emotional states, has developed, which is the third level of obscuration.

Finally, the fourth or the gross level of obscuration is the karmic level of all of these unskillful and negative tendencies, reinforced through physical, verbal, and mental actions and thought processes based upon emotional confusion.

In our present confusion then, as unenlightened beings, we experience the totality of these four levels of obscuration all at the same time. The inherent purity of mind has not been lost in us and cannot be lost, but is obscured to

the point that what one experiences is one big state of obscuration. The impurity, which is the confusion, covers the pure nature of the mind as clouds obscure the sun.

The single most important element in our experience, which binds all of that confusion together, is egocentricity, the clinging to the reality of self or ego, the thought, "I am." We might say that it is the glue or the binding that holds all the obscurations together.

The Purity of the Mental Continuum and the Advanced Scope

In order to sincerely aim with an intermediate scope motivation for liberation from uncontrollably recurring samsara, it is necessary to be convinced that it is possible to attain that freedom. In the advanced scope when we're aiming for enlightenment it is also necessary to be convinced of success.

Each of us has an individual mental continuum with no beginning and no end. Rebirth exists, and with no beginning to that mental continuum it has been mixed with an unawareness or confusion concerning behavioural cause and effect - that unhappiness comes from destructive behaviour and that happiness comes from constructive behaviour – and an unawareness of reality: how we and all things exist.

Based on that unawareness, disturbing emotions arise. Based on the disturbing emotions which are mixed with confusion we act in both destructive and constructive ways. These types of behaviour leave a karmic aftermath on our mental continuum. The karmic aftermath includes tendencies or seeds, positive and negative karmic force, non-revealing forms and habits. This karmic aftermath is carried on the mental continuum.

The mental continuum, at its deepest level is the clear light mind and the subtlest energy wind that is its non-dual support. The karmic tendencies, the potentials, and the habits are not forms of physical phenomenon nor a way of being aware of something – they are simply imputed on a basis. The gross basis is the continuum of the clear light mind. The subtle basis of imputation is the "me" or "I" that is imputed on the continuum of that clear light mind.

These things being merely imputed are abstract. It's like when we drink coffee; we drank coffee the day before yesterday, yesterday, and today. As a way of describing this behaviour, we could say there's a tendency to drink coffee. Because a tendency is not something physical, and it's not a way of being aware of something, it is merely imputed on this sequence of similar events. And the non-revealing form would be mixed (in a sense) with the subtlest energy winds and it's transmitted from lifetime to lifetime, from moment to moment in this package.

Unawareness, and the disturbing emotions all have tendencies and habits as well. Because the disturbing emotions are based on unawareness, the tendency of a disturbing emotion is to give rise to another instance of that disturbing emotion. Underlying destructive behaviour is the unawareness of cause and effect. This unawareness of reality is based on the fact that our mind makes an appearance of things to exist in an impossible way. We both perceive that impossible way of existing and believe it to actually correspond to reality. And when we believe that it corresponds to reality, then we act upon that misconception. Disturbing emotions arise and we physically, verbally, or mentally act on them.

There are two categories here. One is called emotional obscurations and one is called cognitive obscurations. Emotional obscurations are the disturbing emotions and the tendencies that give rise to them. The cognitive obscurations are the habits of our unawareness. When we get rid of the emotional obscurations, we achieve liberation. In addition, when we get rid of the cognitive obscurations, we achieve the omniscient state of a Buddha.

There are many, many levels of impossible ways of existence. There are many levels of subtlety. On the deepest most subtle level, there is an appearance called "truly established existence." Within the Indian Buddhist tenet systems, truly established existence is defined according to each system. We're going to look at the Prasangika definition as it's understood by the Gelug tradition.

What are we talking about here? We are talking about *that* which establishes the existence of something. We're not talking about the way of existing; we're talking about what establishes the existence of something. This is subtle. "Establish" is not an easy word to understand.

What proves that something exists? In the earlier tenet systems, if the object performs a function, if it does something, *doing that* establishes its existence. From the perspective of the lower tenet systems, this is the required proof for existence.

Truly established existence means there is an appearance of something from the side of the object establishing its existence either through its own power or else with other factors of conceptual mental labelling.

So let's take an example so that we can understand this. When we understand voidness, what we're understanding is an absence of an actual referent to these impossible ways of existing. There is no such thing. It's not referring to anything real. For example we could say, "I have a big house" or "I have a strong body." This is perhaps a better example. Now, what appears to us, the way that our mind makes it appear, is that there is something on the side of the body that makes it strong. Without depending on anything else. "I am strong, healthy." Of course, all the causes for that don't appear to us - that being strong arises dependently on good health, and good diet, and exercise, and so on. They don't seem to arise from that. They seem to be real. Strong body. You see yourself in the mirror. Strong body.

But if being strong was established from the side of the body, then it should be strong in any situation, even in comparison to other things. But actually, being strong in relation to the body of a baby, it's is strong. In relation to the body of an adult male gorilla, it's not strong. It's weak. So being strong arises dependently on other factors. So what does it arise dependently on? It's not only dependently on diet and exercise, not only dependent on relative to other things that we're comparing it to, but also dependently on the word and concept of "strong."

We're just doing things every day, aren't we? And so somehow we point out different factors of what we're doing every day and on the basis of that, we have a concept of "strong." And then there are some meaningless sounds that cave people, or whatever that started our language, put together and represented that concept with the sound and so we've got a word: "strong." So what established that the body is strong? The only thing you could say that establishes it is mere "mental labelling," Being strong is merely what the word and concept of being "strong" refers to imputed on the basis. But there's nothing on the side of the basis that establishes that you are strong. Nothing findable.

So we could say, "But, aren't there defining characteristics of being strong: we're able to lift a hundred kilos and so on? Isn't that a defining characteristic of 'strong,' on the side of the object?" No. Because that defining characteristic was also made up by people and a mind that thought up the concept of "strong," and they made up the definition, put it in a dictionary, and there you have "strong." But it's totally mentally constructed. But when we think – However, our mind makes this appearance as if, there, you just see the body and it's strong. "I just did 100 push-ups. I'm strong." As if it's existing all by itself, as strong.

Now, based on that appearance and believing it, that it refers to something real, then we exaggerate the quality of it and then we get attachment, we get pride and arrogance. We look at somebody else who we consider stronger and we get jealous. "Today I wasn't able to do a hundred push-ups. I could only do fifty." I get angry. So, like this, we get all the disturbing emotions based on believing in this appearance of what's impossible. But it doesn't mean that, conventionally, there's no such thing as strong. Conventionally, in terms of our names and concepts and so on, I'm strong. It's not a problem. We're not saying that nothing exists. And n strong, conventionally, dependent on the word and the concept and the comparison to the baby and so on. But nothing on the side of "strong" establishes that I am strong. Nothing on the side of the basis for imputation or on what's being imputed, neither conventionally nor ultimately. So obviously this is a topic that has to be gone into much more deeply. I'm just trying to explain it quickly. But the more we think about it and think about logically how it's impossible, if there was something on the side of the object that made me strong - I should be strong regardless of any sickness, regardless of old age, regardless of anything - when we use logic and so on, we see this is ridiculous.

So when we focus on voidness, what we're focusing on is "no such thing"; it's a total absence of an actual referent, a referent object of this appearance of a truly established existence. It's not referring to anything real - passive. It never was there. Another term for that is that there's no such thing as a "backing support" of this appearance of something impossible. There's nothing backing it in terms of what it's referring to. Like when there's a shadow of someone on a window shade, there's a backing support of an actual person behind there that's casting the shadow. So here in this case, although there's an appearance of a truly established existence like the shadow, there's nothing behind it that is supporting it from its own side.

Now, when we focus on voidness and are totally absorbed - that's a technical term in terms of perfect concentration - so when we're totally absorbed on voidness - on "no such thing," what we're focusing on is "no such thing" - then at that time the mind is not making an appearance of truly established existence and is not believing in it. We're talking about when this is occurring non-conceptually. When it's conceptual, it's mixed with the category of voidness. I won't go into detail about what that means. That's very complex.

So there's no appearance of truly established existence and there's, of course, then no believing in it. So, now, we have the mental continuum. And that mental continuum has been, the word is, "stained" or "tainted" by certain stains, by these emotional obscurations and cognitive obscurations. No beginning. Every moment. Except at the time of the clear light of death and when we are totally absorbed on voidness. This is one of the characteristics of the subtlest clear light mind. Although it may have the habits and tendencies of unawareness imputed on it, but nevertheless it, itself, is more subtle than all of this and it does not produce an appearance of truly established existence and it certainly doesn't believe in it and doesn't have any disturbing emotions and is also non-conceptual.

Now the question is: Can these stains of emotional and cognitive obscurations be removed? Are they part of the essential nature of the clear light mind or are they what we would call "fleeting stains"? And if they were part of the nature of the mind, the defining characteristics of mind, of mental activity, they should be present every single moment. However, they are not. There are occasions, like I've just said, total absorption on voidness and clear light mind of death, when they are not. That demonstrates that they are not part of the nature of the mind.

Now remember, when we get rid of the emotional obscurations, that's liberation; when we get rid of the cognitive ones, that's the omniscient state of a Buddha. Remember that these disturbing emotions cause samsaric rebirth as described in the twelve links. And when our mind makes appearances of truly established existence, it makes things appear totally independently and unrelated to each other. Because of that, we don't see the interconnectedness of everything, particularly in terms of cause and effect, so we're not omniscient. We don't know how best to help everybody: what are the causes for their problems and what would be the result of anything we teach.

So, the question is, then: "If these are fleeting stains, they're not part of the essential nature or defining characteristics of the mind, clear light mind, can they be stopped forever?" Forever, remember this is true stopping - third noble truth. True stopping is they are gone forever. Because tendencies and habits can be imputed on the clear light mind and on the mind that is totally absorbed on voidness, which is why after we arise from these states then these things recur. So how do we get rid of them so that they don't recur? Is it possible? Now we have to go back to understand the nature of tendencies and habits.

Tendencies and habits are imputed on a sequence of similar events. We can only say that there is a presently happening, a presently occurring tendency on my mental continuum only if there can be future recurrences of what it is that's been repeated. If there can be no more future occurrences, then all we can say is that there was a previous, a past tendency or habit. But not presently. Do you understand that? I have a tendency of writing with my right hand. That is a presently happening tendency. It's presently occurring. It's presently there because I can still write with my right hand, in the future. So then I lose my right hand in an accident. Do I still have the habit of writing with my right hand? No. I had a habit of writing with my right hand, but I can't write with my right hand any more because I don't have one. So it's only past tendency or habit, not a present one. So if we can prevent any future recurrence of appearance making, a true existence and believing in it, then the tendency and habits are finished, forever. They're not going to come back.

So the more we can stay absorbed on voidness, non-conceptually, in which there is no appearance of true existence, there is not grasping for it, the weaker and weaker the tendencies and habits become. Remember, the unawareness of all the disturbing emotions are based on believing that this garbage, this appearance, refers to something real and we are experiencing more, and more, and more that it doesn't refer to something real. The more and more we stay absorbed on voidness, eventually we will stop believing that this appearance refers to something real. So that tendency will get weaker, and weaker, and weaker and eventually will finish, in which as we got rid of the emotional obscurations we've attained liberation. Because it's this unawareness that initially brings about these karmic actions that lead to karmic aftermath and it's the disturbing emotions that activate the karmic aftermath to produce a future rebirth. It's all described in the twelve links.

So when there is nothing to activate the karmic aftermath - these tendencies and so on of our karma; nothing to activate it and there's nothing that's planting more karmic aftermath – then samsaric rebirth is finished forever. And if we can stay focused on voidness forever, which is what we would do as a Buddha, totally absorbed on voidness forever, then there would be no more appearance of truly established existence. Our mind would not produce that and we would be omniscient, because we would then be able to perceive the interconnectedness of everything. So this is how we establish the existence and the possibility of liberation and enlightenment.

Now, that mind which understands voidness, needs to have a certain strength to it. We could understand voidness just as an intellectual exercise in our class in university and that doesn't have very much force to it, that understanding. In fact, it could lead to a lot of arrogance. But if that understanding has the force of renunciation behind it, then it has enough energy to be able to get rid of the tendencies of the disturbing emotions and the disturbing emotions themselves. Why? Because we are renouncing the result of the disturbing emotions and the tendencies for them. We are renouncing samsaric rebirth. That is what we are determined to be free of and we are willing to

give up it's causes. That's what we are renouncing is the third form of suffering: the all-pervasive suffering of these aggregates. I mean anybody can renounce - I don't want to have pain anymore. That's no big accomplishment. An animal could have that as well. And many other religions renounce our worldly happiness to go to some paradise. That's not specifically Buddhist here. So what we're renouncing is this third type of suffering which is - that's samsara. That's the basis of samsara. We're not renouncing the fact that we will continue to appear and benefit others, and learn and so on, and be with teachers, and eat, etc. We're not renouncing that. We are renouncing all of that happening under the force of karma and disturbing emotions, and being associated with karma and disturbing emotions, and building up more.

What characterizes samsara? It goes up and down. Sometimes I feel good. Sometimes I don't feel good. Sometimes I feel happy. Sometimes I feel unhappy. And it goes up and down and we have no way of predicting how we're going to feel in the next moment. And even when we're feeling good, we have to be parted from it, we're not satisfied - "I don't feel good enough." etc., etc. This is the samsaric situation that we are renouncing. So we're not renouncing existing. We're not renouncing life.

Now of course mental blocks appear, "Well, if my life doesn't have this up and down and so on, then my life will be empty, it will be boring. The up and downs make it exciting, and so on." Well, analyze that a little bit more deeply. We still have aggregates that make up our - each moment of our experience. We still have feelings, but they are not disturbing feelings. As we said, we have nondisturbing happiness and equanimity. And it's not that we have no emotions whatsoever. We don't have disturbing emotions. We have love, we have compassion, we have generosity, we have patience, we have affection, and so on.

So, these are the things that we work with to really become someone of an intermediate scope. So unless we really are confident that it is possible that the mental continuum, my mental continuum, not only goes on forever, but it is not stained in its nature by the emotional obscurations - I'm convinced of that and that it's possible to stop them forever. And I have a correct identification of what it is I'm renouncing and what it is that's going to result from it as being an arhat - when all of that is clear and we're confident about it, then we are going on the road of actually becoming someone of intermediate scope. A lot more detail we could give about the intermediate scope, but we don't have time. Let's go on to the advanced.

So, when we have the understanding of voidness which is combined with the force of a mind that is with renunciation: it's determined to be free from the uncontrollably recurring existence, the third type of suffering and all the things that are part of that, and therefore determined to achieve liberation and arhat, and plus the prayers to be liberated - so that intention, then that gives the force of the mind to bring about liberation. But when we have the force of bodhicitta aim as the force of the mind that understands voidness, then it's able to stay focused on voidness forever and to get rid of the cognitive obscurations as well. Why? First of all, I have a mental continuum,

no beginning, no end and it's not stained by these two obscurations. So does everybody else. That's the first thing we have to realise.

Therefore on the basis of that, equanimity toward everybody. So although my mind makes it appear, when I see a mental continuum that because of its karma is now connected with the body of an insect, that doesn't mean that this mental continuum from its own side is established as an insect mental continuum. There's no such thing as an insect mental continuum, or a male or a female, or a human, or a Mexican, or whatever. And my mental continuum is - we need to make this point - that the mental continuum itself is devoid of existing in impossible ways, existing all by itself with big walls around it independently. This is ridiculous. All our mental continuums have interacted with each other and been influenced by each other in terms of what we experience.

Then we factor in beginningless time and, as a consequence of that, we have all some time not only helped each other, but been each other's mother and father, etc. And everybody wants to be happy, nobody wants to be unhappy: that's the basic principle for every mental continuum. And so we're all equal on that basis. Plus, we're all interconnected with each other and we all have basically what we would call Buddha-nature, which means the basic purity of the mental continuum, which will allow for the fact that you can become, all of us, can become enlightened, not just me. And so we are convinced that everybody can achieve liberation and enlightenment. If we are aiming to help everybody achieve liberation and enlightenment, we need to believe that it's possible for them to actually achieve that, don't we? And when we understand the voidness of the mental continuum, or the clear light mind or however we want to formulate it, then we understand that it is possible to influence and help others. That causal relationship is possible between mental continuums, without exaggerating what's possible or denying what is possible, based on actually understanding cause and effect.

So already from this factor, this great compassion here is aimed at absolutely everybody based on understanding that all can achieve liberation and enlightenment, equally, and therefore it is appropriate for us to work for that. So we can see and we see interconnection of everything, maybe not so clearly but at least we understand the principle, now you start to understand how that the force of that is so vast that it can act as a cause for actually achieving the omniscient mind of a Buddha and that has that level of vastness.

So bodhicitta aim now is based on that compassion and taking responsibility to bring everybody to enlightenment. "Exceptional resolve" is what it's called. Based on that, induced by that, then - and realising that only if we become a Buddha will we be able to help them fully because we get rid of these, not just the emotional but the cognitive obscurations as well, then we are focused on our not-yet-happening enlightenment. We don't want to use the word "future" because then we get confused here. The Buddhist concepts are very different from the Western concepts of past, present, and

future. So let's not confuse it. I have a huge article on that on my web site called "Not yet happened."

So we're talking about our own individual enlightenment, which is referring to the third and fourth noble truths: the true stopping of the two obscurations and the true pathway minds that have not yet happened on our mental continuum. But which can happen.

When we talk about "future" in a Western context, it sounds as though the future is happening somewhere out there. If we could go faster than the speed of light, we will catch up with the future and travel to the future. That's totally not the Buddhist understanding. In Buddhism, we talk about the no-longer-happening, presently-happening, and not-yet-happening. So only if something is possible can we speak of it not yet happening. But my enlightenment is not happening now. But it can happen on the basis of the purity of the mental continuum and the causes that are built up there, like the network of positive force and the deep awareness, the so-called accumulation of merit and wisdom. The not yet happening enlightenment is imputed on its cause and on the basis which is the purity of the mind.

That's what we're focusing on: our own individual not yet happening, third and fourth noble truths, enlightenment. And we're convinced that it's possible because we have already demonstrated that the true stoppings are possible - of the emotional and cognitive obscurations. They are fleeting stains. They are not part of the nature of the mind. So we are aiming, then, with bodhichitta, to have an enormous, vast, vast scope of mind. This is Mahayana, the vast vehicle of mind. It's not just vehicle, we're not talking about an auto-mobile. We're talking about a vehicle of mind that will bring us somewhere. Bring us to enlightenment. But it's enormous because we are thinking in terms of all beings, all mental continuums and the interconnectedness of all of them and the total purity of our own individual mental continuum and of everybody's mental continuum, and it's just vast. And that gives the force, for the understanding of voidness, to be able to cut through the habits of unawareness as well. In other words, we are able to then stay in this total absorption on voidness forever.

So we have the intermediate scope and the advanced scope. We want to transform ourselves into persons that have this scope in an un-labored fashion all the time. Intermediate scope: no matter what we encounter in our samsaric existence, we see as a form of suffering. What does that mean? Does that mean that we don't enjoy ourselves anymore and we're really grim all the time? No. We are not fooled by what we see. We see that this is - I mean even just on a superficial level - that it has arisen based on causes and conditions and that it's going to change, it's not going to last. And whatever happiness we have, it's going to change and we're not going to have enough, etc. And so we just enjoy what's happening without having problems with it. I mean, fine, I enjoy this meal. It's going to be finished. I'm going to be hungry afterwards. That's what I want to get rid of. But meanwhile, I have to eat. So while I'm eating, I'll enjoy it but not make a big thing out of enjoying it. And " Marvelioso

at how wonderful it is" - none of that, just calm. We don't exaggerate anything.

So on a practical level what does this mean? What type of attitude do we have? Let's say in our interactions with people - some people we are very attracted to and desire, others we are angry with, and so on. Even if we are not able to apply the understanding of voidness, we can apply more temporary antidotes. Very, very helpful. Visualization. So we try to imagine that we have x-ray vision and whether we're looking at the skeleton - imagine the skeleton of the person - I find much more effective peeling off the skin, as Shantideva suggests, and imagining this person or animal or whatever just in terms of the muscles and the intestines and the stomach and the lungs, etc., and thinking this person, no matter how attractive they are or no matter how repulsive and how angry I am with how they're behaving, that they are under the influence of disturbing emotions and so on. They're going to have a pain in their back and they're going to have this and that. It diffuses this attraction and this repulsion and anger which is really based just on the superficial appearance. Very, very helpful, if one can start to really visualize like that all the time.

So we're renouncing. I don't want to have this attraction; I don't want to have this repulsion. It just is causing me problems, causing unhappiness, suffering, difficult situations. And so I am determined to be free of that. To be free of that means I have to apply some opponent to oppose these. It's not just a nice wish, and do nothing. "Oh, maybe they'll go away if I pray hard enough."

Now looking deeper into the person and seeing the insides of them; well, it's true and it's there. It's not something which is a fantasy. But also their surface appearance is likewise there. We don't deny the surface appearance. And eventually we get to the point where we're not so much under the influence of desire and so on. And then we are able to just enjoy the beauty of somebody, the beauty of a flower or the beauty of a meal, and we're not disturbed by it. Because we understand the deeper level of it. And we start to see the beauty in far more things than we did before.

So intermediate scope, our focus then is renouncing these disturbing emotions and the whole samsaric situation that's brought on by them. That's our focus. But... the Dharma-lite version of it is thinking just in terms of this lifetime. So the real thing is thinking in terms of how, if we don't get rid of these disturbing emotions, it's just going to perpetuate themselves forever with uncontrollably recurring rebirths - and we certainly don't want that! So that is what we are focusing on overcoming actually.

And when we become a person of advanced scope, then we are seeing, we are focusing not just on overcoming our disturbing emotions toward everybody and everything, but extending compassion - seeing that we're all in the same situation. We're all under the influence of karma and disturbing emotions. We're all having the up and down suffering of samsara. We all have the basis for that. And how terrible that is - just as our own situation was so terrible. And we are focusing on the fact that the no-longer-happening of their being my mother, their presently-happening being

an insect, and their not-yet-happening being a Buddha, and we relate to them on all three levels on the basis of understanding the purity of the mind, etc. So, that's not an easy accomplishment. That's really not at all. If we're able to have that with everybody and how about having it simultaneously with everybody?

So these are some of the issues that we work with with the lam-rim material. There's no time to go into detail about all of the different aspects that we meditate on with each scope but what I've tried to present are some of the issues that need to be worked on. And certainly I've tried to work on them myself, with the aim of actually trying to transform myself into these type of persons. And it's not easy. And we shouldn't fool ourselves. It's easy to trivialise it.

And we've seen how each of these stages are built on the basis of and include the previous steps. We need to realize that our own mental continuum has no beginning and no end, so there's going to be more rebirths. So, don't just be focused on what's happening now, but think in terms of what's not yet happening. And if we don't do anything about it, it's just going to continue forever in this samsaric situation. And although it has been mixed with no beginning with the emotional obscurations, it's possible to remove them forever. So there's a not-yet-happening liberation that can be imputed on my mental continuum. And the same thing in terms of not being stained by nature by the cognitive obscurations. So I can look ahead to the not-yet-happening enlightenment on the basis of my mental continuum. And I understand the countless number of other mental continuums in exactly the same situation and the interconnectedness of all of us.

So we turn away from just our focus on this lifetime and think in terms of the future, in other words, what's coming next. And then we turn away from our focus on what's coming next just within the boundaries of samsara and look ahead to the state of liberation. And then we turn away from being focused on just that aspect of liberation and turn our attention to our not-yet-happening enlightenment. So each of these stages has a renunciation, a turning away from something. So we have renunciation here. We're focused on our not-yet-happening enlightenment, so it's bodhicitta. And all of this is possible because we understand the voidness of the mental continuum.

Meditation on Perfect Human Rebirth

Preparation: Start by focusing briefly on the position of your body, finding the most beneficial position with your spine straight and erect, a position in which you can be aware and awake, but not stiff or rigid.

Then focus your attention on the breath, letting go of your thoughts and allowing them to pass through, like clouds in the sky. Imagine that with every inhalation you are breathing in purifying blissful white light, and that with every exhalation you breath out negative energy of body and mind, negative thoughts and pains and sickness, in the form of black smoke. Do this for a few minutes.

Motivation: Remember why you are sitting and meditating. Think that you are seeking to understand your mind and your life more deeply in order to become a better person, and ultimately in order to overcome the limitations that are keeping you from fulfilling your highest human potential and achieving a fully awakened existence.

The Main Practice: (For this meditation, have before you the complete list of the eight freedoms and ten endowments.)

Analytical meditation: Meditate on the points of the topic of perfect human rebirth using the following steps, applying these points to your own life and situation and finding examples and reasoning that is effective for your own mind:

Step 1: Recognition of the 8 freedoms and 10 endowments.

Step 2: Contemplation of the great value of the perfect human rebirth (in 3 parts).

- *Step 2a:* The temporal value: enabling one to attain higher rebirth in the future.
- *Step 2b:* The ultimate value: enabling one to attain full enlightenment.
- *Step 2c:* The moment by moment value: the preciousness of every moment of a perfect human rebirth.

Step 3: The rarity of the perfect human rebirth (in 3 parts).

- *Step 3a:* The rarity of the causes of receiving the perfect human rebirth.
  (1) practice of morality
  (2) practice of generosity
  (3) pure prayers

Step 3b: The difficulty of obtaining the perfect human rebirth illustrated by examples.

(1) The example of the blind turtle surfacing in the ocean through a floating golden yoke.
(2) The example of throwing a handful of peas against a wall … how many of them will stick to the wall.
(3) The example of pouring mustard seeds over the tip of a pin … how many will stay on the tip.

Step 3c: The rarity of obtaining the perfect human rebirth in terms of numbers.

(1) The number of beings with perfect human rebirth compared with the total number of sentient beings is like a handful of dust compared to all the dust in the world.

Step 4: Concluding determination:
Having received a perfect human rebirth, with the profound opportunities to attain higher rebirth, liberation, or even full enlightenment, if I do not utilize this rare and precious opportunity to achieve these goals, then this life has been wasted. Therefore, I MUST take the essence of this precious life and practice the Dharma, using my life in the most beneficial way possible to bring only happiness to others and thereby create only future happiness for myself.

Once you have come to this conclusion, cease all analytical thought-based contemplation and single-pointedly focus on this thought, letting your mind simply rest in and concentrate on this strong determination.

Dedication: Dedicate any positive energy and merit to be able to protect and fulfill one's perfect human rebirth and to attain a perfect human rebirth in all one's future lives, in order to progress on the spiritual path and reach enlightenment quickly to bring ultimate happiness to others.

Meditation on Continuity of the Mind

Preparation: Start with a 5-minute breathing meditation. Focus the attention on the breath (the sensation of the breath flowing in and out at the opening of the nostrils). Let all thoughts go, like clouds in the sky. If distractions arise, be aware of them without getting involved and without judgment, then gently bring the attention back to the breath.

Motivation: When the mind is calm and quiet and you feel relaxed and focused, create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that you are meditating not just for your own individual intellectual or emotional benefit, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop your mind to reach a state where you can benefit all beings.

Body of the meditation:
Bring to mind what you were thinking at some time during the day, such as what you were thinking about as you were coming to this class. Then follow your thoughts backward through time, earlier and earlier in the day.

For example, what were you thinking in the car on the way here?
What were you thinking immediately before that? And before that? And before that?

Continue to follow your thoughts backward, observing the relationship between thoughts. Does each thought exist independently of other thoughts around it? How is each though related to the thought that came before it? To the one after it?

Follow your thoughts backward through time, from today, to yesterday, to the day before that. Then move further and further into the past, following your thoughts backward into last month, last year ... into your childhood.

Observe closely how each thought arises. Where does it come from? Is each moment of mental activity linked to the previous moment or not? What is the cause of each thought?

Trace your thoughts through your childhood, into your infancy, right up to the moment of your birth. (With practice in meditation, you may start to actually be able remember these periods of your life. If you cannot, it is sufficient to extrapolate your current experience and to use your imagination about those early years.)

Try to follow your mental processes back even further, through the process of being born, back into the womb ...

Then ... follow your experience even further back ... to the moment of your conception ... to before you were conceived ...

Once you have meditated on the above and have gained some feeling or direct experience (this may require several meditation sessions on the above), then contemplate the following question:

Question to consider: You have seen with this meditation that each moment of experience is a part of a continuum of perceptions, emotions ... of activity of mind. Each moment arises from the previous moment. Given this reality, at the moment of birth, is it sensible to think that a child's mind simply comes into being out of nothingness? Or is there once again a previous moment of mind from which that first moment after conception arises?

Dedication: Now dedicate any benefit you have gained from doing this meditation towards attaining a perfect state of mind where you can benefit countless beings.

MIND AS KNOWER

Guided Meditation

Purpose

The purpose of doing this meditation is for the practitioner to develop an awareness and experience as the mind as a "knower" of experience. It is also helpful to begin to distinguish the mind from the body/brain and to develop a greater appreciation for the vast awareness, knowledge, and experience of which the mind is capable. It is a meditation on the relative nature of the mind as "clear and knowing", with emphasis placed on "knowing". The following meditation could take anywhere from 15-30 minutes, however, best to start with a short and well focused meditation, and build from there.

Begin with a short meditation on the breath, either counting to 21, doing 9-round breathing, etc. to calm the mind.

Set the motivation by generating the mind of entrustment in the objects of refuge and cultivating the wish to attain the state of enlightenment in order to be of perfect benefit to others. It is impossible to help others without understanding and then subduing their mind. It is impossible to understand and help others' minds without understanding and subduing my own! Therefore, I am going to do this meditation on the "knowing" nature of mind, and by becoming the Master of my own mind I will be of best benefit to others and myself.

Concentrate on the breath for a few minutes allowing the mind to become focused.

Now, slowly **move your attention from the breath and simply become aware** – become aware of sounds, smells, shapes, colors, tactile sensations, tastes, and thoughts. Do this slowly, giving yourself a chance to really take it all in. You do not need to look around with the eyes or move the body, just use the power of mind and awareness and take in the scope of what the mind is *knowing* just as we sit here. *(Pause for a few minutes)*

Notice how the mind appears to reside within the body. *(Pause)* Now, notice how the scope of mind's awareness and knowing extend far beyond the physical limits of the body. Generate awareness of the mind as distinct from the body. Notice the differentiation between the physical world and the mind that knows it. *(Pause for a few minutes)*

Rest in this awareness as the mind as knowing as much as possible, without going into details about the phenomena coming into awareness, just **staying with the mere experience of *knowing* phenomena**. *(Pause)*

Some teachings compare the mind to a mirror. As you continue this meditation, see if you can note this **reflective quality** of mind, that which is simply *knowing* experience without generating it, just reflecting what is arising naturally. *(Pause)*

Try to keep the mind as **expansive as possible**, staying open to the fullness of what the mind can be aware of, can know, simultaneously. If you find yourself getting disoriented, you can always go back to concentration on the breath, however focus on *the mind being aware* of the breath, rather than the breath itself.

Maintain awareness of the reflective, expansive, knowing quality of the mind. *(Pause)*

Now, slowly bring your attention back to the weight of the body sitting on the cushion, in this meditation place. Allow the mind to settle back into the breath.

Make a determination to practice this awareness of the mind as *knowing* phenomena as you go about your daily affairs.

Dedication

By virtue of having made this effort to become more acquainted with my mind, may I soon become a Master of mind, having generated all positive qualities and removed all negativities and obscurations. May I swiftly awaken to the state of supreme enlightenment and lead all other beings to that supreme state.

(Other dedication prayers according to your wishes)

ALTERNATE MEDITATION

From Ven. Thubten Dondrub's Sample Course Outline "Mind and Its Potential", Session Two

1 Body/Mind meditation

Rough outline of meditation: purpose is for people to get some idea or feeling of difference between mind and matter and the ever-present continuity of mind.
Begin with posture, motivation. Don't do the 9-round breathing.
Then just ask people to be aware of their physical surroundings-without looking around- colors, shapes, sounds smells, temperature, etc. Experience the variety of matter.
Bring the focus onto the body- shape, weight, and temperature.
Then try to step back and realize there is a *knowing* of all this- ever-present, formless, and clear. Try to focus on that which knows, rather than what is known.
After a short time:
Be aware of the breath- simply the breath. Just notice the body breathing in every way. Again step back and try to catch that which merely knows the breath.
Do this with thoughts and feelings as well.
At the end of focusing on thoughts, emphasize to concentrate on an awareness of the more fundamental level of mind, which is also mere clarity and knowing- the nature of which never changes despite the type of thought or feeling- is always still, clear. Concentrate on that.

Colophon: Prepared by Kendall Magnussen, February 13, 2002.

1. Mind and Its Potential

Meditation Three: Clarity of Consciousness

by: Thubten Yeshe

PRELIMINARIES

Begin with a short period of relaxing physical exercise, yoga or tai chi or a short walk in quiet surroundings. Prepare your altar, or simply light a candle or some incense to help create a sacred space within which to meditate.

After you sit in your meditation space, calm the mind further with a few minutes of breathing meditation. Simply bring your awareness to your breath, to the expansion and contraction of your abdomen as you inhale and exhale. You can also use the breath-counting exercise from the recorded meditation.

When distracting thoughts or emotions arise simply take note of them, and let them go without out any conversation whatsoever.

Do this for three to five minutes, or more if you wish.

Now, imagine that you are surrounded by all the people of your life – friends, enemies and strangers. Bring these people to life in your contemplation; imagine they are really here, in this space with you, doing this meditation with you.

Then, adjust your motivation. Consider your intention for your spiritual practice in general and this meditation in particular. Carefully make the determination to use your study and meditation to increase your understanding and insight, and to take the next step on your spiritual journey for your own sake, for the sake of all the people of your life, and by extension all universal living beings.

THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

Generate an image of spacious clarity – for example, imagine you are lying on top of a hill with an unobstructed view – no trees, no buildings – you are gazing up into a clear blue sky, without clouds or pollution of any kind.

Focus your awareness on this luminous spaciousness. Allow yourself to merge with this clear, luminous space.

Imagine your body and mind, as well as the surrounding environment, becoming one with this pure empty space; becoming empty, luminous and clear. Without any sense of separation or duality.

Hold your awareness in the experience of this empty luminosity. Just that. Without thinking this and that, without judgments or discrimination.

This is the clear pure nature of your mind. Just rest in this space with intense, but relaxed, awareness.

When thoughts and emotions arise from this space, do not engage with them. Do not gravitate towards them with attraction, or push them away with aversion. Simply watch them arise, abide and dissolve back into empty spaciousness.

Don't analyze the thoughts and emotions that arise, or the mind, or your experience. Just observe what whatever arises with perfect neutrality, and as the thoughts pass bring your awareness back to the clarity of your own mind.

Everything that arises – thoughts, emotions, feelings and sensations, the experience of sound, smells and so forth – has the nature of spacious, luminous clarity. Formless, space-like clear awareness. This is the pure nature of your consciousness.

Totally relaxed, stay with this experience with intense awareness. Just that. That's all.

DEDICATION

Bring to mind the motivation that you established at the beginning of the meditation. Dedicate the understanding, the spiritual energy and creative potential that you have generated doing this meditation to the realization of your goals, to taking the next step on your spiritual journey, for your own sake and for the sake of all the people of your life.

Mind and Its Potential Suggested Review Questions

What? 34 questions?! I hear you ask! Don't worry – many of them are 1-line answers!

1. What is the definition of mind?
2. What purpose is accomplished when the mind is defined as clear and knowing?
3. What purpose is accomplished when the mind is described as "merely clear and knowing" and not just as clear and knowing?
4. In terms of grossness and subtlety describe the meaning of clear?
5. What do you understand by the term knowing?
6. What is the significance of the word merely?
7. Why is the mind impermanent?
8. Why is the mind described as a continuum without a beginning?
9. What is the substantial cause of a main mind?
10. What is the function of a main mind?
11. Name two main minds.
12. Why do the middle-way proponents assert only six types of main mind and not eight as the mind-only proponents do?
13. Name two conditions that a main mind depends upon.
14. What is the function of a mental factor?
15. Name two of the always-present mental factors.
16. Briefly describe in two sentences one of the always-present mental factors
17. Name two of the object-ascertaining mental factors.
18. Briefly describe in two sentences one of the object-ascertaining mental factors.
19. Use a metaphor to describe the relationship between main minds and mental factors
20. What is non-virtue?
21. What is ultimate non-virtue?
22. Name one of the natural non-virtues.
23. There are six factors that are necessary for a delusion to arise, name two of the causes and two of the conditions.
24. Name two methods that will prevent a delusion from arising.
25. Name any two delusions that are in the first and second zone and any four in the third zone.
26. Name the major delusion from which all others arise.
27. Are the various states of mind we experience primarily caused by external conditions?
28. What is ignorance?
29. Briefly describe how ignorance functions.
30. In just three sentences describe how a person or the self exists.
31. What is the function of 'desirous' attachment?
32. How is 'desirous' attachment generated?
33. Name two desires that are not attachment based.
34. In just three sentences write anything you can recollect about the Buddha-nature.

Answer as many of the questions as you can relying on memory..
...and then by relying on your notes
...and then you can ask Eddie the question!

MIND AND ITS POTENTIAL

Suggestions for Public Exams Questions

1. Nature of mind. What are the two main characteristics of the mind? (clear and knowing)

2. Nature of mind. Discuss these two characteristics and explain their meaning.

3. Continuity of mind. Explain what continuity of mind means and explain a meditation you can do to get an experience of this.

4. Mind/brain debate. How would you prove that the mind is not the brain?

5. Delusions. What is a delusion? How do you know if you are being influenced by a delusion?

6. Delusions. Name two delusions and define them.

7. Delusions. Name another delusion – describe it and then give one suggestion of how it can be transformed.

8. Precious human rebirth. Describe four reasons why your human rebirth is so fortunate.

9. Possibility of enlightenment. Is it possible to completely eliminate delusions from your mind? Why or why not?

Mind and its Potential Reading List

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Buddhist Thought and Applied Psychological Research. D.K. Nauriyal; Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism, 2006.

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The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech. Kunzang Pelden; translated by the Padmakara Translation Group, Shambhala, Boston, 2007

Emotional Awareness. HH Dalai Lama & Paul Ekman; Holt Paperbacks, 2008

A Fearless Heart. Thupten Jinpa; Piatkus, 2015

Altrism. Matthieu Ricard; Atlantic Books, 2015

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