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Handbook of Meditation in Society 6

Sutta Discovery Vol 60.1f
Theme: A Psychopathology of Mindfulness
When religion and meditation fail

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The essay, **SD 60.1e *Delusion and experience***, is part of the multi-volume *SD 60 Handbook of Meditation in Society*, comprising (to date):

SD 60   **Handbook of Meditation in Society**
SD 60.1a   How to be mindful: character analysis
SD 60.1b   Types of meditation: Samatha, Vipassana, Kammatthana
SD 60.1c   Modern meditation: the rhetoric of Buddhist experience
SD 60.1d   An Evolutionary Psychology of mindfulness
SD 60.1e   Delusion and Experience: epistemology, psychology and the Abhidhamma
SD 60.1f   Psychopathology of Mindfulness: when religion and meditation fail

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60.1f

Handbook of Meditation in Society 6
A Psychopathology of Mindfulness

When religion and meditation fail
by ©Tᴀɴ Beng Sin, 2023

0 Introduction to SD 60.1f

0.1   My special task here is to examine the way in which people tend to view religion or religious ideas or practices, why they view religion in the way they do, and how this affects them. I am focusing on early Buddhism and how it applies to us today, especially in terms of understanding the mind, the body in relation to the mind, mind-training, and related topics. These are the key areas I'm considering when writing this SD 60.1 series, and I have put together some answers from my own experience and from related research over the last 50 years or so.

In this volume, **SD 60.1f**, I have put together summaries and highlights of significant psychological studies of mindfulness and meditation, related to the theme of the SD 60 series, "meditation in society," that is, how early Buddhist meditation is used today and what we can learn from this. We[1] will also look at various issues, difficulties and pathologies related to the modern usages of mindfulness, especially in the light of early Buddhist meditation.

This volume, titled **A Psychopathology of Mindfulness: When religion and meditation fail**, concludes the SD 60.1 series, themed "Meditation in society." This ominous title serves as a reminder that meditation, like any healing method, religious or secular, may fail and often does. Hence, it is vital for us to be properly trained and experienced in our practice, which should suit our needs and personality.

There are, of course, ways of correcting, even preventing, many, if not most, of the failures mentioned here, but these ways are specifically given with Buddhist training in mind. To work with viable solutions to such meditation problems, we need to study and understand what the problems are or may be, and possibly learn how they arise and how to overcome them. To perform these tasks, I have also referred to other SD volumes where relevant to familiarize ourselves with early Buddhist meditation.

0.2 In this closing volume, I start off with a look into meditation as a cult, followed by a digest of the main ideas from over half a dozen major reviews of the physiological and psychological effects of meditation in a scientific and clinical context. These reviews are helpful for Buddhist meditators to recognize and possibly resolve symptoms of troubling issues before any of these issues arise. Much of the materials here, especially in the early sections, have been based on the following major review papers published mostly between 1975 and 2000:[2]

Jonathan C Smith
   1975   "Meditation as psychotherapy: A review of the literature." *Psychological Bulletin* 82,4
                    Jul 1975: Jul 1975:558-564. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1099602/, 10 May 2023.
Robert L Woolfolk
   1975   "Psychophysiological correlates of meditation," *The Archives of General Psychiatry* 32,-
                    10 Oct 1975:1326-1333.

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[1] I will hereon use mostly the common or universal "**we**" to help you connect with this writing—it is mostly related to early Buddhism in some way—so that you feel this writing is about you (since you have shown the interest in reading it).

[2] For a historical overview of the popularization of meditation in the West and the modern world, see A Burke, "Comparing individual preferences for four meditation techniques: Zen, Vipassana (Mindfulness), Qigong, and Mantra," *Explore* 8,4 Jul/Aug 2012:237 f.

Julian M Davidson
   1976   "Physiology of meditation and mystical states of consciousness." *Perspectives in Bio-logical Medicine* 19,3, spring 1976:345-380.
Deane H Shapiro. Jr, & David Giber
   1978   "Meditation and psychotherapeutic effects: Self-regulation strategy and altered states of consciousness." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 35 spring 1978:294-302.
Deane H Shapiro, Jr
   1982   "Overview: clinical and physiological comparison of meditation with other self-control strategies," [1980] *American Journal of Psychiatry* 139 1982:267-274. Rear in Shapiro & Walsh (eds), 2008: ch. 1 (8 pp).
Greg Bogart
   1991   "The use of meditation in psychotherapy: A review of the literature." *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 45,3 July 1991:383-412.
Alberto Perez-de-Albeniz & Jeremy Holmes
   2000   "Meditation concepts, effects and uses in therapy," *International Journal of Psycho-therapy* 5,1 Mar 2000:49-58. Previously from TrancenNet.org. Updated 29 Oct 2009.

0.3 A GLOSSARY OF SOME TECHNICAL TERMS IN MEDITATION STUDIES[3]

0.3.1 Types of meditation

   attentional: (adj) (meditation) that strengthens the self-regulation of various attentional proces-ses, especially the ability to initiate and sustain meta-awareness [0.3.2]. Some forms of this type of meditation involve "fixed or focused attention" (FA), a narrowing of attentional scope, keeping aware-ness on the mind-object (eg, breath meditation, samatha) [SD 60.1b (3-5)]; or releasing one's atten-tional control and bringing awareness to the field of perception, ie, "open attention" (OA) (most per-ceptions, such as those of light, space, impermanence).[4]
   constructive: (adj) (meditation) that allows one to cultivate, nurture, or strengthen cognitive and affective patterns that foster well-being. A constructive practice may aim to promote healthy inter-personal dynamics, to strengthen a commitment to ethical values, or to nurture habits of perception that lead to enhanced well-being. Perspective taking and cognitive reappraisal are important mechan-isms in this style of meditation, cultivating positive emotions, such as lovingkindness and compassion [SD 60.1 (9)], the 6 inspiring meditations (recollections on the 3 jewels, on moral virtue, on charity or on deities) [3.2.1.2].
   deconstructive: (adj) (meditation) using self-inquiry to foster insight into the processes of per-ception, emotion, and cognition. Deconstructive meditation practices may be oriented toward the objects of consciousness or toward consciousness itself. Often it includes watching rise and fall; eg, Vipassana [SD 60b (2, 15)].

0.3.2 Meditation terms

   cognitive reification: the experience of thoughts, emotions, and perceptions as being accurate depictions of reality and, in particular, the implicit belief that the self and objects of consciousness are inherently enduring, unitary, and independent of their surrounding conditions and circumstances. In the Buddhist tradition, cognitive reification is a primary target in deconstructive styles of meditation.
   experiential fusion: an automatic process whereby one becomes absorbed in the contents of consciousness, leading to a diminished capacity to monitor and/or regulate psychological processes.

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[3] Based on C J Dahl et al, "Reconstructing and deconstructing the self," 2015 esp 1, Table 1.
[4] On *saññā* (perception) as meditation: the 5 perceptions (of a saint): Ti,kaṇḍaki S (A 5.144) SD 2.12; the 10 perceptions: Giri-m-ānanda S (A 10.60,3), SD 19.16; as recollection (*anussati*): SD 15.7 (1.1.2.2) 10 meditations. On perceptions of light and of space: SD 60.1b (8.8).

In attentional styles of meditation, this process is systematically undermined through the cultivation of meta-awareness and the regulation of attention. Experiential fusion is also indirectly undermined in the constructive and deconstructive families of meditation.

    insight: a shift in consciousness that is often sudden and involves a feeling of knowing, under-standing, or perceiving something that had previously eluded one's grasp. In deconstructive medita-tion practices, insight is often elicited through self-inquiry and pertains to specific self-related psy-chological processes that inform well-being.

    meta-awareness: heightened awareness of the processes of consciousness, including the pro-cesses of thinking, feeling, and perceiving. Along with the regulation of the scope and stability of at-tention, the cultivation of meta-awareness is an important objective in attentional styles of medi-tation practice. It is also strengthened indirectly in the constructive and deconstructive types of meditation.

    mindfulness: a term that is defined differently in Buddhist (*sati*: mindfulness, awareness, mem-ory) and contemporary contexts (meditation as therapy), but which often refers to a self-regulated attentional stance oriented toward present-moment experience that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance. In some traditional Buddhist contexts, mindfulness is equivalent to the psychological process that we refer to here as meta-awareness [see preceding].

    perspective taking: the process of considering how one or another would think or feel in a parti-cular situation.

    reappraisal: the process of changing how one thinks or feels about situations and events in such a way that one's response to them is altered.

    self-inquiry: the investigation of the dynamics and nature of conscious experience, particularly in relation to thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that pertain to one's sense of self. Self-inquiry may be an important mechanism in deconstructive meditations due to its role in facilitating insight.

    self-schema: mental representations of the self that synthesize information from sensory, affect-ive and/or cognitive domains. Constructive styles of meditation often involve developing and/or strengthening adaptive self-schema.

    state mindfulness: what we should aim to experience in the short term, such as during a medita-tion training or a sitting. This is the mindfulness of being focused on the present moment, awake and aware, learning to manage unwholesome mental states and mastering wholesome states. It includes the cultivation of a good memory (*sati*). See also: trait mindfulness.

    trait mindfulness: how much a person tends to be mindful, even when they are not really trying, and how well we remember wholesome states and skills.[5] This is what we should develop over time through meditative skills and practice so that mindfulness is natural and habitual. See also: state mindfulness.

0.3.3 Related meditation traditions

    Yoga: in its spiritual approach, Yoga's postures were originally created for building muscles so that the meditator would be able to perform seated meditation for hours. The roots of modern Yoga go back to early Buddhism. Although there were some form of "yoga" even during and before the Buddha's time, it was those taught by him and preserved in early Buddhist practices that formed the foundation for modern Yoga. [1.1]

    Qigong has less of a muscular focus, using more flowing movements, which are physically easier to practice. Qigong can be thought of as a movement we do for a certain situation, as opposed to Tai Chi form, which is a series of movements that work on the entire body in a flowing sequence. For example, Qigong can be one move that helps "open the lungs."[6]

    Tai Chi, 太極, simplified 太极 *tài jí*), short for **Tai chi ch'üan** (太極拳; 太极拳 *tài jí quán*), sometimes called "shadow-boxing." An ancient Chinese callisthenics (body-movement exercises) focused on

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    [5] Shapiro 2011.
    [6] https://www.piedmont.org/living-better/the-health-benefits-of-tai-chi-and-qi-gong.

cultivating *qi* (literally "breath," vital force) for health and the martial arts. Sitting meditation is only a part of this movement-based internal strengthening.[7]

0.3.4 Key terms related to religion

Religion refers to the institutions, structural organization, codes of conduct, symbol system and practices defining assumptions and beliefs designed to create powerful, comprehensive and enduring attitudes, world-views and goals. As such, religion is primarily accessible to <u>sociological analysis</u>.[8]

Religious broadly means believing in some form of higher being or power as entities or as states, and how believers and others relate to them personally or as a society. Often, a "religious" belief or action affects *oneself* but also includes others as a group of believers or subjects of such a system.

Religiousness or religiosity refers to the <u>subjective</u> modes of experience and interpreting, making religiousness primarily amenable to <u>psychological</u> analysis. What can be measured in scientific terms are only the physiological or neural correlates of religious experience, which is basically subjective; hence, accessible only as personal experience.

Spiritual means related to religion as personal experience by way of mind, feeling and character rather than the body or in a worldly sense. It refers to how we see meaning in our existence with a higher purpose, and often inspires us to attain that purpose, or at least live guided by that purpose.

Spirituality is thus a <u>subjective personal experience</u> of what is existentially meaningful and purposeful for human beings, especially as individuals. Spirituality is thus primarily investigated as <u>philosophical analysis</u>, especially in terms of *aesthetics*.

0.3.5 Contemporary conventional terms of canonical ideas

Canonical or Pali terms such as Sotāpanna or Streamwinner, Sakādāgāmi or Once-returner, Anāgāmi or Non-returner, Arahata or Arhat, and so on, that do not reflect the canonical context, are spelt with **an initial Capital**. An example is a psychologist's or scholar's usage of Sotāpanna for an "expert meditator" [6.2.2.2]. The same convention is used for terms in a modern sense by ethnic Buddhists, such as those certified Streamwinners, etc, by modern teachers, individuals or groups [6.6.].

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[7] "Tai Chi: What you need to know" <u>Tai Chi: What You Need To Know | NCCIH (nih.gov)</u>.

[8] For refs, see "Religion, Religiousness, and Spirituality" in Fritz K Oser, W George Scarlett & Anton Bucher, "Religious and spiritual development throughout the life span," in ch 17, (edd) R M Lerner & W Damon, *Handbook of Child Psychology,* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2006:953 f.

1 Meditation: Its roots and its undergrowth

1.1 YOGA: THE EARLY BUDDHIST ROOTS OF MEDITATION

1.1.1 Earliest roots of Indian *yoga*

1.1.1.1 *Yoga*

Since "yoga" will be mentioned in this section, we will start off with a brief introduction to it, especially its connection with early Buddhism. **Yoga** (ts,[9] cognate with Eng, "yoke") refers to a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India and reserved through early Buddhism. Yoga aims to control (yoke) the body and still the mind, keeping it undistracted by the senses, by thoughts and by mundane suffering.

According to Geoffrey Samuel (b 1946, emeritus professor of religious studies at Cardiff University, Wales, UK), the "best evidence to date" suggests that yogic practices developed in the same ascetic circles as the early renunciant recluse (P *samaṇa;* Skt *śramaṇa*) movements, encompassing the early Buddhists, Ājīvikas and Jains, probably in around the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, that is India's 2nd urbanization period.[10]

Karel Werner (1925-2019) views that "The Buddha was the founder of his [Yoga] system, even though, admittedly, he made use of some of the experiences he had previously gained under various Yoga teachers of his time."[11] However, Werner adds, "it is only with Buddhism itself as expounded in the Pali Canon that we can speak about a systematic and comprehensive or even integral school of Yoga practice, which is thus the first and oldest to have been preserved for us in its entirety."[12]

1.1.1.2 Yoga as "yoke"

James Mallinson and Mark Singleton[13] give us a clearer picture by explaining that these early Indian traditions, following the renunciant *samaṇa* practices, were the first to use "body-mind techniques"—that is, asceticism (P *tapa;* Skt *tapas*) and meditation (P *jhāna;* Skt *dhyāna*). In fact, in the suttas, the term *yoga* is used as literally meaning "yoke, bond, tie" as a metaphorical term for the 4 influxes (*āsava*) that hold us to the world of cyclic suffering, that is, the bonds of sensual lust (*kāma,-yoga*), of existence (*bhava,yoga*), of views (*diṭṭhi,yoga*) and of ignorance (*āvijja,yoga*).[14]

It was only later, in post-Buddha times, that the term *yoga* was used to refer specifically to a life of body-mind discipline aimed at liberation from the round of rebirth, and popularized as a spiritual path (*rāja,yoga, karma,yoga,* etc) and as a natural method of maintaining bodily and mental health (*haṭha,yoga*).

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[9] Pali/Sanskrit: **ts** = tatsama, a grammatical term meaning that the word is common to both Sanskrit and Pali.

[10] G Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, Cambridge Univ Press, 2008:8.

[11] Werner, *Yoga and Indian Philosophy*, 1977:131, repr Delhi, 1998.

[12] Werner 1977:119. For critical reviews of Werner, see A Rawlinson, *J of Indian Philosophy* 6,3 Nov 1978: 267-275. Werner's rejoinder: JIP 8,2 1980:199-203.

[13] Mallinson & Singleton, *The Roots of Yoga,* Penguin, 2017:13-15.

[14] D 33,1.11(32)/3:230, 34,1.5(4)/276; A 4.10/2:10; Tha 47 [Tha:N 133 n47]. There are also similar terms like *mānusaka yoga,* "the bonds of being human" (Sn 641; Dh 417), which Comys gloss as "the body" (*kāya*) (DhA 4:425; SnA 2:469), and opp *dibba,yoga,* "the divine bond" (S 1:35 = 60) [PED: yoga]. See also Thī 2: "be free from ties" (*mutte muccassu yogehi*); Thī 4 where *yoga* has 2 senses: as "human body" + "right conditions"; Thī 76 "all ties, divine and human, have been cut" (*sabbe yoga samucchinā, ye dibbā ye ca mānusā*); See Thī:N for ad loc for helpful nn.

1.1.1.3 Roots of *yoga* in the early Buddhism
The early Buddhist texts describe yogic ascetic and meditative practices, some of which the Buddha borrowed from the <u>samaṇa</u> tradition.[15] The <u>Pāli Canon</u> contains at least 3 passages[16] in which the Buddha describes pressing the tongue against the palate for hunger-control, self-restraint and mind-control:[17]

Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36)

   20 "'Suppose, <u>with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate</u>, I beat down, hold back, and crush the mind with mind.'
   20.2 So, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down, held back, crushed the mind with mind. While I did so, sweat ran from my armpits.
   20.3 It was just as if a strong man, holding a weaker man by the head or shoulders, were to restrain, subdue, and attack him;
   20.4 even so, *with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down, held back, and crushed the mind with mind, and sweat ran down my armpits*.
   20.5 But although I exerted tireless energy, and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and lacking calm, because I was exhausted by the painful striving.
   20.6 But, Aggivessana, such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain."
   [The Bodhisattva then goes on to hold his breath and do the "breathingless meditation." He is afflicted with terrible headaches, sharp winds in the stomach, and a great heat that is like being roasted over burning coal. He then fasts and becomes so emaciated that the skin of his belly touches his backbone. His hair falls out when he rubs his skin, which loses its fair complexion. He falls into a deathly faint.]
                                        (M 36,20/1:242,23-243,5) SD 49.4 where see nn

Vitakka Saṇṭhāna Sutta (M 20)

   7.2 With **clenched teeth, the tongue pressing on the palate,**
subduing, restraining, attacking the mind with the mind,
   those <u>bad unwholesome thoughts</u>, connected with desire, … with hate, … delusion,
      <u>are abandoned, they disappear</u>.
Just by abandoning them, the mind indeed stands firm internally, settles down,
   becomes unified and concentrated.   (M 20,7.2/1:121,1-5), SD 1.6

Nālaka Sutta (Sn 716)

   I shall show you how to gain sagehood (*moneyya*), | (said the Blessed One).
   Be sharp as a razor's edge. | Having pressed the tongue against the palate,
   he should be restrained regarding the belly.[18]   (Sn 716/3,11/138), SD 49.18

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   [15] R Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism,* London, 1988:44 f; B S Miller, *Yoga: Discipline of Wisdom,* Berkeley, 1996:8.
   [16] See also **Bodhi Rāja,kumāra S** (M 85,19/2:93), SD 55.2, **Saṅgārava S** (M 100,17/2:212), SD 10.9, and **Jātaka,-nidāna** (J 1:67). The early yogic practices practised by the Bodhisattva demanded perseverance: this is what is recommended as the *last* of the 5 methods: see J Bronkhorst, "Self and meditation in Indian Buddhism," 1998:12. **Purisa Thāma S** (A 2.1.5/1:50) teaches us not to be content with wholesome mental states, and to be unremitting in our "personal effort" to win the spiritual goal. See SD 1.6 (1).
   [17] See J Mallinson, *The Khecarīvidyā of Ādinātha,* Routledge, 2007:17-19.
   [18] Sn Comy on this passage describes the tongue pressing of the palate as a means of overcoming thirst and hunger. This is echoed both in medieval Haṭhayogic texts,* and by contemporary Indian yogis who say that the Haṭhayogic *khecarī,mudrā* enables extended yogic practice by removing the craving for taste (*rasa,taṇhā*), ie,

1.2 USAGE OF THE TERM *YOGA*

1.2.1 According to Mallinson (2012), there is no mention of the tongue inserted into the naso-pharynx, as in *khecarī mudrā*. The Buddha uses a posture in which pressure is put on the perineum with the heel, similar to modern postures used to evoke Kundalini.[19] Suttas which detail yoga as salvific practice include key early Buddhist texts such as **the Satipatthana Sutta** (M 10) (on the 4 foundations of mindfulness) and **the Ānâpana,sati Sutta** (M 118) (on the mindfulness of breathing).[20]

1.2.2 The chronology of these yoga-related early Buddhist texts, like the ancient Hindu texts, is un-clear.[21] Early Buddhist sources such as **the Majjhima Nikāya** (the middle-length collection) often give detailed accounts of meditation practices; **the Aṅguttara Nikāya** (the numerical collection) describes "meditators" (*jhāyī* or *jhāyin*) who resemble early Hindu descriptions of *muni*, the Kesin and meditat-ing ascetics,[22] but the meditation practices are not called "yoga" in these texts.[23] The earliest philo-sophical discussions of yoga in Buddhist literature, as understood in a modern context, are from the later Theravāda and Yogācāra schools.[24]

1.2.3 The Yoga Sūtras and Āyurveda

Scholars know that early Buddhism was the root of traditional Indian medicine called Ayurveda ("longevity lore").[25] Zysk argues that Hindu medicine developed largely by the efforts of heterodox ascetics rather than brahmanic intellectuals, and that Buddhist monastic establishments were highly instrumental in the refinement and systematization of ancient Indian medicine. Reasons for this in-clude the fact that Buddhism is free of injunctions against contact with "impurity," and Buddhism's emphasis on compassion and the ethical duty to relieve suffering.[26]

Writing about Patañjali's **Yoga Śūtras,** Dominik Wujastyk, University of Alberta (Canada) profes-sor, specializing in Sanskrit language and literature, classical Indian studies, and the history of science and medicine in pre-modern India, makes the following conclusions:

> The sūtra-s of the Pātañjalayogaśāstra seem to speak directly across the ages to us, if sometimes mysteriously. But this is a false impression. They are deeply embedded in history and culture of their time.
>
> Some of Patañjali's *sūtra*-s cannot be properly understood without an awareness of the Buddhist background to Indian philosophical thought at the time they were composed.
>
> It seems that some of the earliest Sanskrit commentators, including Vācaspati Miśra, misunderstood some of Patañjali's *sūtra*-s because they had lost an awareness of Buddhist thought.

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desire for food or drink (SnA 2:498,28-30). *Eg *Gorakṣaśataka* (ed Nowotny 1976) 65, Śivasaṁhita (ed & tr Mal-linson 2006) 3.93; also Khecarīvidyā 2.107 (Mallinson 2007:17-20, 21 + n377.

[19] Mallinson 2007:20 f.

[20] M 10/1:55-63 (SD 13.3); M 118/3:77-88 (SD 7.13).

[21] Samuel 2008:31 f; M Singleton, *Yoga Body: The origins of modern posture practice*, Oxford, 2010: ch 1.

[22] J Bronkhorst, The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India, Delhi, 1993:1-24.

[23] D G White, "Yoga, brief history of an idea," in *Yoga in Practice,* Princeton, 2012:1-23 introd.

[24] D G White 2012:5 f.

[25] See K G Zysk, "Studies in Traditional Indian Medicine in the Pāli Canon: Jīvaka and Āyurveda." *J of the Inter-national Assoc of Buddhist Studies* 5,1 1982:70-86; *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery.* [1991] Corr ed, Delhi: 1998.

[26] G P Fields, Religious Therapeutics: Body and health in Yoga, Āyurveda, and Tantra, SUNY, 2001:79.

Contemporary interpreters who limit themselves to the commentarial tradition of Brāh-
maṇā householders and later ascetics, but do not look at the Buddhist sources, continue to
be puzzled and misled by the Pātañjalayogaśāstra.   (Wujastyk 2018:42)[27]

The framework of the Yoga Sutras is **the Eight Limbs of Yoga** (*aṣṭāṅga mārga*): moral restraint
(*yama*), discipline (*niyama*), yoga posture (*āsana*), breath control (*prāṇāyāma*), sense-withdrawal
(*pratyāhāra*), mental concentration (*dhāraṇā*), and enstasy (*samādhi,* here broadly to include *jhāna*)
[4.2.3.3]. This octad clearly is a Hinduization of the Buddha's noble eightfold path.[28]

1.2.4 Buddhist roots

1.2.4.1 Further, Wujastyk notes the direct influences of early Buddhism on **Āyurveda** (traditional
Indian medicine), as outlined in his paper, "The path to liberation through yogic mindfulness in early
Āyurveda."[29] **The Sīvaka Sutta** (S 36.210), for example, records the Buddha as informing the wanderer
Sīvaka about the 4 humours—the 3 peccant (illness-bringing) humours and their combination—and
the 8 causes of bodily pains and sickness: bile (*pitta*), phlegm (*semha*), wind (*vāta*), a combination of
1-3 (*sannipāta*), weather changes (*utu pariṇāmaja*), improper care (*visama,parihāraja*), external
trauma (*opakkmaika*) and karmic fruition (*kamma,vipākaja*).[30]

What later Hindu enthusiasts did was to appropriate the Buddha's teachings and methods, and
gave them Hindu origin stories. This might work with the traditional Hindus and the uninformed.[31]
Scholars now know better the true history of this ancient medicine and yoga.[32]

David Gordon White, editor of *Yoga in Practice,* closes his "Note to Instructors" with these words:

Now, it is the case that many modern-day yoga gurus have collapsed the rich and varied his-
tories of the many yogas of India, greater Asia, and now the West, into a simplistic vision of
yoga as an unchanging tradition grounded in the religion of the Vedas. However, the simple
fact that some contemporary teachers and meditators of yoga hold to such an untenable
hypothesis does not make yoga Hindu, any more than the presence of a plastic Jesus on
some dashboards would make all automobile drivers Christian.

1.2.4.2 The Hindu theologians and teachers were quick to adopt what they saw useful in Buddh-
ism (or in any ambient religion). In time, they claimed to be the founders of Yoga and Āyurveda. One
of the most resourceful amongst them was clearly **Ādi Śaṅkara** (c600-c750 CE), the leading monist
theologian of Advaita Vedānta. Śaṅkara's Advaita (monism) was deeply influenced by Mahāyāna
Buddhism, despite his attacks on Buddhism,[33] and Hindu Vaiṣṇava (Vishnu-adherent) opponents have

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[27] D Wujastyk, "Some problematic Yoga Sutra-s and their Buddhist background," in (edd) Baier, Maas & Preis-
endanz, *Yoga in Transformation,* 2018:23-47 (ch 1).

[28] Wujastyk, "The path of liberation through yogic mindfulness in early Āyurveda," in (ed) D G White, *Yoga in Practice,* Princeton, 2012:31. See SD 19.16 (2).

[29] Wujastyk in (ed) D G White, *Yoga in Practice*, 2012:31–42. [Matheson]

[30] S 36.21/4:230 f, SD 5.6 (1.7). This octad is also found in Samaṇa-m-acala S 1 (A 4.87.5/2:87), SD 20.13;
(Ābādhika) Giri-m-ānanda S (A 10.60.7/5:110), SD 15.11; and (Samaṇa) Sukhumāla S (A 5.104/3:131), SD 46.9.

[31] Modern Ayurvedic healing services tend to be very expensive [2.4.4.1].

[32] S N Tandon, A Re-appraisal of Patañjali's Yoga-Sutras in the light of the Buddha's teaching, Igatpuri: Vipas-
sanā Research Institute, 1995; 2nd ed 2005. P P Gokhale, *The Yogasūtra of Patañjali: A new introduction to the Buddhist roots of the Yoga system,* Routledge, 2020.

[33] F Stcherbatsky, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana,* 1927:13, 36, 62, 84. S N Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy,* [1922] vol 1, 1997:492-494.

even accused Śaṅkara of being a "crypto-Buddhist" (*pracchanna bauddha*).[34] Śaṅkara successfully assimilated Mahāyāna ideas to promote his monistic theology.

   According to Advaita tradition, Sankara organised his Hindu monks of the ten sects under four "maths" (Skt *matha,* "monastery"),[35] with their headquarters in each of the four quarters, each led by one of his leading disciples [2.1.2]. Although his lineage was broken for nearly two centuries, these monasteries remained to this day. From one of these monasteries there arose a Cult Guru that became reputedly the richest religious teacher of his time: we will now turn to his story.

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[34] S Biderman "Śaṅkara and the Buddhists," J of Indian Philosophy 6,4 Dec 1978:405-413; N V Isayeva, *Shankara and Indian Philosophy*, SUNY Press, 1993:14; R King, Early Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism: The Mahayana Context of the Gauḍapādīya-Kārikā, SUNY Press 1995:183.

[35] "Math" (Skt *matha*) or "mutt" ("monastery college") in Hindi is often used interchangeably (esp colloquially) with "pītham" (Skt *pītha, or "*peeth, peetham*" in Hindi) (lit, "seat" of learning). For details, see 2.1.2 n on "first Shankaracharya."

2 Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Transcendental Meditation[36]

2.1 HOW MAHESH BECOMES MAHARISHI

2.1.1 Mahesh and Brahmānand

2.1.1.1 Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918-2008)[37] was an Indian cult Guru who shot to fame and wealth through his promotion of Transcendental Meditation (TM), a modern cannibalization of Hindu and Buddhist meditation methods. His religious movement grew into the most successful of religious cults, and he died as the wealthiest of cult Gurus.

The self-titled Maharishi's original name was Mahesh Chandra Shrivastava or Mahesh Prasad Varma (1918-2008). Mahesh belonged to the **kayastha** (Skt *kāya,sthā*) caste[38] in the Central Provinces of British India.[39] Kayastha members are either kshatriya (military or administrative caste) or shudra (artisans); it is the "clerk caste." [40]

This apocryphal story or hagiography of Mahesh's meeting with his Gurudev ("divine teacher"), Brahmānand Saraswati (1871-1953), is well known:

Mahesh related that he was still a college student when he first met Brahmānand in 1940, and instantly knew him to be his teacher. Brahmānand however advised Mahesh to complete his studies. Upon graduating with a bachelor's degree in physics[41] from Allahabad University in 1942, Mahesh joined the *pītha* Jyotir Math [1.2.4.2] at Uttarakhand, serving as a personal clerk to Brahmānand. Mahesh lived in Jyotir Math as Bal Brahmachari Mahesh, which means "the young (or junior) celibate Mahesh."[42] It should be noted that "as an agent of orthodoxy," the Shankaracharya Brahmānand preserved the teaching and practice that guruhood is restricted to the Brahmin male.[43]

2.1.1.2 Although he had no higher position than as a caste clerk at Jyotir Math, he made sure he was close to the Brahmānand. In that way, Mahesh was able to meet many famous people who visited the then Shankaracharya. There are photos that show Mahesh by Brahmānand's side. We may well imagine the sense of awe, even envious piety, that must have overwhelmed the young Mahesh to often have a taste of the leisurely pomp and circumstance of high religious status. This would explain why when his time came, he relished in the adoration of the elites towards him, and the crowds attributing him charisma.

Indian society is deeply rooted in being devoted to "holy saints," dressed in saffron and a full-faced patriarchal beard. As the greatness was thrust at him, he knew just the right time to build his

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[36] Thanks to Tom Anderson (Canada) (b 1943) [2.5.1], a personal secretary and advisor to Mahesh who provided much of the details on which this section is based. Anderson worked for Mahesh in Italy, 1972-1974, was a trained TM instructor, and a trainer of TM teachers training courses (TTC) in Spain [2.5.1]. See also Aryeh Siegel, "Deception in Transcendental meditation," *ICSA Today* 9,3 2018. Other sources are credited accordingly.

[37] His passport says 1917 (Anderson). The exact year of his birth is unknown.

[38] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kayastha. "Kayastha" is found in Webster's Third International Dict: "a member of a high Hindu caste, esp numerous in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh whose caste occupation is that of clerks, writers, and accountants."

[39] J R **Coplin**, *Text and Context in the Communication of a Social Movement's Charisma, Ideology and Consciousness,* PhD thesis, Univ of California, San Diego, 1990: ch 2 n73. C A **Humes**, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: beyond the TM technique," in (edd) T A Forsthoefel & C A Humes, *Gurus in America,* SUNY Press, 2005:61.

[40] C A Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 2005:60 f.

[41] Anderson had a Toronto friend, a PhD university professor of physics who told him that he knew Mahesh in the 1960s. It was obvious to the professor that Mahesh knew no physics!

[42] *Bāl* from *bāla* (ts) lit means "boy," but in the suttas is often used in the sense of "a fool," such as in Maṅgala S (Sn 259) = Khp 5,2/3, SD 67.

[43] Women are also excluded from the title. (Teaching 74, Tiwari, *Shri Shankaracharya Upadeshamrit* 132 f). https://archive.org/details/ShriShankaracharyaUpadeshamrutSwamiBrahmanandSaraswatijiMaharajJyotishpeeth (Hindi). Upadeshasahasri (estudantedavedanta.net) 28 May 2023.

Guru aura, surrounded by acolytes, servers, and emblems of holiness, including clueless fair-skinned foreigners (who went on to outnumber even his Asian followers).[44]

2.1.2 Caste versus charisma

Brahmānanda was the first Shankaracharya[45] installed at Jyotir Math in some 165 years (c1776-1941), in 1941 when Mahesh was there[46] [2.1.1]. But when Brahmānand died in 1953, there was a succession dispute. Apparently, Jyotir Math was without a legitimate Shankaracharya even when David Sieviking, making his documentary movie *David Wants to Fly* (2010),[47] visited Jyotir Math. Sieviking met with Swaroopanand Saraswati[48] (1924-2022), who was then the caretaker of Jyotir Math.[49]

Sieviking's documentary recorded his interview with **Swaroopanand**, who made the following comments on Mahesh (addressing Mahesh by name):[50]

> I was a disciple of Guru Dev [Brahmānand]. He took me into his monastic order. Some-one not born in the priest caste could not be part of this monastic order— but (may) serve in the monastery as a celibate. Maharishi served as a bookkeeper for Guru Dev. He was his secretary. Guru Dev never educated him as a Yogi or spiritual teacher. Maharishi came from the writer caste [2.1.1]. He had no right to give mantras and teach meditation. … Gu-rus don't sell their knowledge. They share it. Guru Dev had a sign at his place: "Donations are not allowed; you can only sacrifice your sins here." What you have learned from Ma-harishi will not bring you spiritual progress.[51]

Mahesh went on to invent Transcendental Meditation, become a world famous Guru, with even the Beatles[52] learning religion at his feet, and the wealthiest Guru in religious history. Clearly other Indian gurus would have envied him, especially from his humble beginnings.

Swaroopananda once, for example, quipped: "It would be nice if the Maharishi once flies from America to India without any airplane. Then perhaps what he says can be accepted."[53] Clearly, Ma-hesh was less liked in India itself, although (even because) he was well known in the West. It is also likely that Mahesh learned the benefits of favouring the enthusiastic Western followers than the more emotionally restrained but less generous and less wealthy Asians.[54]

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[44] For details, see C A Humes 2005:63-65.

[45] It is believed that Ādi Śaṅkar'ācārya (c700-c 750 CE) [foll n] established four "monastery colleges" (*math* or "mutt" in Hindi), called "seats" (Skt *pītha, or "*peeth, peetham*"* in Hindi): Badrikashram Jyotirpeeth, ie, Jyotir Math (north), Dwaraka's Sharada Math (west), Govardhan Math in Puri (east), and Shringeri Math in Chikkama-galur district, Karnataka (south). C A Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 2005:58.

[46] C A Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 2005:58 f.

[47] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Wants_to_Fly.

[48] The proper Skt spelling is Svarūpānanda Saraśvatī.

[49] On the succession dispute at Jyotir Math, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyotir_Math.

[50] Svarūpānanda spoke in Hindi; the documentary's dubbed English is reproduced here.

[51] Sieviking, *David Wants to Fly* (movie)*,* 2010:1,24,29-1,26,30, https://fsharetv.io/watch/david-wants-to-fly-episode-1-tt1598782. 30 May 2023.

[52] The Beatles—comprising John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr—were the world-famous English rock band of the 1960s.

[53] TM-EX newsletter 4,4 *"A Visit to the Shankaracharya, Part III"* (interview by R Kropinski), summer 1992. See also L Williamson, *Transcendent in America,* NY Univ Press, 2010:86 f.

[54] On the Asian traditional moral restraint and social distance toward holy individuals, see SD 64.17 (4.1.3).

2.1.3 Strategies for holiness

2.1.3.1 Mahesh might have been close to Brahmānand, but there was always the caste distance. The Brahmin elite of the Maths did not accept Mahesh simply for his caste—a lowly monastic assist-ant, a caste clerk—albeit a twice-born close to Brahmānand, nevertheless a non-brahmin.

The visionary and ambitious young graduate, Mahesh, seeing no future for himself in the Jyotir Math, went into seclusion for some two years. Then he travelled to the south of India, visiting a Laxmi Temple, which he later said was where he got the idea for Transcendental Meditation (TM).[55]

2.1.3.2 Going into seclusion is a common means of legitimizing oneself as a religious "adept," when a driven meditator may then declare or hint at his "enlightenment" or at having "attained" some high level of mystical power.[56] Mahesh's lowly place at Jyotir Math must have compelled him to succeed as a teacher. He must have felt a deep sense of inferiority complex, of not being accepted as anything more than a "clerk" at Jyotir Math. Hence, he had to turn elsewhere instead, seizing the opportunity whenever it came, and building on his charisma. Where caste failed him, charisma more than compensated this social lack. [2.3.2]

2.1.3.3 TM was Mahesh's own invention. To legitimize TM, he went on to preach that it was a holy practice going back to Śaṅkara himself[57] [1.2.4.2]. Such a lineage, even if sanctimoniously fabric-ated, makes a powerful statement in traditional India (even if it neither holds water nor carries weight amongst outsiders). Mahesh would verbally credit TM, feigning gratitude, to the Gurudev, Brahmānand (the late Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math), knowing very well that only he (Mahesh) lived to reap all its fruits. Further, to build his charisma as a Guru (holy teacher), he then styled himself "Maharshi" (Great Seer, Skt *mahāṛṣī*): he said in a book published at that time, the title "just seemed right," and began actively teaching his TM in India in the late 1950s.[58]

2.2 THE RISE OF THE MAHARISHI

2.2.1 Mahesh wants to save the world

At the 1955 Great Festival of Kerala (*Kerala Maha Sammelan*), Bal Brahmachari Mahesh claimed that his Gurudev, Brahmānand, had taught that *all could be enlightened,* pure and simple:

> Everybody can have, should have and must have, the great privilege of enjoying the glories
> of the soul, the glories of the glorified aspect of everybody's life. Caste, creed or nationality
> is no hurdle in the realm of the soul or on the royal road to it. Soul is the individual property
> of everybody.   ("The Beacon Light of the Himalayas," 1955)[59]

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[55] J Collin-Smith, *Call No Man Master,* 1988, 2004; Paul Mason, *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: The Biography of the Man Who Gave Transcendental Meditation to the World,* Premanand, 2020. He was named Premanand by a sadhu (a "holy man," basically a religious wanderer) he met in India.

[56] For a case-study, see that of the scandalous Thai monk Yantra Amaro in Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism,* Malaysia: The Dharmafarers, 1992h:114-120. [Dharmafarers]. 16 Oct 2023.

[57] Similar claims were made by Chinese Chan (Zen) masters that their lineage went back to the Buddha himself (SD 60.1c (8.3.6)), and by Goenka that his Vipassana meditation went back to the Buddha himself (SD 60.1c (9.2.4).

[58] "The Beacon Light of the Himalayas—The Dawn of the Happy New Era." Kerala: Adhyatmic Vikas Mandal, 1955. This partly paginated pamphlet is the transcription of Mahesh's speeches in English to the crowds during the festival of 23-26 Oct 1955. On Mahesh's use of "Maharshi" and being addressed so, see pp7, 11, 28-31, pas-sim. https://www.paulmason.info/gurudev/sources/pdf/Beacon%20Light%20of%20the%20HImalayas.pdf 29 May 2023.

[59] See prec n & Teaching 74, Tiwari, *Shri Shankaracharya Upadeshamrit,* 132 f.

Mahesh declared to a rapturous crowd of the Great Festival that he would regenerate spirituality not just in India but in the entire world. He soon received financial backing for travel, and set out on his first world tour, teaching what he then called "Deep Meditation." To make himself more saleable to the modern world, he even inserted an additional "i" to his title, and presented himself as "Mahar(i)shi Mahesh Yogi."[60]

Following his rapturous reception at the Great Festival of 1955, Mahesh began a series of world tours in 1958 to promote his "Transcendental Deep Meditation."[61] The resulting publicity generated by Mahesh, especially the celebrities who learned the technique, helped popularize it in the 1960s and 1970s. To make his meditation sound simpler and become more popular, he simply called it "Transcendental Meditation" or TM.[62]

2.2.2 In the Gurudev's name

Brahmachari Mahesh taught what he claimed was his Guru's method of "Deep Meditation" and "Mind Control": using his Gurudev Brahmānand's name meant that Mahesh did not have to explain that the meditation was really his own concoction. A common misconception in India then was that meditation required "mind control," by which was meant holding onto a mantra. This was just what Mahesh taught. This was how Brahmānand actually explained the method:

> It is all well and good to perform worship, chanting, and meditation in the early morning each day, but at night before sleep one must without fail do ten to fifteen minutes of chanting one's chosen mantra and meditation on the chosen form of your favorite deity. From this spiritual program comes quick progress. In darkness, with eyes closed, one should sit and repeat one's mantra, after which you should meditate on your chosen deity mentally, still with eyes closed. One should not envision its whole body, but rather its feet or face, feeling that your chosen deity is looking at you with a compassionate and affectionate expression. The chosen one's seeing is itself effective. You should therefore not visualize your chosen deity with its eyes closed. Thus meditating in your heart on your chosen deity, who is looking at you with an affectionate glance, you should repeat your chosen mantra. From this, fastness for the chosen deity will increase, and if the mind grabs fast onto the chosen one, then at the end, [the deity] will come without fail. On the strength of this [practice], you will cross the ocean of *samsara.*
>
> (Teaching 48, Tiwari, *Shri Shankaracharya Upadeshamrit* 84)

Later on, to popularize TM, Mahesh dispensed with all references to deities, and focused on the special mantra he would select or, in due course, to be selected by the TM teacher. [2.3]

2.2.3 When stress fails you

Mahesh initiated disciples always in the name of his Guru Brahmānand Saraswati, not his own. This way, the initiation had a "double whammy" of an aura: something old, something new, and projected the false notion that he was accredited by Brahmānand [2.1.1]. By presenting what he knew of Advaita teachings in easy Western terms, Mahesh appeared to both preserve the purity and primacy of Śaṅkara's teachings, as presented by his Guru Brahmānand Saraswati, and effectively promoted his TM technique with an ancient halo.

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[60] C A Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 2005:63.
[61] L Williamson, *Transcendent in America,* NY Univ Press, 2010:6 f.
[62] P Russell, *The TM Technique,* Routledge, 1977:25.

In the 1960s Mahesh introduced "advanced"[63] meditative techniques and his movement grew to encompass TM programmes for schools, universities and various other institutions. Mahesh had planned to let TM be taught in prisons, but judiciously backed out, citing too much "**stress**" [2.3.3]. There's too much work and no money in that![64]

2.3 MAHESH'S MANTRA MEDITATION

2.3.1 Mantras for sale

2.3.1.1 Traditionally, **meditation** (at least the way it is done in early Buddhism) does not appear to be a part of Hinduism as we know it today—which makes Mahesh more of a maverick than one may suspect. His method was to have the student simply focusing on the mantra—essentially in the way that a Buddhist meditator would do: simply as a sound. The notion or belief that it was "secret" (perceived as known only to the student and the teacher) gave a special mystical aura and force to the practice.

The mantras that the TM students are instructed to keep secret are really no secret at all. Often enough, Mahesh would teach a large crowd. Once in Nepal, a group of a couple of hundred sitters were taught TM using headphones: obviously they all received the same mantra! In fact, those close to Mahesh (like Anderson) knew that he often simply made up the mantras.[65]

TM has kept three mantra secrets. The 1st secret is that the TM mantras are *not* necessary for TM meditation. *Beacon Light of the Himalayas*, a publication long suppressed by TM, documents a religious meeting in Kerala, India in 1955. At that meeting, Mahesh told his Indian audience that any word or sound could be used to meditate. The "secret mantra" was a good selling point.[66]

2.3.1.2 Second, according to Mahesh, TM mantras invoke the spirits of Hindu gods.[67] Although a word such as "mic" or "mike" (microphone) would work, Mahesh declared that repetition of *his* mantras offered something unique: they produced special vibrations. Hindu audiences learned that these vibrations attract the "grace" of a personal Hindu god [Brahmānand, 2.2.2].

Again, *Beacon Light of the Himalayas*, quotes Mahesh's own words (against himself):

> But we do not select the sound at random. We do not select any sound like "mike, flower, table, pen," etc, because such ordinary sounds can do nothing more than merely sharpening the mind; ... For our practice, **we select only the suitable mantras of personal gods**. Such mantras fetch to us **the grace of personal gods** … [Highlights added][68]

Such contradictions in teachings are a hallmark in Guru teachings. The confused student would then have to consult the Guru directly and get his personal instructions and to follow that without question.

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[63] Basically, this was by adding another mantra at the end of the person's mantra (x); then, advanced to that, adding one more to the beginning of the person's mantra, eg, x, then x + *namaḥ,* then *śrī* + x + *namaḥ* (Anderson). Details of "advanced" method at (2.3.1.1).

[64] "Stress," a term used by Hans Selye (1907-1982), founder of "stress theory," became Mahesh's excuse for why his various fantastic programs like Yogic Flying (levitation) (US$5,000 per course) failed to work. Stress was always blamed when TM failed to bring about results as promised; and the individual practitioner was always at fault: "You're doing it wrong!" when complaints arose that TM wasn't "working" (Anderson)

[65] The mantra lists: tm mantras - Google Search.

[66] It started off properly by "donations" with a basket at the door; but Mahesh felt that this was like being a beggar! In due course, meditation mantra pricing ranged from US$1,000-5,000 each!

[67] In India, an India-trained teacher told Anderson that they were given three mantras, depending on the meditator's favourite god.

[68] *Beacon Light of the Himalayas*, 3 of 4, (Maharishi's discourse), *Trancenet*
http://minet.org/www.trancenet.net/secrets/beacon/beacon1.shtml.

Third, Roth (a true believer) likens competence in TM mantra selection to that of a physician who has specialized training in how to identify a person's blood type. He says that the selection of the mantra is based on three things: (1) the student interview form; (2) personal meeting with the teacher; and (3) the teacher's own training.[69] Most TM teachers (including Roth himself), knew that there was really only one criterion: the student's age at the time of instruction.

2.3.2 The "Sidhi" programme

At one point, Mahesh got all worked up with Patañjali's **Yoga Sūtras**[70] [1.2.3] which were post-Buddha texts, very much influenced by Buddhism, and were "clearly a rip-off of *ānâpāna,sati* with a lack-lustre substitute for the noble eightfold path."[71] Anderson took notes from a relatively old tape of Mahesh explaining each step of Patañjali's "substitute" Eight Limbs of Yoga. Mahesh claimed that Patañjali himself had come to him in the night and told him to teach the *siddhi* section of the Yoga Sūtras (which Mahesh already knew about anyway).[72]

Mahesh's excitement arose from his desire to introduce "**Yogic Flying**," a new project he called the "Sidhi Program" [2.4.3]. He claimed that he would teach students to learn to *levitate*; this grew into a four-hour twice-daily programme.[73] This was one of many programmes and techniques, all of which were variations of doing the initial Transcendental Meditation for 20 minutes twice a day. Yogic flying was a profoundly comic and humiliating disaster; but Mahesh did not see it so. He saw it as only giving more publicity to TM, and attracting more followers and funds.[74] In this, Mahesh was successful without parallel: he died the richest religious teacher in history.[75]

2.3.3 The Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI)

2.3.3.1 By the early 1970s, Mahesh's plan to sell TM to the West gathered momentum, and in a new guise of modernity. In 1970-1972, Maharishi strategically distanced himself from "Hindu" terminology or even "spirituality." After all, an Indian lotus by any other name is still an Indian lotus. He was laying the framework for a more advanced Vedic training for his key disciples.

All along, Mahesh had been teaching the same Advaita theology, which was now renamed the "Science of Creative Intelligence" (SCI). This is the TM worldview, which would facilitate his plan to spread Advaita wisdom throughout the world as "science." Avoiding the terms "Hindu" and "religious," he forestalled any resistance from those outside India being taught the same old Advaita (monist) theology going back to Śankara himself.

2.3.3.2 By the late 1970s and through the rest of his life, Mahesh introduced programmes ostensibly aimed at improving health and well-being based on his interpretation of the Vedic traditions, but as "Maharishi" (beginning 1958), he always ensured that his name was clearly branded to these ex-

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[69] Bob Roth, *Strength in Stillness*, Simon & Schuster, 2018:54. Roth actually mentions 3 criteria for the mantras, but there is disagreement: *Beacon Light of the Himalayas: What TM doesn't want you to know about their mantras, 2020:* [TMDeception] 16 Oct 2023.

[70] L Williamson, *Transcendent in America,* NU Univ Press, 2010:17.

[71] Anderson, personal communication, 10 May 2023.

[72] Anderson informs me that Conny Larsson (long-time Swedish meditator/skin-boy) remarked: "Mahesh was there, I was there, but I didn't see Patañjali." A "skin-boy" was Mahesh's personal attendant who carried the deer-skin mat for him to sit down, and also stayed nearby the sleeping Mahesh and read to him the next day's meetings and events.

[73] A Sidhi course could cost as much as US$6,000.

[74] When Mahesh died, the Transcendental Meditation Organization (TMO) was valued at about US$900M; he left behind £2b (Maharishi inspired Beatles but died leaving £2b and rape rumours - Mirror Online 7 Feb 2008). 25 May 2023.

[75] See Aryeh Siegel, *Transcendental Deception: behind the TM curtain,* LA: Janreg Press, 2019. Book—Transcendental Deception (tmdeception.com). For resources against cults, see Cult Expert Steven Hassan's Freedom of Mind Resource Center. Also see: https://tmfree.blogspot.com/. All sources: 25 May 2023.

pensive and well-marketed programmes and products. While verbally crediting TM to his teacher Brahmānand Sarasvati,[76] he was in the habit of owning whatever ideas used by him. "No such thing as 'credit due' existed (for him)."[77] (Anderson)

By then, he knew people would not mind paying a lot for them; after all, these modern expressions of ancient Indian wisdom were unique and priceless. He often declared that these techniques would overcome the "**stress**" that filled the world.[78] When this stress was removed, his advanced practices would then truly work. When the student was weak or failed, it was their "stress" (fault)![79]

2.4 THE DECLINE OF THE MAHARISHI

2.4.1 Fairfield, Fear-field

When Mahesh died in 2008, the New York Times wrote that he left behind "a multimillion-dollar self-help industry" [2.4.4.2]. What the New York Times did not mention was the often tragic lives of so many who bankrupted themselves trusting Mahesh's word and charisma, trying to do all the techniques and programmes, convinced by Mahesh that these were all necessary for them to achieve enlightenment.[80] Mahesh asserted absolute control over lives of his cult[81] members, especially in Fairfield, Iowa (nicknamed "Fear-field" by his victims).[82]

TM followers were expected to be "perfect" (at least uncomplaining and full of praises) before the enlightened Guru, and never to go against him in any way—even in business dealings.[83] Any breakdown or sickness is our own "stress" (like bad karma) which we must bear ourselves without burdening the Movement. Those who leave the Movement were regarded as deserters and cut off completely from the Movement; they were labelled "demons" and "scorpions" (Anderson).

2.4.2 Pleasures of being the Guru

At the height of his fame and after that, rumours were rife that Mahesh had sexual relations with a number of the numerous bedazzled women who followed him around most of his life.[84] Such relations would of course jeopardize his vow as a brahmachari (celibate meditator), which then

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[76] C A Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 2005:62.

[77] For a similar self-promoting appropriative inclination, see "Chief High Priest" Dhammananda of the Brickfields Buddhist Vihara, Malaysia: SD 7.9 (4.4.3.6).

[78] A number of Mahesh's followers even started political parties for removing stress from the world. In the UK (and also elsewhere), there was the Natural Law Party, a political party based on TM principles: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_Law_Party#United_Kingdom.

[79] Apparently, Mahesh tried a positive approach, too. A TM website stated: "Negative consequences resulting from Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi practices are described by Mahesh's TM Organization as 'unstressing' or 'stress release' and are therefore considered by them to be 'beneficial results.'" The website http://www.unstress4less.org is now unreachable; but see [archive] 8 Nov 2023. C A Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 2005:78 n40.

[80] J W Kellett, 2000-2022, Falling Down the TM Rabbit Hole, How TM Really Works, a Critical Opinion (suggestibility.org) (25 May 2023)

[81] By "cult" here is clearly meant a "personality cult" (Anderson).

[82] Susan Shumsky, "My experience living in a cult for 20 years—Here's how I broke free," Huffpost 2018: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/cult-maharishi-mahesh-yogi_uk_5bc5e04de4b0d38b5871a8c3. 21 May 2023. Shumsky too saw through Mahesh's transcendental machinations, but stayed on longer than Anderson, to learn more about his methods. Then, she launched her own private mystical teachings and books.

[83] On TM (Mahesh) banning apostates Deepak Chopra and Sri Ravi Shankar, partly because of business difficulties, see C A Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 2005:67-79.

[84] N Webster, The Mirror (UK) 7 Feb 2008: https://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/maharishi-inspired-beatles-but-died-leaving-292433. https://asiatimes.com/2017/08/10-godmen-india-crime-records-shock/. (25 May 2023). Sieviking, in David Learns to Fly (2010), interviews an ex-skin-boy (from New Mexico) about his experience with Mahesh: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oQu1-o7ebE.

would negate his Guru status. In Seelisberg (Switzerland), for example, when the evening business ended, Mahesh would leave and a parade of women would follow him to his room, ostensibly "to do his letters." The point is that by that time, Mahesh made his own rules, and had none for himself.

During the Teachers Training Courses (TTC), women would wait outside to get in his white Mercedes (he adored Mercedes and helicopters) to accompany him to wherever he was going. The women "keeners" even seemed to observe a hierarchy, the most special (like one Judith Burke) putting herself at the head of the line and the rest hoping for the good luck of getting in the car.

2.4.3 Legal karma

2.4.3.1 The year 1976 was perhaps the most difficult for the TMO. That year, Mahesh introduced the TM-Sidhi program. As discussed above, the new techniques were based on a classic text of Hindu philosophy and practice, the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali [1.2.3]. Mahesh claimed that with proper practice, his mantra could bring about "Yogic Flying," among other amazing things.

Despite Mahesh maintaining that his meditation was science meant for the West—perhaps *because* of that—Alan B Malnak and others took Mahesh Yogi to court claiming that SCI/TM was a religion, being taught in public high schools in New Jersey, and that this was against the 1st Amendment[85] of the US Constitution.[86]

The New Jersey law court that heard the case ruled that Transcendental Meditation *was a religion*.[87] This effectively put the brakes on TM's rise in the US. By declaring TM and its teaching as "religious," the *Malnak v Yogi* lawsuit stymied Maharishi's attempt to mainstream his technique in the US as science, and dismantled the TM programme's efforts to establish meditation in any government-funded projects.[88]

Schools and jails are government-funded and the government cannot (in most cases) fund religion. So TM cannot have access to places like schools and jails. The point about the workplace is that the government cannot support private efforts to establish meditation (for instance through grants or public information campaigns); so TM can still go there, but it is harder for them now since they cannot teach meditation in the workplace. So we have two separate categories that are being impacted differently.

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[85] Basically, the First Amendment provides that Congress makes no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise. It protects freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and the right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. In other words, it preserves the separation of State and Church. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution.

[86] Since the late 1970s TM had been expelled from various schools often through court hearings, eg, Malnak v Mahesh Yogi (NJ, US, 1977) [2.2.4]. Related cases: Europe late 1970s https://curia.europa.eu/juris/liste.jsf?num=T-412/11&language=EN. US 1986 https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1986/12/12/transcendental-meditation-on-trial/99e54941-151b-4c42-9db4-6488d71b28a1/.

[87] Is TM a religion? According to the *Malnak v Yogi* case, "The teaching of SCI/TM and the Puja are religious in nature, no other inference is permissible or reasonable ... ." This decision was subsequently upheld: MALNAK v.YOGI, Nos 78-1568, 78-1882, UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS, THIRD CIRCUIT, 592 F.2d.197, December 11, 1978, Argued, February 2, 1979, Decided. "We agree with the district court's finding that the SCI/TM course was religious in nature. Careful examination of the textbook, the expert testimony elicited, and the uncontested facts concerning the puja convince us that religious activity was involved ... ." (C A Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 2005:78 n31)

[88] *Malnak v Mahesh Yogi*, Appeal from the US Court for the District of New Jersey (DC Civil Action no 76-0341), 1977. https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/440/1284/1817490/. https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Malnak-v.-Yogi-592-F.pdf.

2.4.3.2 "The Report of Germany's Institute for Youth and Society on TM"[89] is an English translation of an important German report on negative effects arising from TM.[90] The TM movement attempted to suppress this report in the German courts,[91] but its findings were upheld.[92] We have an idea of these negative effects from the court record of the Kropinski, titled (in English translation) "The Report of Germany's Institute of Youth and Society on TM."[93] Among the findings were the following:[94]

- 76% of long-term meditators experience <u>psychological disorders</u>—including 26% nervous breakdowns;
- 63% experience <u>serious physical complaints</u>;
- 70% recorded <u>a worsening ability to concentrate</u>;
- researchers found a <u>startling drop in honesty</u> among long-term meditators;
- plus a detailed examination of the history, culture, and secret teachings of the TM movement.

We will be discussing such symptoms and others related to meditation in the rest of this SD 60.1f.

2.4.4 The serpent recoils

2.4.4.1 Despite the legal setbacks mentioned (in the US [2.4.3.1] and in Germany [2.4.3.2]), TM continued to prosper in other ways. Even as early as 1955, Mahesh had started to lay the foundations for TM so that it could grow into a veritable religious multinational corporation. Mahesh did this by claiming India to be the source of a superior "science of the soul." The new forms of ancient "science" were none other than common features of Indian life that have been routinely categorized as "Hindu" practices.

This new "Vedic science" comprised secret techniques that became the "flying" Sidhi (the power of "levitation"); food supplements and expensive *Ayurveda* treatments; strict diets prescribed based on a typology of body types; "life supporting" music dictated by *gandharva veda* ("science of divine music"); dwellings built in accordance with *sthapatya veda; jyotish* astrological consultations, and *yagyas* (traditional sacrificial offerings, *yajña* misspelt) performed out of sight in India by priests to avoid calamity.

2.4.4.2 In the 1990s, the Maharishi Yoga SM ["Sidhi Meditation"] Program emerged, presaged years earlier by a booklet of postures (*āsana*) compiled by Arthur Granville. Within a decade of the boost in awareness and popularity of TM prompted by Mahesh's appearance on the Merv Wave (Merv Griffin Show of 1975 & 1977),[95] the TM movement had been utterly transformed from offering an easy "technique" to offering a full range of components of an idealized Hindu lifestyle. Theory and

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[89] http://minet.org/www.trancenet.net/research/toc.shtml. 5 June 2023.

[90] "TM was refuted unanimously in Germany and by German clinical experts but still had prominent intercessors in Switzerland launching academic discussions about the results of the scientific research on TM." (Dr Vera Ries) 23 Aug 2023

[91] Germany's legal system separates out various different civil matters into separate "supreme" courts. A local Higher Court in the Administrative branch; the Federal Administrative Court (the highest court in the Administrative branch): Bundesverfassungsgericht; and the Federal Constitutional Court (the highest court in the Constitutional branch).

[92] The Federal Republic of Germany: OVG Muenster: 5 A 1152/84; Bundesverwaltungsgericht: 23.5.87 7 C 2.87; Bundesverfassungsgericht: 1 BvR 881/89.

[93] "The supreme court in Germany denied TM to be a religion but supported that it is apt to be called a youth cult, instead." (Thanks, Dr Vera Ries for this information, 21 Aug 2023)

[94] http://minet.org/www.trancenet.net/research/index.shtml.

[95] On the "Merv Wave," see C A Humes, 2005:65-67.

practice of TM's *samādhi* quickly pervaded the lives of followers and clients—according to Mahesh's personal and constant direction.[96]

These are precious products immeasurable in monetary terms to be paid for through the nose! By the 1980s, the TM Movement—TMers often called it "The Movement"—became one of the richest and best known religious organizations[97] [2.3.2, 2.4.1]. Its main controversy was its claim to be "non-religious" so that it was able to pervade and profit from the education system in the US and elsewhere.[98] Since 1979, schools that incorporated the TM technique using private, non-governmental funding were known to exist in the US, South America, Southeast Asia, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel.[99]

By the late 2000s, TM had been taught to millions of individuals worldwide, and Mahesh oversaw a large multinational organization which has continued since his death in 2008. Mahesh's obituary in the New York Times credited the TM movement as being "a founding influence on what has grown into a multibillion-dollar self-help industry."[100]

2.5 PROFILING MAHESH

2.5.1 TM Survivor

Tom Anderson [2, *heading* n] was one of Mahesh's personal secretaries and a member of Mahesh's International Staff for European Teacher Training Courses. After teaching in high schools in Buffalo, US, and Toronto, Canada, he learned TM in 1968. After his Advanced Training and Rounding[101] (ATR) (Dec 1970-Jan 1972), he left to teach TM in Toronto. As a TM "keener," he was personally liked by Mahesh who made him one of his personal secretaries and advisors.

Anderson began to have doubts about Mahesh's mock religiosity and false attainments in 1971. He left the Movement in 1976. In due course, Anderson went to a Zen centre and found the meditation there much more beneficial than TM. (Mahesh often disparaged Zen.) According to Anderson, he discovered the Dharmafarers (Singapore) in 2003—a turning-point in his life—and found the Sutta Discovery (SD) series[102] meaningfully engaging and greatly helped in his recovery from the cultic trauma of Maheshism and TM through regularly study and practice of Buddha Dhamma, "making my new life possible."[103]

He took up early Buddhism, which helped him recover from the TM Organization's brainwashing. According to Anderson, much of the best in TM philosophy (including the "2x20," *20 minutes meditation twice daily*) is found in early Buddhism, such as the breath meditation. In retrospect, this helped him to better understand how Mahesh had fabricated TM and successfully sold it with mock piety and sham science.

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[96] C A Humes, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi," 2005:67 f.

[97] The Movement was then valued in the US at about US$300 M (L Koppel, NY Times).

[98] On efforts in promoting the separation of Church & State in the US: Rob Boston - Americans United (au.org).

[99] *"Stress-free urban schools,"* David Lynch Foundation. *"At-risk children in developing countries,"* David Lynch Foundation. E Z Waldoks, "School crisis? Send the kids to the corner–to count to 10 cross their legs and hum … " *The Jerusalem Post* 22 Nov 2007. For refs: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendental_Meditation_in_education. All retrieved 19 May 2023.

[100] NY Times: https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/06/world/asia/06maharishi-1.html. [NYTimes obituary]

[101] A single "rounding" comprised a long spell of breathing-exercise (*prāṇayama*)—TM—*prāṇayama-āsana* (with yoga postures) (Anderson). Mahesh had people doing 4 roundings in the morning and 4 in the afternoon in a "week of silence."

[102] Sutta Discovery (SD) series is a full-time translation project started in 2002. This volume is an SD project.

[103] Telegram messages 27 + 29 May, 4 + 7 June 2023.

2.5.2 How to fly (for a fee)

2.5.2.1 After leaving TM, Anderson spent 10 years translating the Yoga Sūtras [1.2.3] on his own, to discover exactly what the Yoga Sūtras [2.3.2] had to say about "yogic-flying" or levitation. He was driven to translate the Yoga Sutras, because he "found the Yogic-Flying so useless and awful and wanted to know what the text, not Mahesh, had to say." He learned, for example, that the Yoga Sūtra's Eight Limbs of Yoga (*aṣṭāṅga mārga*) was based on the Buddha's noble eightfold path (*aṭṭh-aṅgika magga*).

According to Anderson, Mahesh basically cannibalized the Buddha's teaching on breath meditation (*ānâpānā,sati*) and substituted breath-watching with a mantra (making it more secretive, mystical—and saleable). A traditional Hindu would simply mutter a mantra while counting off each bead of a rosary (*jappa,mālā*) (which is no secret at all). Mahesh's well-organized marketing of TM was similar to McMindfulness: TM seems to be very easy, almost magical, and can be gotten personally for a mere fee (US$1,000). A key difference is that while McMindfulness is "not Buddhist,"[104] TM is Hinduism in disguise. In religious marketing language, there is no real difference between the two.

2.5.2.2 The mechanics of "Yogic Flying" is basically that of sitting in "full lotus" (*padmāsana*) with palms together in the laps to gain traction; sitting on very bouncy foam helps. Bending forward slightly, then using the belly, leg and butt muscles, one then "flicks" oneself into the air! The whole process is mystified with a prelude of 20 mins of TM sitting followed by mantra recitation, and then the frog-leap—and with a catchy name. Anderson calls the transcendental frog-leaping "butt-bouncing."[105]

Mahesh's grandiose—some would say megalomanic—claims to save the world through TM and all sorts of costly techniques such as "yogic flying"—a transcendental leap-frogging[106]—branded as "levitation," attracted ridicule as well as curiosity.[107] Mahesh shrewdly knew that any publicity, even negative ones, could be used to broaden his base of recruiting converts. Another faux pas was Mahesh's misspelling *siddhi* (he knew no Sanskrit, according to Anderson) as *sidhi* (pronounced as "seedy")*.* He simply took this as a neologism, which served better to benefit from copyright revenues. Old wine in new skins sells better.

2.5.3 The psychopathy of Mahesh

2.5.3.1 One way of studying Mahesh's life and conduct is to analyze them psychologically, especially in terms of **ego-defence**.[108] The young Mahesh started his religious life as a brahmachari and was close to Brahmānand, the Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math [2.1.3]. Despite his diligent services to Brahmānand, after Brahmānand died, the new Shankaracharya treated the enthusiastic Mahesh as a mere caste "clerk." This must have bitterly disappointed Mahesh.

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[104] On "McMindfulness," see SD 60.1e (1.1.2 f).

[105] Notice the leap-frogging is *forwards,* not upwards and staying so, in this "yogic flying" video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyXAB5L3EIQ. A related illusion is the Balducci levitation first described by Ed Balducci (1906-1988), a NY magician. Balducci levitation - Wikipedia (23 May 2023).

[106] The leader of Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese cult that released deadly sarin gas in the Tokyo subway 1995, also taught his followers to do exactly the same kind of "levitation." If such a yogic hopping is taken seriously as a "spiritual" practice, it is likely that the person, on account of habitual karma, would be reborn as a frog!

[107] A Siegel: https://medium.com/@transcendentaldeception/yogic-flying-sore-knees-getting-conned-by-transcendental-meditation-433ac4dc59ff (25 May 2023).

[108] Ego defence is, in psychoanalytic theory, the use of defense mechanisms to protect the ego against anxiety and frustration arising from threatening impulses and conflicts as well as external threats.

Clearly, he must have felt a sense of **inferiority**.[109] Going on his own, he was able to **compensate**[110] this lack by reaching out to the "world." To build up his charisma, he declared that he was going on a mission to spread his version of "pure Hinduism" worldwide. And to attract the world, he claimed that what he was teaching is not "religion" but a "science of the soul." This can be seen as a delusion-rooted **intellectualization**.[111] Presenting TM in this way appealed to the intellectually inclined westerners and the modern educated elite who had the time and means to join and support him.

2.5.3.2 The wealthy and not so wealthy donated huge sums to him, and he feigned pious disinterest to such worldly pittance! His pious pretence, on the one hand, and tacit personal delight, on the other, in such "blessings" seemed to contradict one another. This is a case of **compartmentalization**.[112] Mahesh held back any expressions of delighting in wealth (which would give others the impression that he was above desiring or needing wealth). The reality was that he saw all his religious efforts and programmes in monetary terms—this is **reaction formation**.[113]

Presenting a calm "pious priestly" face exudes a sense of doing a divine favour to the giver. This notion is at the heart of "religious crowd control": the Guru is above his followers who submit to him. Hence, the rich and not-so-rich gave their wealth in exchange for this favour from a great holy man who did not touch money (only his disciples did that in his name).

We see this pious pretence in some priests of urban Buddhism today too. An urban Sinhala priest once calmly declared, "I only touch money with the hands, not the heart."[114] This heartless honesty puts both the likes of Mahesh and such urban-forest priests in the same realm. Surely, touching money is not the same as when traditional Hindus would respectfully touch a book that has dropped accidentally to the floor, out of respect for knowledge (Skt *vidyā*). Touching money, surely, is to be touched by the power that *money is what money buys*. Anyway, buying and selling are against the Theravāda monastic rules.[115]

2.5.3.3 Blaming any failure of the TM meditator on "stress" is a classic case of **rationalization**.[116] Interviewing the "failed" meditator and counselling them seemed too much trouble for Mahesh. TM was seen like some blessing coming down from Mahesh. When we are unable to "appreciate" it, it is our fault: he termed this "stress." This was, of course, irresponsible and exploitative of a teacher.

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[109] "Inferiority," based on Adler's theory of inferiority complex, is "a basic feeling of inadequacy and insecurity, deriving from actual or imagined physical or psychological deficiency, that may result in behavioral expression ranging from the withdrawal of immobilizing timidity to the overcompensation of excessive competition and aggression" (*APA Dictionary* 2015). In Mahesh's case, his inferiority feelings seemed to develop into sublimation, when his perceived failures were developed into a super-piety in Advaita theology and global evangelizing of Hinduism. See SD 7.9 (3.5.2).

[110] The psychological defence of compensation is where one displaces a perceived lack or failure by its opposite "positive" effort or view. See SD 7.9 (4.5.2).

[111] The defence of intellectualization is where conflicts or emotional problems are dealt with abstractly or concealed by excessive intellectual or religious activity, See SD 7.9 (4.5.2).

[112] The psychological defence of compartmentalization refers to when thoughts or feelings that seem to conflict or to be incompatible are isolated from each other in separate and restricted mental compartments. See SD 7.9 (3.6.1.2).

[113] The psychological defence of reaction formation is where unacceptable or threatening unconscious impulses (Mahesh's love of wealth) are *unconsciously* denied and are replaced in consciousness with their opposite (he feigned not touching money or not having sex). Of course, if Mahesh were doing all this *deliberately*, it would not be a defence but pure *deceit*! See SD 7.9 (3.6.4; 4.3.3.1).

[114] SD 60.1d (7.6.2.3 (3)).

[115] Nissaggiya 19 forbids monastics from "buying and selling." See **Money and Monastics**, SD 4.19-23 (7).

[116] The psychological defence of rationalization is where apparently logical reasons are given to justify unacceptable behaviour that is motivated by unconscious instinctual impulses. See SD 7.9 (4.3.4).

Early in his religious career, Mahesh was known as the "giggling guru":[117] he often gave a child-like giggle or laugh when questioned during interviews or addressed during encounters with the public. This **giggling**, a nervous reflex, might be seen in either of two ways or both. Mahesh was getting all this public adoration and publicity: he felt that he should at least exude a congenial aura. This is a defence of **compensation**, even over-compensation (if we see this as being overly done to give a good impression upon his audience).

On the other hand, there might be a somewhat sinister depth to this nervous giggling. Mahesh had a low opinion of the non-Hindu world, especially Westerners. Setting aside this disdain, he put up this disarming giggling in his weak childlike voice, his gesture could be seen as another case of **compartmentalization** [above]. He set aside his personal feelings and gave the benefit of the doubt to his unworthy soulless audience so that they would benefit from the "science of the soul."

2.5.3.4 Like insects in the dark night, we are drawn to bright dancing open flames that is Guru Mahesh and his likes. We think we can learn something, but the reality is that we are drawn by a sense of **power** (this is called his charisma). Insects that dance around the naked flame soon get burnt; others are scarred.

Mahesh was in the habit of proclaiming that "the actor can play God better than God."[118] With our insect minds, we love those who play God since it seems more real than the idea itself. When we know that we are not insects, we will notice (if we choose to) that something is profoundly wrong with a man playing God or who feigns to be other than what he really is.

Mahesh is a good example of one who was stuck in the mud of craving, and many were cluelessly drawn into the Mahesh mire. With wisdom, we drag ourselves out of the mud to safety. We may even survive and blossom as lotuses to share our wisdom with others who are willing to listen and wise enough to learn. Yet, many more will continue to pay for their ignorance and craving. We simply need to wake up to true reality: perhaps, for this reason, the Buddha arose in India! In this darkness, even a single light shines brightly.

2.5.3.5 Meditation (including mindfulness) promises personal healing and true happiness, even spiritual salvation. However, at this relatively early stage of the popularization of meditation, we have little real informed guidance other than best-sellers and social media posts, but these are simply passing fads that have no accountability for the patient's safety and health. Other than going to a professional for meditation therapy, during the late 21st century we see people flocking to Guru-centred meditation practices, such as TM, which reportedly seemed to be wildly successful.

However, in some significant ways we have learned our lesson not to blindly place our minds (and wallets) in the hands of cultish Gurus and best-selling life-coaches. Those peddling meditation in the mass media and as a business merely claim that many people "like" it. Meditation, however, is a personal practice that must be specially tailored to our personality and personal needs. The best way to know which meditation works best for us is, ideally, to be familiar with at least <u>a brief history of meditation</u>.

Historically, the most organized and reputable tradition of meditation is that of early Buddhism, in which practically all modern forms of meditation (especially Hindu and Buddhist)[119] are rooted. Hence, this is a good place to familiarize ourselves with meditation. Grounded on this historical reality, we can then, if we choose to, safely shop around for some modern versions of meditation.[120]

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[117] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-512747/Lennon-right-The-Giggling-Guru-shameless-old-fraud.html. 29 May 2023.

[118] Anderson, in a personal communication.

[119] On the Indian roots of modern Yoga and meditation, see (1.1). For the roots of Christian contemplative tradition, see SD 60.1e (1.1.1).

[120] For studies on adverse effects of Transcendental Meditation (TM), see R B **Kennedy**, "Self-induced depersonalization syndrome," *American J of Psychiatry* 133 1976:1326–1328; L **Otis**, "Adverse effects of Transcenden-

2.6 THE ABDICATION SYNDROME

2.6.1 Handing over our remote to the leader

2.6.1.1 Why do we fall for authoritarian leaders, corrupt gurus, cult personalities and charismatic teachers? Once we dedicate our lives or surrender our minds to such an authority figure, we see them as some perfect figure; we find it impossible to see or believe anything negative about them. When a Guru acts immorally, we, the followers, explain away his conduct as some kind of test or "divine play." We are sure that there is some rational or religious reason for their conduct. Often enough, we may even blame ourselves for their conduct that only reflects our own failure: we have failed the Guru.

2.6.1.2 As in religion, so in politics: **power** attracts followers like ants to sugar, but a better metaphor is that of insects flying in the dark attracted by an open blazing fire. We feel empowered without knowing why, or refusing to see the true reasons for our own blindness. Before World War 2, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) was idolized by most Germans who saw him as an infallible figure embodying the destiny of the country. Despite their obvious brutality, figures such as Stalin (1878-1953) in Russia, Mussolini (1883-1945) in Italy, and Mao Zedong (1893-1976) in China, were worshipped and followed as heroes while they lived.

2.6.1.3 In our own time, Donald Trump (b 1946), despite his clear display of **grandiose narcissism** [5.3.3.2]—perhaps because he displays such a quality and is very wealthy—is seen by his supporters as having their best interests at heart, that he loves them and their country. His followers either explain away or deny his blatant incompetence, corruption, promiscuity and disregard for others, even international norms, to preserve their image of him as an infallible authority figure.

Trump knew just what he was saying when he proudly boasted: "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any voters, OK!"[121] No doubt his supporters would find a way of justifying the act, in the same way that the disciples of a Guru might try to explain away his ownership of scores of expensive cars and houses, his sexual promiscuity or his violent outbursts.

Elected as the 45th US President (2017-2021), Trump's popularity remained stable throughout the presidency mainly because, in the midst of economic hardship and uncertainty, many Americans seemed to feel safe with an authoritarian figure, and because of the illusion of his parental care and control. However, when such a narcissist sees himself as failing, or rather as being failed by others, being plotted against, his psychopathic impulses might build up to a crescendo exploding in violence and destruction—as was evident on 6th January 2023 in Washington, DC, with the storming of the Capitol by Trump's supporters.

When the corruptions and crimes of such a grandiose narcissist are known, the authorities may intervene (as they did in 2023).[122] Steve Taylor, a senior lecturer at Leeds Beckett University, UK, writes: "We should be grateful that, in the United States at least, there are democratic systems and processes in place to limit the disastrous effects of the abdication syndrome and the tyrants who exploit it."[123]

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tal Meditation," in (edd) Shapiro & Walsh, *Meditation: classic and contemporary perspectives,* NY: Aldine*,* 1984: 201–209; R J **Castillo**, "Depersonalization and meditation," *Psychiatry* 53,2 1990:158–168.

[121] Trump made this remark at a campaign stop at Dordt College in the city of Sioux Center, Iowa. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTACH1eVIaA.

[122] https://www.politico.com/interactives/2023/trump-criminal-investigations-cases-tracker-list/.

[123] S Taylor, "The abdication syndrome," *Psychology Today* 1 May 2020: https://www.psychologytoday.com/sg/blog/out-of-the-darkness/202305/why-some-people-hand-their-lives-over-to-cults.

2.6.2 Desire to return to early childhood

2.6.2.1 We are likely to recall our early childhood with love and confidence because we had the feeling that our parents were in complete control of the world. We felt that they protected us, provided for us, and took responsibility for our lives. If there were any problems, we felt that they would work them all out. If there was anything we did not know or understand, they would tell us the answer or how to sort things out. We didn't have to worry about anything: we went to school, played, had fun, rested; they comforted us and took care of everything else.

Steve Taylor, in his article, "Abdication Syndrome," writes

> I remember being disappointed when I was [a] little older, perhaps 11 or 12, and began to realise that my parents weren't as omnipotent and omniscient as I'd thought. One day I asked my father a question about my school homework and I was surprised when he couldn't help me. I began to realise that my dad was actually a very anxious person who constantly worried about the smallest things. But by that point, I was beginning to feel independent, so I no longer need [sic] their protection so much.
>
> For many people, this phase of early childhood represents an ideal *which they long to return to* (if only subconsciously). How wonderful it would be to worship powerful parental figures, who take responsibility for our own lives, protect us from the world, and provide answers to all our questions.
>
> (S Taylor, "The abdication syndrome," *Psychology Today* 12 Sep 2020)

2.6.2.2 A common trope or strategy cult leaders use to rally support and attract followers for themselves is to ostensibly urge a return to an ideal state, the "golden age." Although this may be seen as a "pure, pristine" Buddhism, for example, the real cult activity is not the keeping of moral conduct, wholesome meditation, or sutta study for personal cultivation. Cult activities tend to be ostentatious and ritualistic with only one subtle or overt goal: the glorification of the cult leader.

Although many people seek teachers and teachings because of a genuine desire for spiritual development, many others are motivated by unhealthy impulses. They may seem to be seeking "enlightenment," but this is really a return to **a childhood state** of unconditioned devotion and non-responsibility (even irresponsibility). In 2020, Steve Taylor coined the term "**abdication syndrome**" [2.6.2.1], and explained it as follows:

> They want to abdicate responsibility for their own lives, and hand it over to the guru or cult leader. They don't have to worry about anything, because the guru will guide them in the right direction. They don't need to think for themselves, because the leader knows all the answers. They don't need to struggle in their lives; they can just bask in the love and protection of the guru, *as they did with their parents when they were young children*. I call this impulse the "abdication syndrome."
>
> (S Taylor, "The abdication syndrome," *Psychology Today* 1 May 2023)

Taylor, in his book, *DisConnected* (2023),[124] explores the abdication syndrome in more detail. He suggests that the syndrome is so powerful that it gives rise to a specific altered state of consciousness—or as we could call it, an abdicated state of consciousness.

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[124] Taylor, DisConnected: the roots of human cruelty and how connection can heal the world, Aberdour (Scotand): Iff Books, 2023.

2.6.3 The glassy-eyed look

2.6.3.1 Steve Taylor, in his book, *DisConnected* (2023)*,* relates that once he went to a talk by a well-known religious teacher. Arriving early, he looked around, perusing the books and other mer-chandise. He chatted with one of the teacher's followers, who slightly unnerved him with his vacant stare and childlike admiration of his guru. "He's the guy!" he told me with wide-eyed enthusiasm. "He's everything I've been looking for. Everything's been going so well in my life since I've been following him."

> I remembered that I had seen that vacant look before. A few years earlier, an acquaint-ance invited me and my girlfriend to attend a workshop of her spiritual group. I realized straight away that it wasn't for me. I was put off by the massive reverence they showed to their teacher (who wasn't actually present). Every time they mentioned his name, a giant smile broke across their faces, like teenagers in love. I was also bemused by the poor quality of the teachings, which were mostly incoherent psychobabble, full of cliches and platitudes.
> (Taylor, "Why some people hand their lives over to cults," *Psychology Today* 1 May 2023)

2.6.3.2 What disturbed Taylor the most was the strange, absent look of most members of the reli-gious group [2.6.3.1]. In *DisConnected* (2013), Taylor describes how they shared the same vacant stare. Anyone whose relatives or friends have joined a religious cult will recognise this trance-like stare. A former follower of the Unification Church recalled the cult's members: "They all had glassy eyes, like two eggs sunny-side up, open so wide that the pupils seemed to bulge out of their faces."[125]

Some researchers have investigated this "glassy eyes" stare. The sociologist Benjamin Zablocki described this *glazed, withdrawn look*—with their "fixed eerie smiles"—as a classic sign of brain-washing, or "extreme cognitive submissiveness" (turning off the mind).[126] Another sociologist, Marc Galanter, believed that the "glassy stare" has an insulating effect, establishing the boundaries of the group and pushing outsiders away.[127]

According to Taylor, the glassy-eyed stare is a sure sign of the abdication syndrome. It's the look of people who have given up responsibility for their lives and returned to a child-like state of devo-tion to a paternal figure. This abdicated state of consciousness is similar to hypnosis. After all, the essential feature of hypnosis is that a person gives up their will, and allows the hypnotist to take over the "executive functions"[128] of the mind, which manage our behaviour and control our deci-sions and emotions (2023).

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[125] Taylor, *DisConnected,* 2023:18 Preview. See also C S Clark, *Cults in America*, *CQ Researcher* 3 1993:385-408. See http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre1993050701

[126] B D **Zablocki**, *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary Communes,* NY: Free Press, 1980:333; "Exit cost analysis: A new approach to the scientific study of brainwashing," *Nova Religio* 1,1 1998:232. D **Anthony** & T Robbins, "Conversion and 'Brainwashing' in New Religious Movements" (ch 11), (ed) J R Lewis, *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements,* Oxford Univ Press, 2004:291 n25.

[127] M Galanter, *Cults: Faith, healing and coercion.* Oxford University Press, 1999:4, 107.

[128] APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015: **executive functions,** higher level cognitive processes of planning, deci-sion making, problem solving, action sequencing, task assignment and organization, effortful and persistent goal pursuit, inhibition of competing impulses, flexibility in goal selection, and goal-conflict resolution. These often involve the use of language, judgment, abstraction and concept formation, and logic and reasoning. They are frequently associated with neural networks that include the frontal lobe, particularly the prefrontal cortex. Deficits in executive functioning are seen in various disorders, including Alzheimer's disease and schizophrenia. In the latter, for example, selection and maintenance of goals may be impaired, as may the ability to exclude distractions. Also called **central processes**; **higher order processes**.

2.6.4 Transference and counter-transference

2.6.4.1 The terms "brainwashed" or "brainwashing" may not be appropriate in the context of cult behaviour because they imply that cult members are innocent victims of malevolent leaders; which is too simplistic. Cult leaders, corrupt gurus, and authoritarian leaders may be "**hyper-discon-nected**"[129] personalities who crave power and admiration. As with hypnosis—when a subject allows the hypnotist to take over their will—the abdication syndrome is (at least initially) an agreement or accord between the follower and the hyper-disconnected leader.

The follower has a psychological need *to worship* someone, and the leader has a psychological need *to be worshipped*. In this **co-dependence**, the follower takes the role of a helpless or docile child, and a Guru or leader the role of powerful parent-figure. Psychoanalytically, there is transfer-ence on the part of the followers: they project the desirable qualities they have associated with their parents or carers onto the Guru or leader, who then enjoys this adoration, and reciprocates by play-ing that role of authority, security and power.

2.6.4.2 The abdication syndrome affects both sides insidiously. It is blind addictive co-depend-ence. Any toxic relationship, one between authority figure and their submissive followers, is doomed from the start. After all, the relationship is rooted in pathology on both sides: the hyper-disconnec-tion of the leaders, and the emotional insecurity and psychological immaturity of the followers.

It is also a highly unstable relationship, due to the immense personal gulf between the leader and the submissive followers. Every **pathocracy**—an unwholesome power-based group in the form of a cult or a government—leads inevitably to conflict, chaos and self-destruction as is evident from history.

2.6.4.3 Although early Buddhism recounts marvellous stories of the Buddha's admirable person and personality, and of miraculous stories of various persons and divine beings, these accounts al-ways point to a higher level, that is, the Dharma. These are skillful means in teaching to wean the followers from attributing charisma to teachers, and to encourage the followers to take up the Dharma themselves for reaching the path of awakening and attaining the very same goal as those luminaries themselves.

Even though the early Buddhist texts speak highly of the Buddha and **the teacher** of Dharma-Vinaya—morally exemplary, deeply learned in Dharma, profound in meditation, even fully awaken-ed—the stress is on the Dharma learning (based on the suttas), keeping to the Vinaya and practising the Dharma for self-awakening.

2.6.4.4 The Rūpa Sutta (A 4.65) records that the monk Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya (a dwarf with a beautiful voice) speaks of 4 types of people, that is, those who measure or judge a teacher (or any-one) by looks (form), by voice, by austerity or by Dharma. **These 4 measures of charisma** are ex-plained in **the Puggala Paññatti** and the Commentaries as follows:

> What sort of person measures by **looks** [form] (*rūpa*) and is inspired by them?
>> Here a person, having seen the height, the breadth, the shape, or the whole (of a person), grasping such measures (*pamāṇa*), feels inspired.
>> Such a person is one measuring by and inspired by looks.
> What sort of person measures by **voice** (*ghosa*) and is inspired by it?
>> Here a person, on the basis of comments, of praise, of applause, of compliments of others, grasping such measures, feel inspired.
>> Such a person is one measuring by and inspired by voice.
> What sort of person measures by **austerity** (*lūkha*) [external holiness] and is inspired by it?

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[129] "Hyper-disconnected" means that one seriously lacks real concern for others.

Here a person, having seen the austerity (or roughness) of the robes, of the alms-
bowl, of the lodgings, of various (other) austerities [things difficult to do, including "mir-
acles"], grasping such measures, feel inspired.
        Such a person is one measuring by and inspired by austerity.
        <u>What sort of person measures by **religiosity** (*dhamma*) and is inspired by it?</u>
        Having seen the moral virtue, the mental concentration, the wisdom (of another),
grasping such measures, one feels inspired.
        Such a person is one measuring by and inspired by one's religiosity.
        (Pug 53 f; PugA 229 f; cf A 2:70; SnA 242;[130] DhA 3:113 f), SD 3.14(6 f); SD 19.2a (6.5)

    In **the Rūpa Sutta**'s closing verses (also found as **Tha 469-472**), Bhaddiya warns us that those
who measure others by *looks* or *voice* see only the outside but know not the inside, overcome by
desire and passion. We should *understand* both <u>the inside</u> and *see* <u>the outside</u>.
    One way of interpreting this teaching is that we should "**see the outside**" (form, voice, austerity
or Dharma) as characterized by *impermanence* and *suffering*; and "**understand the inside**" (the prin-
ciple behind it all) as being *nonself*. These are the characteristics that we should reflect on. This
should inspire us with the urgency (*saṁvega*) of practising **self-reliance** (*atta,saraṇa*),[131] which is of-
ten taken to mean the mindfulness or meditation on <u>the 4 satipatthanas</u>, that is, contemplations of
the body (such a breath meditation), on feelings, on thoughts and on realities as they arise to us.[132]
The simplest form of such a practice is "observing the rise and fall" of all states and things for the ac-
complishment of wisdom.[133]

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[130] On **SnA 242**, see SD 3.8 (5.1.11, 5.1.4.3, 5.1.6.3).
[131] On <u>self-reliance</u>, see SD 9 (6.1).
[132] **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.26), SD 9.
[133] **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,15), SD 5.10.

3 Modern meditation studies

3.1 ROOTS OF MEDITATION AND ITS MODERN VICISSITUDES

3.1.1 Body, mind and others

3.1.1.1 Traditional Buddhist training—especially in early Buddhism (the teachings of the historical Buddha)—comprises 3 interdependent aspects: *the training in moral virtue, in concentration* and *in wisdom*; hence, they are collectively known as **the 3 trainings** (*sikkha-t,taya*). Moral training refers to the "purification" of bodily actions and speech, that is, the activities of the 5 physical senses. The purpose of moral training is to "calm" the body down and have a "stress-free" living with others and the environment, so that our physical being conduces to mental cultivation, the second training; that is, the body does not become a source of distraction to mental development.

Concentration training is about mental development through mindfulness and meditation (which includes concentration). Mindfulness (*sati*) refers to conditioning the mind to focus on some mind-object so that it is able to free itself from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) rooted in the 5 sense-activities (seeing, hearing, etc) that result in distracting thoughts. Mental training includes a growing awareness of how our mind is not merely brain-based or self-centred, but is essentially extended through *how* we see visible objects, hear sounds, smell, taste and touch the world: *we are literally the world*, it is our "**extended minds**" [4.4.8.2]. When we harm others or the world, we are harming ourself, too.[134]

With a moral life and healthy body supporting a calm, clear and open mind, we begin to see ever more truly that all lives evolve and all things change in an endless interdependent cycle. When we fail to see this or when we exist selfishly, we are going against nature; hence, we suffer. There is no I but only *we*; there is no me, but only *us*; there is no mine but only *ours.* The true reality is that there is no self. This is true wisdom.

Wisdom refers to both the purpose and the result of proper morally-rooted meditation, especially the attaining of concentration (*samādhi*) or mental focus, leading on to various levels of full concentration or dhyana (*jhāna*). Ideally, we should go on to master at least the 1st dhyana. This is called "calmness" (*samatha*) or calmness meditation. In due course, having emerged from such a dhyana, we direct the profoundly calm and clear mind towards seeing into the true nature of reality or phenomena. This is traditionally called "insight" (*vipassanā*).

3.1.1.2 A close study of the suttas, especially the early Buddhist texts related to mindfulness and meditation, provides us with a theoretical background and the vocabulary to better understand and express our meditative experiences. With a sutta background, it is easier for the meditator to identify and appreciate the profound states that arise in meditation resulting from some kind of breakthrough, even if momentarily, into true reality.

We have earlier noted how about a century or so after the Buddha's passing, Patañjali used the Buddha's eightfold path as the Eight Limbs of Yoga and structured the Patañjali Yoga Sūtras upon the Buddha's yogic practices [1.2.3]. In our own times, Mahesh then plagiarized both the Buddha's breath meditation and Patañjali's Yoga Sutras for his Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Yogic Flying [2.3.2].

3.1.2 "Non-religious" mindfulness

Modern psychotherapy uses aspects of both mindfulness and meditation but opted to use the term **mindfulness**, probably to avoid the notion that it is religious or even "Buddhist." It is a "non-

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[134] On "the extended minds," see SD 60.1e (12.7).

religious" mindfulness.[135] Meditation, however, is an ancient Buddhist practice, and only in recent times (within the last generation or so, that is, the late 21st and early 22nd centuries) has it been plucked out of its spiritual framework, and applied to therapy for the enhancement of personal well-being.

Hence, Alberto Perez-de-Albeniz and Jeremy Holmes (2000), in their survey of the modern psychotherapeutic use of meditation, offer this caveat:

> Although we have limited ourselves to reviewing studies that refer only to meditation as a technique, there is abundant literature that relates meditation to a religious-philosophical framework. It could be argued that in extracting the technique from its theoretical and belief context, the meaning and effect of meditation is deprived of its essence—just as an interpretation, cognitive challenge, or a paradoxical injunction would not have the same impact/outcome when removed from its therapeutic context.

> (2000:54 f)

Clinical meditation of whatever name, without its early Buddhist grounding, is at best psychological mumbo-jumbo. Most psychotherapists can only intellectualize their meditation procedure and results, and where they had difficulties or fail often have no real idea why, except for the technical rationalizations. Even then, these rationalizations can be useful to study: they help us understand how the psychiatrists themselves think, which would guide future generations of mind-scientists.

3.2 MODERN ASPECTS OF MINDFULNESS

3.2.1 Novel concoctions

3.2.1.1 Although Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness[KZ] is the best known[136] amongst professional psychologists and psychotherapists, most of these professionals would use various forms of "mindfulness methods" or meditations, many of which they had put together from their training, ingenuity and needs. All such methods seem to be fundamentally based on the concept of self-observation of our mental activity in *the here and now*, with an appreciation of *the process* and *appeal* of that activity rather than the content.

In Buddhist mental training, there are 2 kinds of such <u>processes</u>, that of **mindfulness** (*sati*) and of **cultivation** (*bhāvanā*). **The mindfulness practices** or "mindfulness meditations" are where the object is already present, such as <u>the breath</u>—hence, it is called breath meditation (*ānâpāna,sati*)[137] —or a reality that is always there which is noted or observed, such as <u>impermanence</u>—hence, it is called perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*).[138] In this practice, the mindfulness or minding is directed to and awareness focused on the mind-object that is already *naturally* present.

3.2.1.2 The cultivation practices or "cultivation meditations" are where we mentally arouse some wholesome state, especially lovingkindness; hence, it is called <u>the cultivation of lovingkindness</u> (*mettā,bhāvanā*).[139] Such a practice is used to counter some habitual negative mental state, such as anger, boredom or depression. Initially, some subverbalization (mental speech) or visualization (of some joyful state) may be used, just sufficient to induce the mind to arouse that wholesome state,

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[135] See eg Kabat-Zinn's claim that he was "not a Buddhist" despite using *Buddhist* mindfulness to his great profit: SD 60.1e (1.1.3).

[136] Mindfulness[KZ] refers specifically to the Mindfulness method introduced by Jon Kabat-Zinn. The term Mindfulness (with the initial capital) is used for forms of mindfulness innovated by other therapists or teachers (this usage is often clear in the context). See SD 60.1e (1.0).

[137] See Ānāpāna,sati S (M 118,5-7 + 15-22), SD 7.13; Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S (M 62,24-30), SD 3.11.

[138] On the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*), see (Anicca) Cakkhu S (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

[139] On the cultivation of lovingkindness, see Karaṇīya Metta S (Khp 9 = Sn 1.8) & SD 38.3 (6).

and thereby displace the unwholesome state. Such practices are also called "recollections" (*anussati*), such as the well-known set of "**6 inspiring meditations**."[140]

    Even without any formal training, we can spend just about 10 mins a day, sitting in a quiet place and close our eyes. Breathe in a relaxed manner with eyes closed. Repeat some wholesome words as we breathe in, and imagine all our negativity or tiredness leave with the out-breath. With the in-breath (or with both in-and-out breath), we try to feel the word "love," "peace" or "joy." We can similarly use such a subverbalization while doing our chores, and activities such as exercises (running etc), yoga, playing music, or knitting.[141]

3.2.2 Short-term and long-term benefits of meditation

    3.2.2.1 Such practices of meditation have positive short-term as well as long-term benefits. A suitable meditation properly done is likely to have an immediate positive effect for the meditator. Even a simple breath meditation, for example, properly done, for 10 minutes or so, may bring an immediate sense of calm and clarity; a cultivation of lovingkindness, similarly done, can at once displace negative emotions, especially anger, with inner calm.

    However, when we are exposed to similar negative conditions, the habitual negative state may return. Hence, for **long-term benefits** of meditation, we should not only know a mindfulness practice, but we should also undergo related awareness training. Such an awareness training entails some familiarity with the nature of the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion),[142] and of the 5 mental hindrances (sensual lust, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt),[143] and their antidotes.[144] Ideally, we should also cultivate spiritual friendship with morally virtuous and experienced teachers or friends.[145]

    3.2.2.2 Psychologically, the main benefit of meditation is a calm and clear-minded self-control, which has been called "the relaxation response"[146] by Herbert Benson [4.1.1.2]. The relaxation response may help people to counteract the toxic effects of chronic stress by slowing the breathing rate, relaxing muscles, and reducing blood pressure.[147] Regular meditation of even just 10-20 minutes a day, or whenever we feel like it, helps to keep a balance of our *energy-replenishing* (parasympathetic or trophotropic)[148] and *energy-application* (sympathetic or ergotropic)[149] functions.

    How we use our energy is harmonized with how we build it up. We *use* energy not only through our body when physically working or just letting time pass. We also *lose* energy faster when we are with negative people. We seem to lose energy *faster* because we are not enjoying the situation; we are engaged with another or with others without feeling, with neither truth nor beauty; thus there is no inspiration, no renewal of energy.

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[140] There are a set of 6 mindfulness practices used for such cultivation, that is, the recollections of the Buddha (*buddhânussati,* SD 15.7)*,* the Dharma, (*dhammânussati,* SD 15.9)*,* the noble sangha (*saṅghânussati.* SD 15.10a)*,* moral virtue (*sīlânussati,* SD 15.11), charity (*cāgânussati,* SD 15.12) and deities (*devatā'nussati,* SD 15.13)*.* See (Agata,phala) Mahānāma S (A 6.10), SD 15.3 (2, 3.3); SD 15, esp 15.1 (1.5.6), 15.7 (1.1.2); SD 10.16 (1.4.1.3); SD 60b 3.3.7 (4).

[141] https://www.apa.org/monitor/2008/10/relaxation.

[142] On the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion), hate or anger is easiest to overcome, **see (Akusala Mūla) Añña Titthiyā S** (A 3.68), SD 16.4 (1.1); on *lobha raga dosa moha*, see SD 35.6 (5.1.1).

[143] On the 5 mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), see **Nīvaraṇa,** SD 32.1.

[144] On the 6 roots (3 unwholesome + 3 wholesome), see **(Kamma) Nidāna S** (A 3.33) + SD 4.14 (1).

[145] See SD 16.1e (1.1.2.2).

[146] H Benson, *The Relaxation Response,* NY: Morrow, 1975.

[147] https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/using-the-relaxation-response-to-reduce-stress-20101110780.

[148] Trophotropic (adj), related to or concerning a capacity or propensity for renewal of energy, ie, for rest. (APA *Dictionary of Psychology,* 2nd ed, 2015).

[149] Ergotropic (adj), related to or concerning a capacity or propensity for expenditure of energy, ie, for activity, effort, or work (APA id).

Recharging ourself is best done in solitude of inner peace. We are then enjoying ourself; we are at peace. Sometimes we can energize ourself with positive people; it is truly beautiful when this happens—like being with a truly wise, kind and good teacher: it is like being with the Buddha himself. Otherwise the best solitary joy is through good meditation.

Although meditation may seem to benefit us on our first try in resolving some emotional or psychological issues, sustained wholesome results are better obtained with regular practice using suitable meditation methods with proper guidance. Meditation's physical effects are consistent with increasing evidence of the biological impact of psychological interventions. It clearly refutes the stereotypical criticism that such therapies "do nothing" or are "just" placebo.

3.2.3 A Centre for Meditation Standards

3.2.3.1 Meditation is, however, not free from **side-effects**, even negative ones, especially for long-term meditators, including experienced teachers. Nor is it free of contraindications: it may not work in certain situations because of underlying conditions, or because the method is neither properly taught nor suitable for the meditator. The right meditation, the right instructions, the right meditator (especially in terms of self-effort) and the right social engagement (spiritual friendship and fellowship)[150] are the vital ingredients of an effective meditation practice. [3.1.1.1]

The common element with psychotherapy is the stress on and the goal of self-awareness and mental focus. These are the bases for freeing the meditator from negative patterns of thinking and feelings, and cultivating wholesome or healing personal and social habits. This differs from psychotherapy in that meditation is *a completely private, silent* yet self-affirming exercise that can be difficult to monitor or measure. In other words, informed Buddhists do not see meditation so much as a "therapy" but as **a holistic lifestyle**, integral to the Dharma-spirited Buddhist life.

3.2.3.2 Researches have produced mixed results regarding the efficacy of meditation as therapy or an adjuvant to therapy. Most of the studies are based on small numbers, over a limited duration, and lack standardized diagnostic procedures. The current evidence seems to indicate a significant value of meditation in the treatment of stress and anxiety-related disorders, but there is a need for a rigorous meta-analysis—a careful examination of the meditation methods and research methods used—in order to guarantee standards in evidence-based therapeutic practice.[151] Therapists should then use such meditation methods in their professional practice, record their observations and results for further comparisons and studies.

Considering the widespread application of mindfulness and meditation methods, there is a vital need for a central body for data analysis to study the reports of the routine progress of such therapies. It should be legislated that all professional therapists keep proper records of methods used, how they are applied and details of the therapies. The rule of privacy and privilege still applies but are limited to the clients and the professionals. **The Centre for Meditation Standards** (or whatever name it is given) should have a regular team of specialists and experts who study the results, discuss them, and where necessary, make rules of ethics for the profession.

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[150] This refers to interrelating with an experienced meditation teacher (or at least suitable sutta teachings), and a healthy interactivity with others.

[151] An example of such a study is reported in R K Wallace, H Benson & A F Wilson, "A wakeful hypometabolic physiologic state," *American Journal of Physiology* 221,2 Sept 1971:795-799.

3.3 RESEARCHES INTO MEDITATION AS THERAPY: A REVIEW[152]

3.3.1 A review of meditation literature

3.3.1.2 Although modern Indian Yoga is deeply rooted in early Buddhism, its modern sense of the term is not found in the early Buddhist texts [1.1.1]. The term *yogi* as a term for "meditator" is used only by followers of Burmese Vipassana in modern times. In modern India, *yoga* refers to a broad range of religious disciplines, both theoretical and practical. Indian Yoga, of course, includes meditation. We use the term "yoga meditation" as a broad term for any kind of Hindu or Hindu-influenced meditation.

There were (and are) various difficulties attending the researches into <u>yoga meditation</u> [3.3.2.5]. The early scientific investigations of TM and Zen, on the other hand, yielded apparently the most consistent findings, as we have noted [3.3.2]. However, in recent times, as scientists and scholars become better informed and experienced with such cults and religious groups, and when these early researches into meditation were critically examined, they were, as a rule, found to be exploratory at best, and seriously flawed at worst.

3.3.1.3 Jonathan C Smith in "Meditation as psychotherapy: A review of the literature" (1975)[153] writes that since 1936 at least 100 scholarly books and journal articles have argued that meditation have psychotherapeutic potential, and he refers to the bibliographies of these books.[154] Smith adds: "Virtually every school of psychological thought has been invoked to support these claims, including psychoanalytic, neo-Freudian, Jungian, client-centered, Gestalt, Maslovian, existential, logotherapy, bioenergetic, and learning theory." (1975:558)

How these scientists and scholars see meditation is well conveyed by one of their leading pioneer spokesmen, Daniel Goleman, thus:

> I conceptualize meditation as a "meta-therapy": a procedure that accomplishes the major goals of conventional therapy and yet has as its end-state a change far beyond the scope of therapies … an altered state of consciousness.   (1971:4)[155]

3.3.2 TM and Zen meditation

3.3.2.1 J C Smith (1975) noted that these early researches into meditation practice were done mostly with Transcendental Meditation (TM) practitioners [2.3] and Zen meditators [3.3.4.2]. Studies were done with groups ranging from 16 up to as many as 1900 meditators. Serious researches only began around the late 1970s. Smith's detailed and careful survey of research literature yielded 3 sets of findings (1975:558):

(1) Experienced meditators who are willing to participate without pay in meditation research typically praise meditation and indeed appear happier and healthier than the beginner meditator, the average college student or the man in the street.

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[152] This section is based on A Perez-de-Albeniz & J Holmes, "Meditation: Concepts, effects and uses in therapy," *International Journal of Psychotherapy* 5,1 Mar 2000:49-58.

[153] J C Smith, "Meditation as psychotherapy," *Psychological Bulletin* 82,4, 1975:558.

[154] Timmons & Kamiya, "The psychology and physiology of meditation and related phenomena: A bibliography," *J of Transpersonal Psychology* 2, 1970:41-59. Lesh, "Zen and psychotherapy: A partially annotated bibliography," *J of Humanistic Psychology* 10 1970a:75-83. Haimes "Zen Buddhism and psychoanalysis," *Psychologia* 15 1972:22-30. Kanellakos & Ferguson, *The Psychobiology of Transcendental Meditation.* LA: MIU Press, 1973. Timmons & Kanellakos, "The psychology and physiology of meditation: Bibliography II," *J of Transpersonal Psychology* 6 1974:32-38.

[155] Goleman. "Meditation as meta-therapy: Hypotheses toward a proposed fifth state of consciousness," *Jl of Transpersonal Psychology* 3 1971:1-25.

(2) Beginner meditators who practice meditation for 4-10 weeks show more improvement on a variety of tests than non-meditators tested at the same time.

(3) Persons who are randomly assigned to learn and practise meditation show more improvement over 4-10 weeks than control subjects assigned to some form of alternate treatment.

3.3.2.2 Smith (1975), after a careful study of the literature on meditation research came to some useful and sobering conclusions and observations. According to Smith, the major weakness of these studies is that they relied on data resembling solicited testimonials. A meditator asked to participate in a study investigating the beneficial effects of meditation might view this as a calling or opportunity to "step forth for meditation" somewhat analogous to the evangelist's call to "step forth for Jesus."

"Put technically, the sample of those who volunteered to participate in meditation research was perhaps not representative of the population of those who learned to meditate. We cannot conclude from such studies that the practice of meditation is therapeutic." (1975:559). One way around the ambiguities present in testimonial data (including questionnaires) is to test a sample of meditators before learning meditation and then after practising meditation for a period of weeks or months.

3.3.2.3 Using such a design Benson and Wallace (1972)[156] found that 22 hypertension patients showed a significant reduction in blood pressure after 4-6 weeks of meditation. Of course, we may ask if such a decrease could be *the result of the simple passage of time* rather than meditation. In order to answer this question, we need a control group of non-meditators tested during the same time period.

Six studies, all using TM, have incorporated such a control and have found that over 4-10 weeks, meditators showed significantly greater progress. Unfortunately, studies that compare changes experienced by meditators and non-meditators are faulty because the two populations may not be comparable. At the very least, meditators, by their decision to learn meditation, demonstrate some motivation for self-improvement not demonstrated by nonmeditator controls. Such motivated subjects may be ripe for growth and may display reductions in pathology regardless of what they choose to do.[157]

3.3.2.4 In all the studies reviewed by Smith (1975), either the meditation instructors or the subjects demonstrated some initial belief (or absence of disbelief) in the therapeutic potential of meditation. The most frequently cited form of meditation, TM, is not only taught by believing, practising meditators but is introduced by two mandatory lectures that present a plausible psychophysiological theory of the technique's effectiveness as well as summaries of numerous "verifying" scientific studies.

The same religious issues or cultural conditioning can be similarly levelled at studies based on **Zen** practitioners. The main difficulty with Zen meditation in meditation study is that it is a well-rooted "belief-based" meditation. We will not be able to "do" Zen meditation without prior training or keeping to the Zen ritual behaviour and lingo. [3.3.3.2-3.3.2.4]

3.3.2.5 Moreover, all forms of meditation reviewed by Smith were done while sitting quietly. Perhaps, concludes Smith (1975:562), the practice of regular sitting, and *not* the meditation exercise, is the crucial therapeutic factor. This possibility was hinted at (but rejected) in 1936 by B K Bagchi in one of the first published psychologically based arguments for the therapeutic potential of Yoga meditation:

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[156] Benson & Wallace, "Decreased blood pressure in hypertensive subjects who practiced meditation." *Circulation* 46 (Suppl 2) 1972:130. (Abstract No. SI6).

[157] Smith, 1975:559 f.

> If some critic … contends that it is not so much the intention to relax [as is present in medi-tation] as the physical quietness and lying still that have the recuperative effect, at the present we can only point to clinical cases as a practical counterargument, waiting for further neurological evidence to support our belief.   (Bagchi 1936:433)[158]

Bagchi had good reasons to reject such a criticism of meditation, more specifically Indian Yoga, with which he was working. The criticism was, however, a valid one mainly because the critics never participated in the meditation. Moreover, Bagchi's Yoga research was an isolated one, lacking many of the parameters mentioned above. By now, his research is at best of historical value, that is clearly dated.

3.3.3 "Zen is not meditation"

3.3.3.1 The Beat Generation of the post-WW2 US was characterized by an eclectic spiritual search leading to ideas on the fringes of society, especially the teachings of Japanese Zen and Yoga-cara schools. Life is characterized by suffering and impermanence, and the material world as it appears to our senses is illusory and ephemeral. The Beat Generation combined awareness with critical detachment from society, as in Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* (1958).

English writer, speaker and "philosophical entertainer" of Oriental traditions, **Alan Watts** (1915-1973), however argued "Beat Zen" is a misunderstanding of genuine Zen. The Beats were probably unaware of the complicity of Zen Buddhist practitioners in Japanese nationalism and its government's militarism during WW2. It was this strand of Zen which gained popularity in the 20th century as Suzuki Zen, which was, in significant ways, the precursor of modern Western Zen, especially that of the US.[159]

3.3.3.2 In **SD 60.1c (10)**, we examined how pre-modern Japanese clerical Buddhism became very powerful so that even the emperor feared the Temples. The secular elites, perceptive of the dangers of a colonial takeover and foreign domination employed 2 strategies: nationalization and westernization. The Japanese modernized their legal system and practically all aspects of their society. The most devastating change was the **secularization** of Buddhism, which effectively banned any kind of monastic or celibate clergy—a deathblow to traditional Buddhism.

Buddhism was socially downgraded "below" State Shinto, the nationalistic official religion of Japan from the Meiji Restoration (1868) until World War 2, where "religion and government are one" (*saisei ichi*). Clerical Buddhism lost much of its wealth, lands and influence. To recover from this utter devastation, many Buddhist leaders and thinkers worked to present Buddhism as fully supporting Japanese culture and politics, even its war efforts leading up to World War 2. The "Suzuki Zen" that captivated the West in the second half of the 20th century was really a "nationalist" Zen to promote the superiority of Japanese culture, and Buddhism was its tool in doing so.[160]

3.3.3.3 Zen Buddhism was introduced in the US at the end of the 19th century during the World Parliament of Religions (1893). It only grew significantly after World War 2 and the US occupation of Japan, with the reverse-current of Japanese culture flowing into the US. A successful Nipponization in the US is seen in the rise of Zen Buddhism and its centres. To legitimize themselves as Buddhist teachers and masters, US Zen Buddhists wore impressive Japanese Zen robes, acted in Japanese

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[158] Bagchi, "Mental Hygiene and the Hindu doctrine of relaxation." *Mental Hygiene* 20 1936:424-440.
[159] On "Suzuki Zen," see SD 60.1c (8.4).
[160] On Buddhism in Meiji Japan, see SD 60.1c (10.2.2).

ways, studied and taught Zen teachings. Zen was Americanized: it must appeal to the consumer, the American way.[161]

Ironically, what appeals to the white American and the well Americanized immigrant is the uniqueness of Zen. For our purposes, this uniqueness of Zen is well documented in Issho Fujita's "Zazen is not the same as meditation" (2002). According to Fujita, Dōgen (1200-1253), founder of the Sōtō Zen school, *zazen*[162] is not how we (non-Zennists) generally think of meditation, but is taught only in Zen: it is a "unique approach" to Buddhism.

To Dōgen, *zazen* is first and foremost "a holistic posture, not a state of mind." One of the terms he used to describe *zazen* is *gotsu-za*, meaning "sitting immovable like a bold mountain." A related term, adds Fujita, one of great importance is *kekka-fuza*—"full-lotus position" which Dōgen regards as the key to *zazen.*

> For Dogen, on the other hand, the objective of zazen is just to sit in *kekka-fuza* correctly—there is absolutely nothing to add to it. It is *kekka-fuza* plus zero. Kodo Sawaki Roshi, the great Zen master of early 20th century Japan, said, "Just sit zazen, and that's the end of it." In this understanding, zazen goes beyond mind/body dualism; both the body and the mind are simultaneously and completely used up just by the act of sitting in *kekka-fuza*. …
>
> In the *Eihei-koroku* ["Extensive Record" of his formal Dharma talks] Dogen wrote, "In our zazen, it is of primary importance to sit in the correct posture. Next, regulate the breath and calm down."
>
> But after going through this preliminary stage, all instructions given as separate pieces in space and time must be integrated as a whole in the body-mind of the practitioner of zazen. When zazen becomes zazen, *shoshin-taza* is actualized. This means "just (*tan*) sitting (*za*) with correct (*sho*) bodily (*shin*) posture, with the "*taza*" emphasizing the quality of being whole and one in time and space. The "whole" of zazen must be integrated as "one" sitting. In other words, zazen must become "Zazen, Whole and One."
>
> … The practitioner is not engaged in doing many different things in different places in the body by following the various instructions on how to regulate the body. In reality s/he is doing only one thing to continuously aim at the correct sitting posture with the whole body.
>
> (I Fujita, *Insight* spring 2002:37)

This is of course "Zen language"—beyond our normal language and words, even beyond early Buddhism—in order to understand it, we need to learn what the Zen master has to teach us. In order to gain that unique Zen enlightenment, we must be certified by the Zen master. In other words, it is neither some "meditation" nor something to trifle with.

This is the essence of Sōtō Zen, a down-to-earth everyday Zen in its own words. Keeping to its Chinese and Dao roots, Zen presents itself as almost magically <u>logocentric</u>, word-centred, and yet the Zen that we can speak of is *not* Zen. It is beyond words, independent even of the sutras and suttas. It can only come from one who has mastered it. It seems to turn the early Buddhist teaching on self-reliance [4.2.5.2] on its head.

There are, of course, other forms of Zen besides Sōtō Zen (Chinese, *cáodòng zōng*), that is, Rinzi Zen (*línjì zōng*) and Ōbaku Zen (*huángbò zōng*).[163] However, the kind of Zen meditation used in the meditation researches are likely to be that of the Sōtō school.

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[161] On difficulties of defining "Buddhist" in the US, see P N Gregory, "Describing the elephant: Buddhism in America," *Religion and American Culture 11,2* summer 2001:233-263. On Buddhist statistics (2020), https://www.prri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/PRRI-Jul-2021-Religion.pdf.

[162] *Zazen,* Jap 座禅, Chin 坐禪 zuò chán: "sitting meditation," both as n and as vb.

[163] Historically, there are the 5 "houses of Zen," arising during the Tang dynasty (7th-10 cent CE): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Houses_of_Chán. For roots of Chán in China, see SD 40b (5).

3.3.3.4 Zen meditation is considered an "open-monitoring" (OM) meditation,[164] where minding or "noting" skills are used. These monitoring skills are transformed into a state of reflexive awareness with a broad scope of attention and without focusing on one specific object. Where Zen meditation uses OM, it is similar to Mindfulness[KZ 165] in that it is about focusing on the presence of mind. However, while Mindfulness[KZ] focuses on a specific object, Zen meditation involves a general awareness.

Unlike lovingkindness or compassion meditation, which focuses on cultivating a positive emotion, or mantra meditation, which involves the recitation of a mantra, Zen meditation involves increased awareness of the ongoing physical and self-referential processes. The Zen meditator attempts to expand their attentional scope to incorporate the flow of perceptions, thoughts, emotions, and subjective awareness.

Zen meditation often involves keeping the eyes half-open, which is different from most other forms of meditation that encourage closing the eyes. During Zen meditation, practitioners also dismiss any thoughts that arise, and essentially try to think about nothing. Over time, they learn how to keep their minds from wandering and may even be able to tap into their unconscious minds[166] [4.4.8.3]. Often, the goal is to become more aware of preconceived notions and gain insight into oneself.

3.3.3.5 Researchers have been quite curious about whether Zen meditation, or any meditation, for that matter, will allow meditators to access their <u>unconscious minds</u>. Early Buddhism teaches that the conscious mind can only focus on one thing at a time—like when we are reading this now, or when we are learning to play a difficult piece of beautiful music.

Some experts think that the unconscious mind is profoundly vast or deep. Many researchers believe that knowing how to access unconscious processes could foster greater creativity and help us become more aware of what we need to do to reach our goals, or to remain mentally healthy.

A 2012 study conducted by Madelijn **Strick**, Tirza H J **van Noorden**, Rients R **Ritskes**, Jan R **de Ruiter**, & Ap **Dijksterhuis** conducted 2 experiments. In the first, they examined whether Zen meditation helped meditators <u>better access their unconscious minds</u>. All of the participants were experienced Zen meditators. One group was asked to meditate for 20 minutes. The other group was asked to read magazines. Then, all of the participants were seated in cubicles with a computer.

They were instructed to link three words presented on the screen with a fourth, associated word. They also were asked to type the answer as fast as possible. The individuals who meditated prior to the test were able to complete the task faster, which demonstrated that they had better access to their unconscious minds.

In the second experiment, one group was again asked to meditate for 20 minutes while the control group was simply told to relax. Then, all the volunteers were asked 20 questions, each with three or four correct answers. For example, they may be asked to name one of the four seasons. However, just before seeing the question on the computer screen, a potential answer such as "Spring" was flashed for 16 milliseconds.

On average, the meditation group gave 6.82 answers that matched <u>the subliminal words</u>. The control group only matched an average of 4.93 words. The researchers concluded that the meditators were better able to access what the brain paid attention to than the non-meditators. The study authors report "Zen meditation" might be able to provide better insight into what's going on in the background of the brain. If Zen meditation allows us to better understand how we are feeling, why

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[164] On "opening monitoring" (OM) meditation, see SD 56.22 (0.3.4.1).

[165] This is Kabat-Zinn "Mindfulness" practice: SD 60.1e (1 + passim).

[166] In Vipassana practice, the watching or experiencing of the "unconscious," includes the watching of "material clusters": SD 60.1b (12.2.1).

we make certain decisions, and how we are influenced by our environment, this could have a big impact on our life.[167]

3.3.4 Meditation studies and related areas

3.3.4.1 Adam Burke (2012), from the Institute of Holistic Health Studies, San Francisco State University, reports on a meditation study where 247 college students[168] learned 2 open observing meditation techniques (Vipassana (Mindfulness) and Zen) and 2 focused attention techniques (Mantra and Qigong Visualization), practising one method per week over the course lasting 6 weeks. At the end of the study, they were asked to rank the meditation practices in order of personal preference. Significantly more participants ranked Vipassana (mindfulness) and Mantra meditation as higher than Zen and Qigong Visualization.[169]

Meditation studies, such as the above, need further "internal" analysis on how each of the 4 meditation methods were taught, by whom (their qualification, experience, etc), data regarding the participants (their previous experience of meditation, religious background, psychological state, etc). Even then, such studies, especially when they are one-off, are often notoriously inaccurate for various reasons [4.1.1]. A more useful approach would be, for example, a series of such studies, after which a comparative study of them is carefully made. Such a project would understandably be costly and time-consuming.

Both Vipassana meditation and Mantra meditation are historically from the ancient Indian contemplative traditions. While **Vipassana** is a well known modern Buddhist meditation technique[170] and taught in the US by an experienced White teacher from the Spirit Rock Meditation Center, California, **Mantra meditation** is a Hindu meditation taught by a teacher from the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre, Los Angeles.

3.3.4.2 Both Vipassana and Zen are "**open monitoring**" (OM) types of meditation.[171] Simply, we keep the mind distraction-free and focus on a mind-object. In Vipassana practice, the "mind-object" (*dhamma*) is whatever arises in the mind, whether a distraction (a sound, a sensation, a thought, etc) or even a pleasant mental state, we simply "note" it as it is, say, as "seeing," "sound," "thinking," or "pain," letting it arise and pass away.

Beginner Zen meditations are mostly OM methods, taken from early Buddhist methods or something similar. The more experienced Zen meditators are those who may be given koans.

> Practitioners use kōan as the focus of meditation in order to transcend dualistic thinking and promote enlightenment experiences. Generally kōan [sic] take the shape of a short episode from Zen literature, depicting an encounter between a master and disciple or a traditional account of an important event in Zen history. Although commonly thought of as puzzles, kōan are not intended to elicit rational responses. Rather, they represent challenges to discursive and rational thought.
>
> (H J Baroni, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism,* 2002: Koan)

Zen koan practice, especially with a teacher (*sensei*) may be said to be highly intellectualized ritual dialogue, where teacher and pupil work to gain some kind of Zen emptiness of words. Both these

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[167] M Strick, T H J van Noorden, R R Ritskes, J R de Ruiter, & Ap Dijksterhuis, "Zen meditation and access to information in the unconscious." *Consciousness and Cognition* 21, 2012:1476-1481.

[168] The participants were a convenience sample of self-selected undergraduate students enrolled in a semester-length university course on meditation and imagery.

[169] A Burke, "Comparing individual preferences for four meditations techniques: Zen, Vipassana (Mindfulness), Qigong, and Mantra," *Explore* 3,4 Jul/Aug 2012:237-242.

[170] On Vipassana meditation, see SD 60b (2.3 f).

[171] Further on "open monitoring," see SD 56.22 (0.3.4.1).

methods—Zen meditation and Zen dialogue—are rooted in traditional Chinese Daoism. The basic idea is to let all things be and remain solid and stable "like a mountain" [3.3.3.2]. To be able to habituate such a response, we need to be well trained in Zen theory and practice. This is where the practice is no more "open monitoring."

3.3.4.3 Qigong (氣功, simplified 气功 *qìgōng*) was developed in China thousands of years ago as part of traditional Chinese medicine. It involves using exercises to optimize energy within the body, mind, and spirit, with the goal of improving and maintaining health and well-being, a system of co-ordinated body-posture and movement, breathing, and meditation is used for the purposes of health, spirituality, and martial-arts training.[172]

Both Qigong and Mantra Meditation are "focused attention" (FA) methods. In both methods both body position and movements are ritually performed with mental focus. In Mantra Meditation, the body assumes a sitting posture (*āsana*) with proper gestures (*mudra*) to accompany the mantra that is repeated a certain number of times in a certain way. The mind, meantime, visualizes the deity or some image. The whole process is practised until the meditator becomes a virtuoso "performer," that is, *becomes* the performance itself. At the end of the ritual, the meditator must return to his "original" human form. The practice is usually associated with some "devotional" exercise to worship some deity or sacred figure—a practice very different from Vipassana.

3.3.4.4 In significant ways, the Zen mind of "**sitting like a mountain**" is deeply ingrained in Japanese culture. Once in Malaysia, when I was still a monk, a Japanese executive named Takahashi and his family came to my temple to perform memorial rites for his late mother who had died in Japan. While I recited the Pali chants for the occasion (lasting about 45 minutes), the whole family sat virtually motionless throughout the session. Only at the very end of the recitation, they "came out" of their amazing mountain-like sitting with only a few Japanese words of relief. This "mountain-like sitting" is an example of how a religious practice can be acculturated, so that one can naturally get into on account of childhood and cultural conditioning.

The fact that **Zen meditation** was not a highly preferred meditation technique amongst the students of the meditation study [3.3.4.5] is not surprising, especially considering that Zen master Fujita has explained that "Zen is not the same as meditation" [3.3.3.2]. Clearly, we need to be properly trained in Zen teachings, rituals and meditation before we can really "do" Zen. Zen, as one of the most loquacious and verbose of Buddhist traditions, can only be properly practised by an intellectual person, or at least one who has a good level of schooling. The college students of the meditation study in Burke's report [3.3.4.2] were clearly not Zen practitioners, despite their understandably high intellectual level. Zen has conscripted language as its handmaiden.[173]

3.3.4.5 In 2018, **Marco Schlosser** (University College London, Division of Psychiatry) and a team of researchers reported on meditation studies done at Witten/Herdecke University (Germany) and the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia) "to report the prevalence of particularly unpleasant meditation-related experiences in a large international sample of regular meditators, and to explore the association of these experiences with demographic characteristics, meditation practice, repetitive negative thinking, mindfulness, and self-compassion."[174]

Using a cross-sectional online survey, 1,232 regular meditators with at least two months of meditation experience (mean age = 44.8 years, 53.6% female) responded to one question about particularly unpleasant meditation-related experiences. A total of 315 participants reported having had *par-*

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[172] Noel Plaugher, Standing Qigong for Health and Martial Arts, Zhan Zhuang. Ebooks Corporation, 2015.

[173] See eg D S Wright, "Rethinking transcendence: The role of language in Zen experience," *Philosophy East & West* 42,1 Jan 1992:113-138.

[174] M Schlosser, T Sparby, S Vörös, R Jones, N L Marchant, "Unpleasant meditation-related experiences in regular meditators: Prevalence, predictors, and conceptual considerations." *Plos ONE* 14,5 e0216643 2019. [PlosOne] 8 Nov 2023.

ticularly unpleasant meditation-related experiences, which they thought may have been caused by their meditation practice.

Participants answered the following question: "Have you ever had any particularly unpleasant experiences (eg, anxiety, fear, distorted emotions or thoughts, altered sense of self or the world), which you think may have been caused by your meditation practice?" Meditators also reported how long they had been practising meditation and the frequency of practice, whether they had attended a meditation retreat at any point in their life and what form of meditation they practised (attentional, constructive, or deconstructive).[175] They also completed measures of repetitive negative thinking and self-compassion.

The report concludes with saying that of the 1,232 participants,

• 26% of the participants said that they had encountered particularly *unpleasant* meditation-related experiences.
• 29% of the <u>male</u> participants experienced an unpleasant experience; 23% of female participants did so.
• 31% of those who did *not* have <u>a religious belief</u> had a particularly unpleasant experience, compared to 22% of those who *had* a religious belief.
• more people, 29%, who practised <u>only deconstructive types</u> of meditation reported a particularly unpleasant experience, compared to 20.3% who only engaged in other meditation types.
• 29% of those who had been on <u>a meditation retreat</u> (at any point in life) had a particularly unpleasant experience, compared with 19.6%, who had never been on a retreat.

From Schlosser's report, we may conclude that most research on meditation has focused on its benefits. The range of meditative experiences studied by scientists needs to be expanded. Yet, it is important at this point not to draw premature conclusions about the potential negative effects of meditation. Longitudinal studies will help to learn when, for whom, and under what circumstances these unpleasant experiences arise, whether they can have long-term effects, and how they can be corrected or prevented. This future research could inform clinical guidelines, mindfulness manuals, and meditation teacher training.

"We propose that a constructive interdisciplinary discussion of these topics would advance the field and help construct a unified theoretical framework that would do justice to the plurality of traditional and scientific approaches." (Schlosser 2019:14)

It must be stressed that Buddhist meditation teachers, as a rule, only warn against "unpleasant" effects of meditation when they are <u>harmful</u> or seen as likely to be so. Often, an unpleasant meditation will be examined in its proper context, and the meditator will be advised on remedial steps or way of improving the person's meditation. This is, in fact, a key purpose of **spiritual friendship** in Buddhist meditation.

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[175] For comprehensive defs & discussion: C J Dahl, A Lutz, R J Davidson, "Reconstructing and deconstructing the self: cognitive mechanisms in meditation practice," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 19,9 2015:515-523.

4 Discoveries in modern consciousness studies

4.1 PIONEER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENTS

4.1.1 Study themes and trends

4.1.1.1 "Consciousness studies" is a broad field covering researches in modern psychology which we have covered in previous SD 60 volumes, that is, its sociohistorical aspects (SD 60.1ab), its evolutionary aspects (SD 60.1d), its epistemological aspects (in terms of Abhidhamma) (SD 60.1e); leading up to a psychopathology of meditation (SD 60.1e), dealing with difficulties arising in meditation (SD 60.1f).

To better understand the difficulties that meditators face, we need to know how early Buddhism views the mind and health, and how modern psychology has studied and researched into consciousness, especially in **meditation**. Modern studies and researches into meditation have mostly been of poor quality. Most of the studies are methodologically flawed, with an insufficient number of cases, lack of standardized diagnostic procedures and are limited to non-psychiatric populations.[176]

A common feature in such studies of the practice of mindfulness or meditation was that of "**psychological well-being**." In a random sample studies mentioned below, we see the same feature: a negative effect of meditation was highlighted and those affected identified. Tests and treatments were done on them, and the results were measured or analysed.

Smith et al (1995)[177] studied 36 undergraduate volunteers, and found that meditation had a positive effect as part of a "**happiness enhancement program**."

Miller et al (1995)[178] reports a 3-year study with 22 subjects showed positive effects on people diagnosed with <u>anxiety disorders</u>, using a meditation-based stress reduction intervention.

Teasdale et al (1995)[179] found that mindfulness meditation used for stress reduction based on the skills of **attentional control** achieved positive effects for maintenance and relapse prevention of depression.

4.1.1.2 Kutz, Borysenko & Benson (1985)[180] and Kutz, Leserman, et al (1985)[181] studied the effects of meditation on 20 patients diagnosed with narcissistic or borderline personality disorder (BPD), anxiety and obsessional neurosis: 50% of them showed improved tension reduction, and tolerance of stress; depression, anger, guilt, self-blame and self-esteem were all helped, and 65% greatly improved on therapists' estimate of insight and psychological mindedness.

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[176] Atkinson et al, *Hilgard's Intro to Psychology,* San Diego, 12th ed 1996; Nolen-Hoeksema et al, Boston, 16th ed, 2014.

[177] Smith, Compton & West, "Meditation as an adjunct to a happiness enhancement program," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 51 1995:269-273.

[178] Miller, Fletcher & Kabat-Zinn, "Three years follow-up and clinical implications of a mindfulness meditation-based stress reduction intervention in the treatment of anxiety disorders," *General Hospital Psychiatry* 17,3 1996:192-200.

[179] Teasdale, Segal & Williams, "How does cognitive therapy prevent depressive relapse and why should attentional control (mindfulness) training help?" *Behaviour Research Therapy* 33 1995:25-39.

[180] Kutz, Borysenko & Benson, "Meditation and psychotherapy: a rationale for the integration of dynamic psychotherapy, the relaxation response and mindfulness meditation," *American J of Psychiatry* 142, 1985:1-8.

[181] Kutz, Leserman, Dorrington, Morrison, Borysenko & Benson, "Meditation as an adjunct to psychotherapy, an outcome study," *Psychotherapy Psychosomatics* 43, 1985:209-218.

In a study of alcohol-dependent patients, using an "attention placebo group" which consisted of a group practising bibliotherapy,[182] Benson (1975)[183] suggested that **relaxation training**, whether it was meditation, progressive relaxation, or attention placebo, had a positive effect compared with normal placebo. However, in two studies (Holmes, 1985; Lazarus & Mayne, 1990),[184] there were no significant differences between three different relaxation processes used.

4.1.1.3 The pioneers of meditation psychology, after putting together some coherent hypotheses behind their understanding of meditation had to put them to the test to confirm them as viable meditation-based theories. Their studies and researches into meditation were part of a larger scheme of things: to understand how the human mind works and the nature of consciousness.

We see many such studies and experiments based on various ideas they had regarding meditation. We can see from the above samples of themes of their studies, they were clearly pioneers struggling to get an open window into their special field of interest. Ideally, they would run a series of such experiments with a large selection of volunteers or subjects.

In academia, the more fashionable the field, the easier the money is to come by. In terms of payment, in the US, course credit would be offered to students for taking part at no cost to the researcher. This was a problem for the field, as the typical participant in psychological studies was not representative of humanity more widely, meaning that we have a body of work that claimed: "People do this," when the most they can actually say is "*We* students did this." We should examine what are the discussion sections of these papers saying? How are they critiquing their own work and what directions do they want the field to go in?

Despite such challenges and shortcomings, these research scientists managed to learn something regarding meditation from their studies and experiments. From their reports, we (especially the outsiders), with some interest in psychology, would also benefit from such papers. In a useful way, this is what I am trying to do here: to study and compare a number of learned papers and reports that are relevant to the themes of this SD 60 series, and put them into layperson language for some understanding of modern meditation studies and its vicissitudes.

4.1.2 Mind the hype

4.1.2.1 Modern education has the great advantage of continuity through multimedia records of past studies, so that the following generations of scholars and students are well informed of the field, and could build on these past achievements, even learn from past mistakes or difficulties, and work around them. By the first quarter of the 21st century, a group of meditation researchers led by **Nicholas T Van Dam** (Dept of Psychiatry, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, NY) were able to prepare a cautionary paper, "Mind the Hype" (2018).[185]

The abstract of the 2018 paper reads:

> During the past two decades [the early 2000's], mindfulness meditation has gone from being a fringe topic of scientific investigation to being an occasional replacement for psycho-

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[182] **Bibliotherapy** (also called book therapy, reading therapy, poetry therapy or therapeutic storytelling) is a creative arts therapy that involves storytelling or the reading of specific texts. It uses an individual's relationship to the content and context of books and poetry and other written words as therapy. Bibliotherapy partially overlaps with, and is often combined with, writing therapy. Two popular books used in bibliotherapy are *The* D Burns, *Feeling Good: the new mood therapy* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2004) for cognitive therapy, and P M Lewinson et al, *Control Your Depression* (Simon & Schuster, 1986) for behavioural therapy. [Types]

[183] Benson, *The relaxation response*, NY: Morrow, 1975.

[184] Holmes, "To meditate or rest? The answer is rest," *American Psychologist* 40,6 1985:725-731. Lazarus & Mayne, "Relaxation: Some limitations, side effects and proposed solutions," *Psychotherapy* 27 1990:261-266.

[185] Van Dam et al, "Mind the Hype: A critical evaluation and prescriptive agenda for research on mindfulness and meditation" (*Perspectives on Psychological Sciences* 13,1 2018:36-61.

therapy, tool of corporate well-being, widely implemented educational practice, and "key to building more resilient soldiers." Yet the mindfulness movement and empirical evidence supporting it have not gone without criticism. Misinformation and poor methodology associated with past studies of mindfulness may lead public consumers to be harmed, misled, and disappointed.

Addressing such concerns, the present article [Van Dam et al 2018] discusses the difficulties of defining mindfulness, delineates the proper scope of research into mindfulness practices, and explicates crucial methodological issues for interpreting results from investigations of mindfulness.

For doing so, the authors draw upon their diverse areas of expertise to review the present state of mindfulness research, comprehensively summarizing what we do and do not know, while providing a prescriptive agenda for Contemplative Science, with a particular focus on assessment, mindfulness training, possible adverse effects, and intersection with brain imaging.

Our goals are to inform interested scientists, the news media, and the public, in order to minimize harm, curb poor research practices, and staunch the flow of misinformation about the benefits, costs, and future prospects of mindfulness meditation.

(Van Dam et al, "Mind the hype," *Perspectives in Psychological Science* 13,1 2018:36)

4.1.2.2 Van Dam et al (2018:21) concludes by stating that "much work should go toward improving the rigor of methods used, along with the accuracy of news-media publicity and eliminating public misunderstandings caused by past undue 'Mindfulness Hype'." They then list several of these fronts as follows (here summarized):

(1) The various meanings of "mindfulness" should be clarified.

(2) Future mindfulness studies should apply lessons learned from the ongoing "replication crisis" (the possibility of repeating the practice or phenomenon). For example, pre-registered experiments[186] and Open-Science replications[187] of mindfulness are desirable; neither focusing on popular topics of psychoneural investigations nor resorting to questionable practices.[188]

(3) Future clinical applications of mindfulness-based interventions should have more uniformity and better control [Van Dam et al 2018: Table 3], especially where definitive answers have yet to be found. Researchers should clearly lay out their limits and limitations in terms of clinical practice. They should be mindful of and address the potential adverse effects stemming from mindfulness practices for public benefit.

(4) New and advanced neuroimaging methods and findings, when used, must be reported with all due modesty. Such technologies should be properly vetted in view of the challenges that still remain to be surmounted by the Contemplative Neuroscience community.

4.1.2.3 Building on the suggestions made by Van Dam et al (2018), **Richard J Davidson & Cortland J Dahl** (both of the Center for Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin-Madison), in their paper,

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[186] Pre-registration is the practice of deciding the research and analysis plan prior to starting our study and sharing it publicly, like submitting it to a repository or registry. Optionally, before conducting a scientific investigation, we can submit our plans for peer review in a journal.

[187] "Open Science" and "replication crisis" are concerns about a crisis of mass irreplaceability across scientific fields ("the replication crisis") that have stimulated a movement for open science, encouraging or even requiring researchers to publish their raw data and analysis code. Replication studies are broadly classified as: exact or direct replications—direct replication is the repetition of an experimental procedure to the exact degree as possible. Conceptual replication is when research is conducted by using different methods to repeat the original study.

[188] S Coronado-Montoya et al, "Reporting of positive results in randomized controlled trials of mindfulness-based mental health interventions," *PLOS One* 2016.

"Outstanding challenges in scientific research on mindfulness and meditation" (2018),[189] make further 5 key points, thus:

(1) Many of the key methodological issues raised by Van Dam et al. are not specific to research on mindfulness.

(2) Contemplative practices are varied, and the landscape of modern scientific research has evolved to focus almost exclusively on one or two types of practice to the exclusion of other forms of practice that are potentially highly impactful.

(3) Mindfulness and related contemplative practices were not originally developed to treat disease.

(4) Key issues of duration, intensity, and spacing of practice and the extent to which formal meditation practice is required or whether practice can be piggybacked onto other non-cognitively demanding activities of daily living (eg, commuting) remain as among the most important practical questions for disseminating these practices more widely, yet have received scant serious research attention.

(5) The use of mobile technology in both disseminating contemplative training and in assessing its impact is going to be required to solve some of the key methodological challenges in this area including standardizing training across sites and addressing individual differences (which will require very large-N[190] studies).[191]

> In conclusion, the critical evaluation of this large group of scholars who are coauthors of the Van Dam et al [2018] article is a much-needed corrective to some of the less rigorous trends in contemplative science. As we note in this commentary, while Van Dam et al touch on many important themes, there are many more that also deserve emphasis in future research in this area. We look forward to the next generation of research on contemplative interventions. These interventions will play an increasingly important role in many sectors of society that are coming to appreciate the importance of regarding well-being as a skill that can be cultivated.   (Davidson & Dahl, 2018:4)

4.2 DEVELOPMENTS IN CONSCIOUSNESS THEORIES

4.2.1 Personal construct theory

4.2.1.1 A common goal in psychotherapy is the cultivation of greater self-awareness. This is often used as the first step in freeing oneself from troubling symptoms, and as the basis of behavioural monitoring and feedback, cognitive diaries and psychoanalysis of transference, dreams and free association—and in personal construct therapy.

Personal construct psychology was developed in the 1950s by George Kelly (1905-1967), an American psychologist, therapist, educator and personality theorist. He was considered the father of cognitive clinical psychology and is best known for his theory of personality called *personal construct psychology.* In *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (London: Routledge, 2 vols, 1955, 1991), Kelly explains his philosophical theory called "constructive alternativism," according to which every individual has a choice of various options of giving meaning to events, or constructing reality.

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[189] Davidson & Dahl (pre-publication 2017), "Outstanding challenges in scientific research on mindfulness and meditation," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 13,1 2018:62-65. It cites Van Dam et all without any date (pre-publication copy) as "this issue" of the Journal. The confusion is around early publication online before being gathered into an issue. The convention is to use the later, issue-based, date even though, in principle, there will have been no changes to the text between the first (pre-publication article) and the issue-based publication.

[190] "Very large N" = studies with very large number of participants.

[191] Davidson & Dahl, "Outstanding challenges … ," 2017:2.

The essence of the personal construct approach is to help individuals test the usefulness and validity of their constructs and to revise and elaborate them as necessary to enhance their positive interpretations of and interactions with the world.[192]

Personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955),[193] popular in Britain, is sometimes used in meditative concentration techniques. Such techniques are seen as deliberately working with "constriction,"[194] where the perceptual field is reduced to manageable elements for reorganizing and managing the construct system (basically a combination of our self-view and world-view). Mindfulness techniques can also be seen as "dilation,"[195] where we broaden the perceptual field to include more elements for the sake of a greater control of our construct system (Delmonte, 1987).[196] Such a use of meditation helps us grow out of our mental or conceptual limitations, a process seen as resolving neuroticism and promoting personal insight and creativity (Craven, 1989; Greguire, 1990).[197]

4.2.1.2 The self-detachment experienced in meditation can be understood in relation to the split described by Freud (1930)[198] between the *experiencing* ego and the *observing* ego. With closer study of this pair of selves, they may be compared to the modern Buddhist dichotomy of "the doer" and "the knower," which are simply terms for situations often addressed by traditional meditation teachers warning meditators of the workings of the conative mind, the karmic will, which is basically lust (*kāma*) or craving (*taṇhā*), especially sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*). This primal or latent lust lurks as the will-to-be (*asmi,māna*)[199] and will-to-have (*mamaṅ,kāra*) related to the 5 sense-based pleasures (*kāma,guṇa*) rooted in seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, unified in the sexual act and mental pleasure.[200] [4.1.2.3]

Every unawakened meditator will be confronted by some form of **lustful desire** (*kāma-c,chanda*), which ranges from a simple need for some comfort to an instinctive drive for sexual pleasure. This is where the body takes over as *the* doer, demanding sensual satisfaction: to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, and to touch. The self here is **the doer**, in the sense of driving us to want to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, and to touch for even a moment's pleasure, but it never ends there. Hence, lust is regarded as the 1st of the 5 hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇā*).[201]

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[192] APA Dict of Psychology 2nd ed 2015. Fransella & Dalton, *Personal Construct Counselling in Action*, 2nd ed, London, 2000; Boeree, *Personality Theories*, 2006.

[193] Fay Fransella, *George Kelly,* London: Sage, 1995. C S Peyser, "Kelly, George A," in Corsini's *Ency of Psychology,* 2nd ed,1994 4:89 f. Robert A Neimeyer, "Kelly. George Alexander," in Kazinsky's *Ency of Psychology* 2000 4:439-441.

[194] "When a person moves in the direction of **constriction** he tends to limit his interests, he deals with one issue at a time, he does not accept potential relationships between widely varying events, he beats out the path of his daily routine in smaller and smaller circles, and he insists that his therapist stick to a sharply delimited version of his problem." (Kelly *The Psychology of Personal Construct,* [1955] 1992 1:352)

[195] "When a person moves in the direction of **dilation** he jumps around more from topic to topic, he lumps his childhood with his future, he sees vast ranges of events as possibly related, he participates in a wider variety of activities, and, if he is a client undergoing psychotherapy, he tends to see everything that happens to him as potentially related to his problem." (Kelly, 1:352)

[196] DelMonte, "Constructivist view of meditation," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 41,2 1987: 286-298.

[197] Craven, "Meditation and psychotherapy," *Canadian J of Psychiatry* 34 1989:648-653. Grequire, "Therapy with the person who meditates: Diagnosis and treatment strategies," *Transactional Analysis J* 20,11 1990:60-76.

[198] Freud, "Civilisation and its discontents," in *Complete Psychological Works*, *Standard Edition*, vol 21, London: Hogarth Press, 1930.

[199] SD 19.2a (6.3) 5; SD 31.13 (2); as latent tendency (*anusaya*), see SD 19.11 (1.2) esp (1.5.3).

[200] *Saṅkhāra,* SD 17.6 (8.4); SD 15.1 (1.5).

[201] The 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) are (1) sensual desire, (2) ill will, (3) restlessness and worry, (4) sloth and torpor, and (5) doubt: *Nīvaraṇa*, SD 32.1.

On a deeper and darker level, the doer lurks as **sensual lust** (*kāma,raga*),[202] one of the 10 fetters (*saṁyojana*)[203] that keeps us chained to this samsaric cycle—in psychological terms, this is **the will-to-live**. While the 5 hindrances induce us to slave for our body, the 10 fetters drive us on as veritable hamsters to gleefully run the samsaric wheel as if this is all there is to life. When these drives are totally self-driven and self-satisfying, it is called **sex**, and becomes the most selfish of sentient acts.[204]

The world thrives on sex; sex thrives on sense-pleasures; hence, sense-pleasures holds us back in the world, and they are regarded as contradicting spiritual liberation. The problem with sexual pleasure is that it is usually addictive (and is functionally meant to be so, that is to keep life going and the species evolving). Apparently, the Buddha once seems to hint that sensual pleasure (*kāma*) —including the sexual act in its moral context—does not hinder us from reaching the path as a streamwinner.

4.2.2 Streamwinners "enjoying sensual pleasures"

4.2.2.1 Lay Buddhists desiring to live a full and happy lay life should understand that **the 3rd precept** is about respect for our bodies (self and others). It means that we should keep it healthy with proper and moderate eating, good care and habits, and sufficient leisure, exercise and rest. The 3rd precept is also about "sexual freedom," in the sense that we should respect a "no" just as we rejoice in a "yes" regarding sex with our spouse or partner.

Informed lay Buddhists, especially those who meditate, understand that **sexual pleasure** is really a mental experience. In other words, wholesome love between partners should be expressed through the body as joyful gestures of mutual appreciation of being. The early saints are said to live "in concord, with mutual joy, without disputing, mixing like milk and water, seeing each other with kindly eyes" and that they constantly cultivate lovingkindness through *bodily action, speech and thought*.[205] We should emulate these joyful habits in our own lay lives so that we live fully and happily.

Sexuality is the gateway to samsara. It is time-consuming; it also consumes us; and it keeps us in this cyclic world. It also brings beings into samsara: we are thus responsible for them, our children. Our beholden tasks are to give them wholesome love and joyful space so that they grow well as humans, to go on to contribute well in terms of truth and beauty to others and society in time. In short, sexuality is our karmic door, and we should guard it with wholesome love, respect and restraint.[206]

4.2.2.2 The Buddha's first 60 disciples were all monks who are arhats, celibate and awakened. As the Buddha's teaching spread, the Buddhist community of meditators also include nuns, laymen and laywomen. As evident from **the Dhammika Sutta** (Sn 2.14), a very early sutta, and **the (Tad-ah) Uposatha Sutta** (A 3.70), the Buddha recommends that even the laity keep rules of celibacy (*brahma,cariya*),[207] moderation of food (*bhojane mattaññuta*)[208] and a simple bed (for watchfulness, *jāgariyā'nuyoga*),[209] over and above the regular 5 precepts[210] [5.1.1.1]

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[202] SD 6.11 (2).

[203] The 10 fetters (*dasa saṁyojana*) are (1) self-identity view, (2) doubt, (3) attachment to ritual and vows, (4) sensual lust, (5) aversion, (6) lust for form existence, (7) lust for formless existence, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness and (10) ignorance: SD 10.16 (1.6.6-8); SD 11.1 (5.1.4); SD 3.3 (2); SD 56.1 (4.4).

[204] See **Sexuality**, SD 31.7.

[205] **Dhamma,cetiya S** (M 89,11), SD 64.10; **(Anuruddha) Upakkilesa S** (M 128,11), SD 5.18.

[206] See **Sexuality**, SD 31.7.

[207] On celibacy, SD 29.6a (5.3.2).

[208] On moderate eating: **Kakacûpama S** (M 21,7.2), SD 38.1; **Bhaddāli S** (M 65,2), SD 56.2; **Mahā Assa,pura S** (M 39,9), SD 10.13; **Kīṭa,giri S** (M 70,4), SD 11.1; **Āma,gandha S** (Sn 2.2), SD 4.24 (3.4.1); SD 32.2 (5.1); SD 37.13 (1.2).

[209] On watchfulness, see **Jāgara S** (S 1.6), SD 54.2f; **Jāgariya S** (It 47), SD 54.2f(5).

[210] **Dhammika S** (Sn 2.14/*376-404/66-70), SD 87.1; **(Tad-ah') Uposatha S**, also called **(Tika) Uposatha S** (A 3.70/1:205-215), SD 4.18.

This moral training is based on **the 8 precepts**,[211] recommended for observance during the full moon and new moon days—hence they are called *uposatha* or "sabbath" (observance-day) precepts.[212] The simple life and moral observance are used as a support for *Dharma learning and meditation*—to emulate the way of the arhats. In other words, this is to expedite the lay meditator's progress towards the path of awakening.

Clearly this approach works wonders, that is, both renunciants and laity successfully attain the noble (*ariya*) state of *streamwinning, once-returning,* and *non-returning*, as evident from **the Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 73). In response to the wanderer Vaccha,gotta's questions on whether there are such saints, the Buddha states that there are, in the noble sangha, *many hundreds* of saints of each of these 6 categories:[213] (1) monk arhats, (2) nun arhats,[214] (3) laymen non-returners, (4) laymen streamwinners,[215] (5) laywomen non-returners, (6) laywomen streamwinners.[216] Similarly, in **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), they Buddha tells Ānanda that there are many lay saints.[217]

4.2.2.3 There are teachings for renunciants (who are celibate), and there are teachings for lay practitioners, who may live the celibate life or live the family life, that is, those "enjoying sensual pleasures" (*kāma,bhogī*). Such lay followers enjoy sensual pleasures guided by the spirit of the 5 precepts, that is with respect for life, happiness, love, truth and mindfulness.

The Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta (M 73) recounts that when the wanderer Vacchagotta asks the Buddha whether there are streamwinners who are laymen and laywomen "enjoying sensual pleasures" (*kāma,bhogī*), the Buddha replies:

> Not just one, Vaccha, nor 100, nor 200, nor 300, nor 400, nor 500, but far more laymen,
>   who are my disciples, householders dressed in white,
>   who enjoy sensual pleasures (*kāma,bhogī*),[218]
>   who are doers of the teaching, followers of instructions,
>   *crossed beyond doubt, become free of uncertainties,*
>   *gained fearless confidence, and independent of others*,[219] dwell in the teaching.
> (M 73,10/1:491), SD 27.4; also SD 54.9 (4.2)

This interesting passage shows that the Buddha's path of training also includes those who live the lay life—including having families and running worldly affairs—in keeping with the 5 precepts and are diligent in overcoming the unwholesome roots of lust and hatred. It is thus clear that the Buddha is neither anti-family nor misogynist.

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[211] On the 8 precepts, see SD 4.18 (2.2).

[212] On the observance day (*uposatha*), see SD 4.18 (1.2).

[213] **M 73**,7-12/1:490 f (SD 27.4).

[214] Note that there is *no* mention of lay arhats (male or female) here. The best known cases of lay arhats are those of (*1*) the youth **Yasa**, who ordains on the same day (Mv 1.7.22 (V 1:17)), SD 11.2(7); and (*2*) the wanderer **Bāhiya**, who dies within days of attaining arhathood, **(Arahatta) Bāhiya S** (U 1.10), SD 33.7; SD 60.1c (6.3.2). Clearly, lay arhats do exist but are rare: see SD 37.4 (4); SD 8.6 (15); SD 4.9 (5.3.5); SD 60.1c (6.2.1.3). On the destiny of a lay arhat, see SD 8.6 (19). On why there is no mention of lay arhats, see SD 8.6 (13-20). That a lay arhat must ordain or die, see SD 39.3 (1.4.5).

[215] Interestingly, **laymen once-returners** and **laywomen once-returners** are not mentioned here. The possible explanations are that either there are very few of them (the more likely possibility) or that this category is not yet added to the list of aryas or noble saints.

[216] M 73,10/1:491), SD 27.4; also SD 54.9 (4.2).

[217] In **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.7), the Buddha mentions over 50 lay non-returners, over 90 lay once-returners, and over 500 lay streamwinners (SD 9).

[218] On the 10 kinds of *kāma,bhogī,* see **Rāsiya Gāmaṇi S** (S 42.12/4:331-337); SD 91.3; **Kāma,bhogī S** (A 10.91/-5:177-182), SD 100.8.

[219] This italicized passage defines a streamwinner and includes the once-returners, too. At this early stage in the Buddha's ministry, it is very likely that these 2 stages have not be differentiated.

4.2.3 Ecstasy and enstasy

4.2.3.1 One of the things that separates <u>the non-returners and arhats</u> on the one side and <u>the streamwinners and the once-returners</u> on the other is **sexuality**, the bridge (*setu*) between the mind and samsara.[220] Our sense-experiences *form* the samsara—the virtual world that we ourselves create —the world of *formations* (*saṅkhāra*). However, as lay-practitioners, even when we indulge in sensual pleasures—but keeping to the 5 precepts—we will be able to attain **streamwinning** (*sotāpatti*).[221] When we cut down on the unwholesome roots (lust, hate and delusion), we then attain **once-return- ing** (*sakad-āgāmi*).[222]

Sexuality is <u>the bridge to samsara</u>, as Ānanda declares in **the (Taṇhā) Bhikkhuṇī Sutta** (A 4.159). Nowhere in the suttas has it been said that sex is "bad" (*akusala*) or "evil" (*pāpa*), but that it is of the nature of being *impermanent, unsatisfactory and nonself*. It is <u>unwholesome</u> when we are caught up running after it, since it will bring us the suffering (unsatisfactoriness) of space-time existence, and will hinder us from progressing spiritually, that is freeing our mind with joy and peace, ultimately bringing us to the death-free beyond space-time, that is, nirvana.

For this reason, the celibate life of a renunciant is the *ideal* path, that is, the best way to free the mind to gain arhathood and nirvana. However, to reach this path, we must gain the momentum to free ourselves from the gravity of sexuality and the senses. This means that we should first under- stand how our senses and the mind work. We will now turn to this topic: how we *know* things, how we *do* things, and how we are *free* from such sense-processes.

4.2.3.2 Sexuality begins as <u>a sense-based experience</u>, and its greatest joy or rapture is fully at- tained when one *loses* oneself—even one's "self"—in the whole process. There is only the sexual experience, no one really feeling it. The thrill lasts only for a brief moment. Then there's the laundry to wash, and we age, it becomes just a memory. Perhaps the fruit of this act of love (it's best as an act of love) mature to be sons and daughters following in our steps.

A sexual experience is only beneficial between proper partners who love and respect one an- other. Although there is always the element of lust (*taṇhā*), when it is mutually experienced between couples who have love and respect for one another it can serve as an experience of <u>impermanence</u> and how the body decays over time. It is when <u>lust</u> predominates that it is *the most selfish* of sentient acts, in the sense that it is a self-centred action, even exploitative and narcissistic [5.3].

4.2.3.3 Lay practitioners who *have enjoyed sensual pleasures*, and who are able to experience deep states of meditative joy, especially dhyanic bliss, will at once notice how dramatically profound dhyanic bliss is compared to sexual ecstasy. Hence, dhyanic bliss is sometimes termed **enstasy** (Greek, *en-stasis,* "standing into or within"): it is a joy that builds up and stays with us for a long time; even a mere memory of it can arouse in us positive mental states.[223]

It would be interesting when the mind sciences are able to study the differences between sensual and sexual *ecstasy* and meditative *enstasy*. Clearly, enstasy is, in a Buddhist sense, a highly refined form of transcorporeal or suprasomatic form of ecstasy—ecstasy beyond the body, transcending sen- sual pleasures. Essentially, it is mental state that transcends all notions of subject and object; hence of time and space.

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[220] Spoken by Ānanda in **(Taṇhā) Bhikkhunī S** (A 4.159,7/2:146), SD 10.14.

[221] On streamwinning, see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3. Kūṭadanta's streamwinning, **Kūṭa,danta S** (D 5,29-30), SD 22.8. No dhyana needed: SD 3.3 (0.3); SD 55.15 (1.3.1.2).

[222] On once-returning, see SD 10.16 (12). Weakening the 3 unwholesome roots: SD 10.16 (12.1.2.1); SD 10.16 (12).

[223] Broadly, **enstasy** is an altered state of consciousness [4.3], esp meditation, that transcends ordinary exper- ience or consciousness, suspending all external (sense-based) awareness, and that is often profoundly and lucidly blissful.

For religious traditions unfamiliar with contemplative discipline or incorporated it late in their history, dhyanic bliss (or even a mild form of it) may appear as being abandoned by all that is familiar (including the God-idea): *the dark night of the soul,* or simply, the dark night [7.4.4]. However for an informed Buddhist, this apparent inner stillness is like "dawn's joyful face beaming through the night,"[224] that is the universal characteristic of **nonself** (*anattā*)**.** In Buddhist practice, dhyanic enstasy is valued as the embodiment of mental calm and clarity that conduces to seeing into true reality, and into the true nature of sense-based ecstasy.[225]

4.2.4 The knower, the doer and free will

4.2.4.1 We have noted that we are but *body* and *mind:* the body is form (*rūpa*) and the mind comprises feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), formations (*saṅkhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These are **the 5 aggregates** (*pañca,khandha*).

If we see the main actor or "the doer" as the aggregate of "mental formations" (*saṅkhāra-k,-khandha*), then, "the knower" is our aggregate of perception (*saññā-k,khandha*), how we know or "recognize" things: this is perceptual knowledge, based on our memories of sense-experiences and our thoughts.[226]

With these, *saṅkhārā,* then, fabricate ideas and construct knowledge, producing conative or conceptual knowledge[227] that fuels our creative drive, "creative" in the literal sense of becoming creatures to the creator that is samsara (herded together as subhuman, human and divine beings). Simply put (for the purpose of understanding their basic functions), we call perception "the knower," and formations "the doer." However, we should also note that *saṅkhārā* also include that which has been done, that is, our **karma** (P *kamma*), which can and does "act back" or *react* on us in all our actions, conscious and unconscious, so long as we are unawakened [5.1.7.2].

Thought-based knowledge is either *conceptual knowledge* (fabricated by *saṅkhārā*), that is, when we initiate an act through greed, hate or delusion or through non-greed, non-hate or non-delusion; or perceptual knowledge (arising from *saññā*) when we recognize a sense-experience, and then evaluate it with our feelings. This latter feeling-based perception is actually a karmic act—involving the aggregate of feeling (*vedanā-k,khandha*)—which makes it effectively conative (or karmic) knowledge.[228]

4.2.4.2 Thus self-detachment mentioned above [4.2.1.2] does not refer to the "detached selves" in the sense of selflessness or nonself. Far from it, it refers to the ego taking over our will, as it were, so that we are bereft of "free will." We are simply conditioned to react sensuously to somatic sense-stimulations and to sensual thoughts. In this sense, we lose our free will, or we simply have not learned to free our will for it to be directed to spiritual growth.**[229]**

4.2.5 Self-views

4.2.5.1 This capacity to rise above the self—or to work and live outside the box called "self"—encourages the motivation, reduction and overcoming of guilt, but also enhances a sense of unity and centredness. On the other hand, to reach this deeper stability, we must first become fundamentally destabilized, even uprooted—we must face our demons before we can cast them out—for

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[224] *Aruṇaṁ nandi,mukhī rattī.* This beautiful metaphor is from the Vinaya: Cv 9.1.1 (3.1), SD 59.2c.

[225] For a contemporary view of ecstasy/enstasy, see P Connolly, "Ecstasy and enstasy: Two sides of the same coin?" *Journal for the Study of Religious Experience* 1,1 2015:61-75. [JSRE]

[226] On perceptual knowledge, see SD 60.1e (8.1.6; 1.8.2).

[227] On *saṅkhārā* as conative knowledge, see SD 60.1e (5.5); as conceptual knowledge, see SD 60.1e (8.1.6; 1.10).

[228] On the overlapping of *saññā* and *saṅkhārā,* see SD 60.1e (11.2.1).

[229] See Free Will and Buddhism, SD 7.7.

which we require some faith and strength (Shapiro, 1992).[230]

Freud, personally unfamiliar with meditation, misinterpreted the "oceanic" meditative experience as a "reaction formation," a defence of omnipotence against infantile helplessness [5.3.2.3]. Even Jung (1936),[231] who was better acquainted with both mystical philosophy and Eastern ways of thinking, was uncertain about the use of meditation. He thought that Western attempts to use such Eastern methods and philosophical doctrines in psychotherapy were blindly groping around in the shadows.

On the other hand, Jung notes, "People will do anything, no matter how absurd, in order to avoid facing their own souls. They will practice Indian Yoga and all its exercises, observe a strict regime of diet, learn theosophy by heart, or mechanically repeat mystic texts from the literature of the whole world—all because they cannot get on with themselves and have not the slightest faith that anything useful could ever come out of their souls. Thus the soul has gradually been turned into a Nazareth from which nothing good can come."[232]

4.2.5.2 Meditation is, of course, meant to be used in a positive way. One good effect of meditation is that we can cultivate an **undifferentiated regressive state**, which, like the mother-child bond, protects us from the fear of separation and desolation. It has been called a "regression in the service of the ego" (Atwood & Maltin, 1991; Shafii, 1973),[233] even in the face of alienation, and when all that seems to matter is our not being dead or disintegrating into non-existence.

This very early "narcissistic" feeling of injury, experienced as a loss of the safety provided by attachments to others, is temporarily offset by an enhanced sense of a tangible sense of self induced by meditation (Bogart, 1991).[234] The Buddhist term for such a state would be *atta,bhava* (literally, "self-state"), "selfhood," or better "a sense of self," a feeling of self-empowerment. In Buddhist training, this is a basis for the key teaching on **self-reliance** (*atta,saraṇa*). [5.1.7.4]

The spiritual safety of the self (that is, the mind) is presence of a pervasive inner **silence** (*tuṇhi,-bhāva*), which symbolizes the absence of distractions, even of mental defilements. Shafii (1973)[235] emphasizes the importance of silence, and conceptualizes meditation as a temporary and controlled regression to the *preverbal* level or "somatosymbiotic phase" of the mother-child relationship. This regression also resolves unresolved themes from the developmental phase in which the individual develops a sense of basic trust and self-confidence.

4.2.5.3 In Buddhist terms, the ultimate goal, the realization that **the self-ego** is illusory, seems irreconcilable with the goals of psychotherapy, which is, rather, to facilitate the development of a unified and stable ego (Bradwejn et al, 1985).[236] But both Buddhist thought and psychoanalytic object relations theory view human growth as a series of developmental stages (Engler, 1984).[237] The ego or self is defined as an internalized image that is constructed out of experience with the object world and which appears to have the qualities of consistency, integrity, and lucidity.

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[230] Shapiro, "Adverse effects of meditation: a preliminary investigation of long-term meditators," *International Journal of Psychosomatics* 39 1992:62-67.

[231] Jung, "Yoga and the West" and "The psychology of Eastern meditation," in *CW 11*. Princeton, NJ, 1936.

[232] Jung, CW 12, par 126 *Psychology and Alchemy*, 1952, 1968:99-101.

[233] Atwood & Maltin, "Putting eastern philosophies into western psychotherapies," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 45,3 1991:368-382. Shafii, "Silence in the service of ego: psychology of meditation," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 54 1973:431-443.

[234] Bogart, "The use of meditation in psychotherapy: A review of the literature," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 45 1991:383-412.

[235] Shafii, "Silence in the service of ego: Psychoanalytic study of meditation," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 54 1973:431-443.

[236] J Bradwejn, M Dowdall & L Iny, "Can East and West meet in psychoanalysis?" Letters to the Editor, *American Journal of Psychiatry* 142,10 1985:1226 f.

[237] Engler, "Therapeutic aims in psychotherapy and meditation: developmental stages in the representation of self." *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 16 1984:25-61.

According to **object relations theory**,[238] the major cause of psychopathology is the inability to establish a cohesive integrated *self*. In contrast, Buddhist psychology states that the deepest psychopathology is the notion of an abiding self or a fixed self-view, that is a "clinging to self-view" (*atta,-vādûpādāna*).[239]

Meditation can help both with getting in touch with oneself, and with letting go of the self, where there is excessive investment in the self. Meditation is thus only helpful to people who have achieved an adequate level of personality organization who *understand and accept change as a wholesome part of personal development*.

Perhaps meditation can offer the possibility of development beyond what most therapies can offer, but proceeds more effectively when certain fundamental ego-based issues, such as self-esteem, livelihood, intimacy and sexuality have been, at least to some extent, resolved (M Finn, 1992).[240] *One has to be somebody before one can be nobody*: only with self-confidence one is able to do without a self-view.

4.2.5.4 "One has to be somebody before one can be nobody"; what does this saying mean? It depends on what our purpose here is. Since our purpose is meditation, it is about *knowing the self, taming the self, freeing the self.* We become *somebody* when we **know**—but we also need to understand—that we have a body and a mind that goes with it: they work together as the 5 aggregates: form (the body), and the rest, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness (constituting the mind).

We need to **tame** the mind because it controls the body (the 5 senses) through craving, running after what it (the mind) feels as pleasant, rejecting what it sees as unpleasant, and ignoring what it sees as neither, not knowing what they are or what it is doing (ignorance). By perceiving what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think in this way, the mind forms ideas and views of its own. This is the consciousness that constructs us what we *see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think*: this is our virtual world.

The tamed mind is like 5 beautiful horses pulling the chariot, taking us right where we want to go on the path of awakening. Keeping to this path and moving forward safely and surely, we reach various beautiful places, representing the stages of our mental freedom and true nobility (*ariya*): streamwinning, once-returning, non-returning and arhathood.

These are not titles we use or status we receive from some authority. Each of these 4 stages are those of spiritual nobility: how we *become* nobly nobody. **Streamwinning** is when we realize we really have no self-identity, and need neither pretend nor doubt to have such a self, that is, a changing body in a changing mind. **Once-returning** is when we are willing and able to see how we are ridden with lust, hate and delusion. By seeing these defilements for what they are, they begin to loosen their hold on us (that is, the mind).

Non-returning refers to when we fully uproot those lust, hate and delusion. When these 3 unwholesome roots are exterminated, we are free from the powers of the 5 senses: our mind is well tamed and happy, ready to move on to the last stage of true nobility. Finally, when we are free from such defilements as *conceit* (even thinking, "I'm a nobody"; they think they are *somebody*)—we don't

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[238] **Object relations theory** is a psychoanalytic theory, originated by the British-based Austrian psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882-1960), the English psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott (1896–1971), the Scottish psychoanalyst W Ronald D Fairbairn (1889–1964), the British-based Hungarian psychiatrist Michael Balint (1896–1970), and others. It holds that a person relates to others not, as Freud held, to satisfy their instincts, but rather to develop themself and to differentiate themself from others. The theory stresses the effects of social relations on a person. It has heavily influenced family therapy. (*Macmillan Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed, 1995; *Oxford Dict of Psychology,* 2000, 2003).

[239] See Mahā,nidāna S (D 15,6), SD 5.17; Sammā Diṭṭhi S (M 9,34), SD 11.14.

[240] M Finn, "Transitional space and Tibetan Buddhism: The object relations theory of meditation," in Finn & Gartner (eds), *Object relations theory and religion: Clinical applications*, Praeger, 1992:109-118.

even think that we are a "streamwinner," a "once-returner," a "nonreturner," or an "arhat." We have awakened to true reality: our mind is free like that of the Buddha.

4.2.6 Is consciousness merely an epiphenomenon?

4.2.6.1 We have spoken of our **body-mind** existence in Dhamma or spiritual language, that is, in the spirit of learning and understanding ourself (that there is no self): only body and mind, and the processes that animate them, that define them (us) as being alive, as living beings. We will now examine as simply as we can what the "body-mind correlates" are in terms of <u>meditation</u>. We are looking deeper into the true nature of what we see as body and mind.

If "the proper study of mankind is man,"[241] it is a paradox worth investigating why consciousness, the state of all that is truly a living human, is only just finding its place in the mind sciences: the body has been, for centuries, well studied, and that knowledge and skills medical science widely used today for public benefit. Psychological science is fast catching up in this millennium of the mind.

4.2.6.2 Historically, we are just emerging from an age when philosophy and science regarded consciousness as an **epiphenomenon**. In the late 19th century, <u>epiphenomenalism</u>[242] was the notion that "mind," "consciousness" and other similar constructs are but the manifestations or by-products of a complex neurological system and are without causal influence.

Epiphenomenalism is the view that mental events are caused by physical events in the brain, but have no effects upon any physical events. Behaviour is caused by muscles that contract upon receiving neural impulses, and neural impulses are generated by input from other neurons or from sense organs.[243]

On the epiphenomenalist view, mental events play no causal role in this process. T H Huxley (1874),[244] who held this view, compared mental events to a steam whistle that contributes nothing to the work of a locomotive. William James (1879), who rejected the view, characterized epiphenomenalists' view that mental events as not affecting the brain activity that produces them "any more than a shadow reacts upon the steps of the traveller whom it accompanies."[245]

4.3 ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

4.3.1 Typical altered states of consciousness

4.3.1.1 An **altered state of consciousness** (ASC),[246] also called "altered state of mind," "altered state of awareness," or "mind alteration," is any condition which is significantly different from a normal waking beta-wave state.[247] What has been considered an "altered state of consciousness"

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[241] From English Enlightenment-era poet, translator and satirist Alexander Pope (1688-1744), "An essay on Man: Epistle II" (1734). https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44900/an-essay-on-man-epistle-ii.

[242] https://plato.stanford.edu/Archives/Win2005/entries/epiphenomenalism/.

[243] William Robinson, "Epiphenomenalism," 1999, rev 2023. 31 July 2023. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epiphenomenalism/.

[244] T H Huxley, "On the hypothesis that animals are automata, and its history" address at the British Assoc, Belfast, Aug 1874; *Nature* 10, 1874:362-366; *Collected Essays* vol 1, London: Macmillan, 1898.

[245] W James, "Are we automata?" *Mind* 4,13 1879:1 (1-22). See W Robinson, 2023.

[246] See: (ed) A **Kazdin**, (APA) *Ency of Psychology,* "Altered states of consciousness," 2000:122-124; A **Revonsuo**, "Altered and exceptional states of consciousness," (Academic*) Ency of Consciousness,* Elsevier, 2009:12-14. M P **Brugnoli**, *Clinical Hypnosis in Pain Therapy and Palliative Care,* Springfield, IL: C C Thomas, 2014:55-59.

[247] A **Kokoszka**, "Altered States of consciousness," Kazdin *Ency of Psych* 1, APA, 2000:122-124; A **Revonsuo**, "Altered and exceptional states of consciousness," (Academic) *Ency of Consciousness,* 2009:9-21; P V **Bundzen**, K G Korotkov & L E Unestahl, "Altered states of consciousness: review of experimental data obtained with a multiple techniques approach," *J Alternative & Complementary Medicine* 8,2 2002:153-165.

has varied over time. By 1892, the term was also used for hypnosis,[248] but then there is no consensus amongst the experts on the definition of hypnosis even today.

In 1904, Max Mailhouse, during a conference,[249] used the term "altered state of consciousness" in relation to epilepsy (for which it is still used today). In academia, the term was used as early as 1966 by Arnold M Ludwig,[250] and brought into common usage from 1969 by Charles Tart.[251] It describes induced changes in one's mental state, almost always temporary. The term, "altered state of consciousness" is today restricted to academic usage.

Due to the imprecise definition of consciousness, it is generally used to refer to a variety of states differentiated from normal waking states. It includes states experienced in not too well understood conditions, such as hypnosis, activity under psychoactive drugs, biofeedback, trance states, as well as mystical ecstasy or union, and meditation, such as samadhi or enstasy [1.2.3 n] in yoga, Zen *satori*, or dhyana (jhāna).

A person in an ASC is not unconscious; in fact, many common experiences may create it, such as sleeping, dreaming, daydreaming, sleep deprivation, euphoria or even panic. ASC is thus a relative state of mental functioning. The mind may be still wandering (such as in a dream) or concentrated and focused (such as in meditation). A thought-free stillness could be experienced from time to time that could take us beyond ASC. Thus, ASC is a state wherein **citta** (the preconscious mind) is still active; beyond or behind this active mind is **mano** (the conscious mind), and below all that, **viññāṇa** ("consciousness" itself, including the unconscious as well as the rebirth consciousness).*[252]*

4.3.1.2 ASCs arise naturally because our feelings and moods change from bad to good and vice versa. They can happen for just a moment or for an extended period, and bring remarkable changes upon us, as happened with the Buddha [4.5.2]. Whether an ASC is real or hallucinatory, the effect on the person is very real, even if it is impermanent. Mundane ASCs tend to pass quickly or easily forgotten. A spiritual ASC—like the 4 sights [4.4.10.2]—pulls the rug from under us and is, as a rule, life-changing at least.

Psychologically, an ASC is any temporary, reversible state of consciousness. An ASC may not arise from usual causes, or the ASC's usual causes have a very powerfully different effect than in normal events. We have, for example, seen a very old man, or a very sick man, or perhaps a corpse, or even a calm monk, but we just let such sights pass, or we quickly rationalize them away.

On the other hand, someone who got drunk may look back with shame or disgust at themself; but most of us would probably be no more than embarrassed with ourselves until the occasions for recidivism compel us to repeat our mistakes, and we may even get used to it. Then, we may no longer recall our ASCs as having any significance, taking it as a "typical" ASC.

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[248] Aberdeen Evening Express, "An Aberdeen Doctor on Hypnotism" [in 3rd col, ¾ down page, adjacent to article spacing rule in 2nd col] 14 Dec 1892. "The faculties of reason and judgement, the elaborate and regulative faculties, in this altered state of consciousness, are obviously dependent on sense perceptions, and vary accordingly as they do."

[249] M Mailhouse, "The Duties of the State with Reference to Epileptics," *Bulletin of State Institutions* [under the Board of Control] vol 7, 1905:83; read at the 4th Annual Meeting of the Assoc for the Study of Epilepsy and the care and treatment of Epileptics, 22 Nov 1904: "that is to say the psyche may take on an independent action entirely foreign to the nature and personality of the epileptic when free from an attack, and this altered state of consciousness may lead to acts more or less harmful to patient or bystander."

[250] A M Ludwig, "Altered states of consciousness (presentation to symposium on Possession States in Primitive People)," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 15,3 Sep 1966:225-234.

[251] C T Tart, *Altered States of Consciousness: A Book of Readings,* NY: Wiley*,* 1969; repr *States of Consciousness.* Backinprint.com, 2001. Tart repr Ludwig's paper (1966:9-22).

[252] On *mano, citta* and *viññāṇa,* see SD 60.1d (1.2.5.5).

4.3.2 Hypnosis as a typical ASC

4.3.2.1 We can actually induce a *typical* ASC, that is, through **hypnosis**. In fact, "hypnosis is the oldest Western conception of a psychotherapy, yet generation after generation forgets and then re-discovers it."[253] Hypnosis is a situation or set of procedures in which a person designated as the hypnotist suggests that another person designated as the patient, client, or subject experience various changes in sensation, perception, cognition, or control over motor behaviour.[254] The hypnotist gives first <u>a hypnotic induction</u> to a subject, telling them to intensely focus on something (such as the hypnotist's voice, a light), relax, and let their eyes close. After the induction, the hypnotist gives more specific <u>suggestions</u> about certain changes in the subject's experience.

The suggestions typically concern changes in how one feels one's own body or one's own actions (eg, feelings of heaviness in one arm, inability to open one's eyes, numbness or painlessness of a part of the body) or changes in sensation, perception, memory, or thinking (eg, seeing or hearing something that is not there, not remembering something one normally remembers, not being able to think straight, or believing uncritically some statement and acting as if it were true).

These 2 phases of *induction* and *suggestion* are what generally happen in hypnosis although in practice they may not be entirely distinct. Some responsive subjects report that hypnotic inductions produce an altered state that is much different from the normal waking consciousness, but most described it as a normal state of focused attention.[255] Anyway, most people are more responsive to suggestion after an induction than they were before.[256]

There is a persisting controversy among hypnosis researchers, that is, whether hypnosis involves an ASC or whether hypnosis is simply a peculiar <u>social</u> situation where subjects behave as expected and play along with the rules just like in any other social situation. This controversy has persisted mainly because there is no consensus on what would count as an ASC.

It is possible that only a small proportion of subjects truly enter an ASC after getting the hypnotic induction. These are very highly hypnotizable people, also called "hypnotic virtuosi," who, following the suggestions of the hypnotist, experience vivid hallucinations in different sensory modalities, followed by amnesia such that they suddenly cannot remember the proceeding. They may also have an altered sense of time, thinking that they were under hypnosis only a few minutes when an hour or longer had passed.

4.3.2.2 On the average, most people are moderately suggestible, whereas a small proportion of people is not suggestible at all and feels no changes in experience, and a similarly small proportion is highly suggestible to hypnosis. Thus, most people, especially the low and moderately hypnotizable, when hypnotized, experience at most only similar things as one is expected to experience with guided mental imagery in a relaxed state. They do not experience any ASC, but only mental imagery, expectations, and playing voluntarily along with the hypnotists' suggestions.

Whether we are suggestible or willing to play along, we make good hypnosis subjects when we need such a therapy. Modern therapists who use hypnosis would generally agree with David Spiegel (American psychiatrist and the Wilson Professor and Associate Chair of Psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine, where he researches into psycho-oncology) when he says:

> … the phenomenon of hypnosis touches on something central in the healing arts: getting the
> patient's full attention, mobilizing an alteration in awareness, sensitizing the patient and

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[253] D Spiegel in his Foreword to (edd) L Brann et al, *The Handbook of Contemporary Clinical Hypnosis,* op cit, 2012: xvii.

[254] J F Kihlstrom, "Hypnosis," *Annual Review of Psychology* 36, 1985:385-418; "Hypnosis: A sesquicentennial essay," *International J of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 40, 1992:301-314.

[255] K M McConkey, "Opinions about hypnosis and self-hypnosis before and after hypnotic testing," *International J of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 34, 1986:311-319.

[256] Hilgard, *Hypnotic susceptibility*, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965.

doctor to the importance of clear and empathic communication and honing therapeutic strategies.

Hypnosis is not a treatment, but rather a mental state that can facilitate a variety of treatment strategies. It is a form of highly focused attention coupled with an ability to dissociate—put outside of conscious awareness—things that would ordinarily be in consciousness. Hypnosis is to consciousness what a telephoto lens is to a camera—what you see you observe in great detail, but you are less aware of the context.

This means a reduction in critical scrutiny and an emphasis on doing rather than thinking about what you are doing. Such a state of mind offers special therapeutic opportunities—the patient is really paying attention. But it also confers special responsibilities on the clinician using it—to assess the problem well, think through therapeutic strategies carefully, evaluate the patient's response, be clear when the hypnotic experience is over and teach the patient how to mobilize and make good use of their own hypnotic abilities.

(David Spiegel, in *The Handbook of Contemporary Clinical Hypnosis,* 2012:xvii)[257]

4.3.3 Sleep and dreams as typical ASCs

4.3.3.1 Altered states of consciousness (ASCs) most commonly occur with **sleep**,[258] especially during the interim between falling asleep or "asleeping" (the hypnogogic) and waking up or "awaking" (the hypnopompic). Technically, such ASCs are hallucinations[259] since they are fabricated by the mind or simulate past events, often from our experience of natural conditions—like seeing a mirage (they are *real* all right but there is really *nothing* there!). How we react to such daily hallucinations is what basically makes us what we are, how we view and live our lives, or at least reflect our current life-events.

Physiologically, these hypnagogic and hypnopompic hallucinations are regarded as intrusions of *rapid eye movement* (REM) sleep imagery into the borderline between wakefulness and sleep. Both of these comprise mostly hallucinatory images with a residual perceptual or bodily awareness: we can know and feel them.

Typically, the hallucinations are visual, from simple geometric forms to objects, faces, animate characters, or even landscapes. Also auditory phenomena are common: noises, sounds, music, or human voices. Other sensory modalities occur, too, such as bodily feelings or tactile sensations. The hallucinatory states then give way to brief dreams, usually visions of the previous day's events.

Another ASC in the form of hypnagogic or hypnopompic state is **sleep paralysis**. It is a mixture of wakefulness and REM-sleep-related muscular atonia (relaxed immobility): we feel awake but are unable to move in any way. There may also be difficulty in breathing or the feeling of some weight upon our chest, called "succubus" (female) or "incubus" (male),[260] and "the night hag" experience, in Western folklore.[261]

4.3.3.2 Dream-states tend to occur more often during REM state (about 85%) than during "non-REM" (NREM) sleep states. There are 2 kinds of such subjective experiences during sleep: sleep

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[257] D Spiegel's Foreword to (edd) L Brann, J Owens & A Williamson, *The Handbook of Contemporary Clinical Hypnosis,* Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

[258] On our normal sleep pattern, see Brugnoli 2014:59-61.

[259] On hallucinations as delusion, see SD 60.1e (13.4).

[260] In Old English, these apparitions were called *mare* or *mære* (from a proto-Germanic **marōn*, cf Old Norse *mara*), hence the *mare* in *nightmare*. The word may be cognate with Gk *marōn* (in the Odyssey) and early Buddhist *Māra.*

[261] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Night_hag. Such an experience is likely to be more real and troubling for those who have suffered sexual assault or abuse. Since the 1960s (in the West at least), aliens have made in a way that "night hags" have not: see eg R J McNally & S A Clancy, "Sleep paralysis, sexual abuse, and space alien abduction," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 42,1 Mar 2005:113-122. [Sage]

mentation and dreaming. Typical **sleep mentations** (how our minds work while we are in deep rest) consist of a single image that occurs in a single sensory modality and remains static or repeats itself in the same form. An image of a visual object, or a word or sentence or sound heard repetitively, or a thought that runs through the mind again and again, are common types of sleep mentation. By contrast, **dreaming**[262] involves complex, organized, and animated imagery in multiple sensory modalities that shows progression and change through time. Thus, dreams depict a sensory-mental world with objects and characters, that echo one's actual experiences. We tend to relive our experiences either functionally (through the intrusion of external states) or karmically (as the result of our moral habits).

Systematic research on dream content has shown that all of our sensory modalities may be involved in dreams, the most common being vision and auditory experiences. Most dreams, however, have a central character or a "dream self," who is a representation of the dreamer in the dream. Most dreams also include other humans, but may include animal characters; and social interaction and communication between dream characters are common, as a result of our daily experiences (personal habits) or our desires (mental habits).

Negative events and emotions are more common in dreams than positive ones, and our habitual or daily routine—such as reading, writing, typing, working with a computer, or calculating—usually do not occur in our dreams. The bizarre contents and events of our dreams are usually impossible or highly unlikely in the real world, but we suffer from disorientation, amnesia, and a lack of critical thinking in dreams. Hence, we are only rarely able to recognize the peculiarity of the dream events while they go on, or rarely able to recognize the dream for what it is—an elaborate hallucination or simulation of a virtual world.

Since dreams are known to primarily occur during REM sleep, the sleep stage when the "mean corpuscular haemoglobin" (MCH) cells[263] turn on, activation of these cells may prevent the contents of a dream from being stored in the hippocampus. Consequently, the dream is quickly forgotten, unless we make an effort to carefully record them upon waking. Even then, because dreams are profoundly subjective or visionary experiences, it can be difficult, even impossible, for us to normally find the words or the right words to describe the more interesting or bizarre aspects of our dream events in precise terms.

4.3.4 Lucid dreaming

4.3.4.1 Lucid dreaming is primarily a higher cognitive state of consciousness, but since it can sometimes spontaneously occur in ordinary people, we will discuss it here before going on to the section on "exceptional or higher states of consciousness" [4.4]. Lucid dreaming is the name for the special ASC in which we become reflectively aware of the fact that our ongoing experience is a dream while the dreaming progresses, and we may even control the course of the dream. Thus, lucidity renders the dream into a *pseudo-hallucination*: a hallucination whose subject is well aware of the hallucinatory nature of the experience.

Sleep laboratory studies have confirmed that lucid dreaming takes place during REM sleep. The defining feature of **lucidity** is the cognitive realization or reflective consciousness of the fact that "This is a dream!" or "I'm dreaming!" Once we realize this, the dream changes from an ordinary one into a lucid dream, and lucidity lasts as long as we are aware of the fact that we are dreaming. Lucidity is like an awakening within the dream, possessing the revelatory knowledge that the whole world

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[262] On dreams, ie, a def and description of the physiology of dreaming; an overview of the psychological theories of and research on dreaming; and a survey of various cross-cultural perspectives on the causes and significance of dreams and altered states of consciousness: (APA) *Encyclopedia of Psychology* 3:78-88.

[263] MCH is the average amount in each of our red blood cells of a protein called haemoglobin, which carries oxygen around our body. We may hear about MCH when we get a blood test called a CBC (complete blood count).

around us right now is unreal or hallucinatory, none of the objects or persons around us really exist, but are mere projections of our dreaming mind.

The defining feature of this higher state is <u>cognitive</u> in that we have the knowledge that we ordinarily do not have during dreaming. In fact, lucid dreams have also been called "dreams of knowledge."[264] However, there are also attentional and emotional components to this state. Once lucidity starts, we can deliberately pay attention to features of the dream world, make deliberate plans of action and carry them out within the dream, or explicitly recall the facts of waking life from long-term memory.

4.3.4.2 The ability to carry out deliberate and even preplanned actions was the key to the laboratory studies in which it was shown that lucidity occurs during continuous REM sleep, without any disruption of sleep or even a brief awakening. Highly trained lucid dreamers are able to give preplanned eye-movement signals in the dream when lucid.

The eye-movement recordings show that these incontestable objective signs of lucidity are clearly recognizable and that the EEG at the same time was typical of uninterrupted REM sleep. The heightened attentional state in lucid dreaming is often accompanied by a heightened realism of the dream-world where the sensory-mental features seem almost unnaturally vivid, clear, radiant, and beautiful. Emotionally, lucid dreaming is often characterized by a positive tone, a feeling of full control, freedom and well-being, even elation.

Although many people may have been briefly lucid during dreaming, for most people lucidity happens only very rarely, if ever. In dream samples, lucidity occurs on average only in one or a few dream-reports out of a hundred. Only about 20% of people report having lucid dreams at least once per month.

However, lucidity is <u>a learnable skill</u> and various training programs and tips exist that increase the probability of becoming lucid. These include frequent reality-testing while awake (asking ourself frequently during the day: *Is this a dream?*), paying attention to impossible oddities and bizarre features of the dream world which reveal that it must be a dream, and reminding ourself before going to sleep of the intention to become lucid.

There are technical devices that give signals (such as a flashing red light) to the dreamer in REM sleep that are supposed to be perceived within the dream without waking up the dreamer. The signal is expected to intrude into the dream and be noticed by the dreamer (*Why is the world suddenly flashing in red?*). This is supposed to immediately lead the dreamer to the realization, "*This is a dream!*"

4.3.4.3 When we are asleep—and in the absence of the intrusion of the external sense-activities—there are always active images before our minds. We call them **dreams** when we recall them or when they wake us up. As such, these ASCs are actually the *normal* ongoing conceptualizings of the mind. There is nothing pathological since it is a natural process of both our waking and sleeping life, that is, so long as we are alive.[265]

Further sleep-related ASCs include bad dreams or extremely unpleasant dreams that do not wake the dreamer up, nightmares or extremely unpleasant **dreams** that wake the dreamer up, and <u>sleep-talking, sleepwalking or nocturnal wandering</u> which involve a mixture of NREM sleep and wakefulness. The sleepwalker's eyes are open, and they usually pursue some unreasonable goal without realizing that they are still sleeping and that the goal does not make sense.

4.3.4.4 All in all, sleep-related ASCs are the most common types of ASCs. Due to the ongoing active nature of our mind, we are likely to endlessly conceive mind-states and verbalize them: our

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[264] Oliver Fox (pseudonym of H G Callaway), *Astral Projection: a record of research,* London: Rider, 1939; repr *Astral Projection: a record of out-of-body experiences,* Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1969.

[265] For suttas based on dreams: SD 40b.4 (4.3.3.6, 3.4.4.3); the Bodhisattva's 5 dreams: **Mahā Supina S** (A 5.196), SD 63.13.

mind can be a very noisy place of incessant chatter. In early Buddhist terms, these are "mental pro-liferations" (*papañca*) arising from our sense-perceptions and mental conceptions, of cognizing and re-cognizing events and states, a noisy prolix soliloquy.

In this connection, it makes good sense to reflect on the Buddha's instruction that we should be <u>mindful</u> (*sato*) "**while asleep**, while awake" (*sutte jāgarite*)—a phrase that has baffled scholar and meditation scholars—who turn Pali on its head and incitefully read it as "when falling asleep, when waking up" (which are, of course, a part of the whole process). When we consider "lucid dreaming" or even "lucid sleeping," we are gazing through a window that **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) opens for us.[266]

4.4 EXCEPTIONAL OR HIGHER STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

4.4.1 Optimal experience or the flow

4.4.1.1 Exceptional states, also called <u>higher states of consciousness</u>, go beyond the normal state of consciousness (NSC) in the sense that they comprise subjective experiences of extreme at-tentional, emotional, or cognitive levels. Hence, they are deeply meaningful, satisfying, and desir-able, but also difficult to reach, even more difficult to sustain. Such an exceptional or higher state is characterized by changes in attention involving full absorption with the object in the narrow focus of attention (one-pointedness of mind), or involving the broadening of attention to at once cover the entire sensory-mental field (total mindfulness or full awareness).

Higher attentional states are often characterized by the absence of reflective thoughts or feel-ings, especially negative ones, and a sense of deep inner peace or mental calmness. They typically involve strong positive feelings of well-being, contentment, lovingkindness, compassion, joy, elation, or bliss. The quality of inner emotional experience is thus characterized by total and profound happi-ness.

4.4.1.2 Higher cognitive states also give a sense of deep understanding, sudden revelation or powerful insight into the true nature of things, glimpses of higher knowledge about the universe, or feelings of being directly connected or absorbed into the cosmos, or with higher spiritual realms or beings, such as the gods; or the heavens themselves, to nirvana, free of space and time. In these states, we seem to get in touch with deeply meaningful information about the nature of true reality or have direct knowledge of it.

However, it is unclear whether such knowledge is actually gained, or that it is simply a feeling of "deep insight" without any actual factual content, full of everything but signifying nothing. Often such a "revelation" or "epiphany" only affirms what we already deeply believe in or have been ha-bitually conditioned by our faith or by those we look up to as living authority. In any case, this knowledge is often impossible to express precisely in words; it is easily lost like a dewdrop on the grass-tip at day-break, with the return of ordinary consciousness.

These attentional, emotional, and cognitive components of exceptional or higher states of con-sciousness may appear separately or in various combinations in different ASCs. But when we do "re-call" such states or revelations, they may lose their original drive, and seem a trivial platitude in the light of the NSC. This is especially true of the flashes of insights gained in drug states, such as under the influence of LSD or meth.

4.4.1.3 Positive psychology—the scientific study of what makes life most worth living, focusing on both individual and societal well-being[267]—describes a radiantly wholesome unification of action and being, or body and mind, as a **flow state**, or colloquially as being "in the zone." This is the mental

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[266] M 10,9 (SD 13.3) = D 2:283 (SD 13.2).

[267] Martin E P Seligman & Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Positive Psychology: An introduction," *American Psycho-logist* 55,1 2000:5-14.

state in which a person performing some activity is utterly immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and totally enjoying it all.

In essence, <u>flow</u> is characterized by the complete absorption in what we are doing, with a resulting transformation in our sense of time.[268] Flow is the melding together of action and consciousness; the state of finding a balance between a skill and how challenging a task is. It requires a high level of concentration; however, it should be effortless. Flow is used as a coping skill for stress and anxiety when productively pursuing a form of leisure that matches one's skills.[269]

Flow or optimal experience is a higher emotional and focused state of mind characterizing the best moments of our lives, moments when we feel deep enjoyment, exhilaration, and happiness, and forget about everything else. We are firmly focused on reaching a meaningful, challenging goal; we are intrinsically motivated to reach the goal for its own sake, and our skills and resources are just sufficient to reach the goal.

We momentarily forget about everything else, including the sense of time and our own sense of self. We become fully immersed in the actions necessary to reach the goal. During such moments, experience simply flows onward (like currents in a stream): we feel in full control of the situation, and our minds are worry-free.

<u>Flow states</u> may emerge in almost any kind of activity, such as listening to or performing music, engaging in games or sports, hiking in nature, immersing ourself in a conversation with an interesting person, reading a good book, sailing, and so on. In some ways, intense <u>flow</u> experiences are similar to meditative samadhi where self-awareness disappears, and where our experience is one of mental focus.

4.4.2 Runner's high or second wind

A higher state of consciousness may arise in a sportsman fully involved with his sport. This is especially well known during <u>endurance running</u> where this state is known as **runner's high** or "second wind." It is, to an extent, similar to psychological features as flow and samadhi [4.4.1.3]. As in breath meditation, for example, <u>endurance running</u> is associated with highly regular, long-lasting rhythmic patterns of action and breathing. Like typical flow-producing activities, it is challenging and does not arouse anxiety, but involves physical activity where awareness and action become one.

In runner's high, reflective or analytical thoughts disappear and subjective experience becomes immersed in the here and now. Intense feelings of pure happiness, timelessness, unity with nature, inner harmony, boundless energy, and floating often arise. At the same time, there is reduced awareness of one's surroundings and reduced sensitivity to bodily discomfort or pain. A similar state may emerge in connection of other types of endurance training, such as swimming and rowing.

4.4.3 Out-of-body experiences (OBEs)[270]

4.4.3.1 An "**out of body experience**" is where the subject has a visual perspective from or feels spatially located in a place that seems to be outside the subject's physical body. The thinking, acting, and perceiving subject seems to have left their physical body behind, and may see it from the outside, usually from above (like just below the ceiling). The subject often feels that the perceived OBE environment is identical with the actual environment where his body was located. The subject may feel that although the physical body has been left behind, they still have some kind of "astral" or phantom body. In some cases, the subject has no clear image of the body, which seems to be a vague cloudy form or simply a formless viewpoint.

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[268] <u>G D Ellis</u>, <u>J E Voelkl</u> & <u>C Morris</u>, "Measurement and analysis issues with explanation of variance in daily experience using the flow model," *J of Leisure Research* 26,4 Sep 1994:337-356.

[269] P H Marvis, Review of Csikszentmihalyi's *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience* (NY: Harper & Row, 1990 303pp), *Academy of Management Review* 16,3 1 July 1991:636-640.

[270] The data (incl percentages) from this and foll sections are from A Revonsuo, "Altered and exceptional states of consciousness," 2009:17-21,

About 15%-20% of people report having experienced an OBE. In most cases, OBEs occur when a person is lying down but apparently in the waking state rather than sleeping. OBEs may occur at any time and under any circumstances, however, also during intense physical and mental activity, and sometimes in response to life-threatening situations. An OBE usually lasts for a few seconds to a minute.

4.4.3.2 OBEs often have features that are similar to other higher and mystical states of consciousness. The subject may have the impression of being able to see distant events, or to be able to travel at will to any place. A sense of freedom and control reminiscent of lucid dreaming [4.3.4] may occur, as well as feelings of elation, common in mystical experiences.

People typically interpret OBEs as evidence that "something"—a spirit, a soul or some entity of their belief—actually did leave the body during the experience. There is no real evidence for this. Experiments where the OBE subject's task has been to retrieve some otherwise inaccessible information (such as a number written on a piece of paper or some object placed out of ordinary sight) while in OBE mode have not produced any convincing results.[271]

Cognitive and neuropsychological theories try to explain OBEs by referring to hallucinatory dissociations between visual perspective and body image. In recent studies, OBEs and other similar distortions of body image and visuospatial perspective have been correlated with and induced by activity in particular cortical areas (the temporoparietal junction). Thus, one explanation for OBEs may be a temporary failure to bind the body image and the visuospatial representation of the world coherently together in the temporoparietal cortex**.**[272]

4.4.4 Near-death experiences (NDEs)

4.4.4.1 A near-death experience (NDE)[273] is an image, perception, event, interaction, or feeling (or a combination of any of these) reported by a person after their life is physically threatened (eg, in a cardiac arrest or drowning), when the person perceives that death is imminent even without or just before any fatal physical damage (eg, a brain injury, falling from a height), and sometimes in connection to non-life threatening events (eg, general anesthesia).

The core features of typical NDEs are, in the order in which they are usually experienced: (1) peacefulness and weightlessness, (2) an OBE [4.4.3], (3) a dark tunnel into which the subject is drawn and through which the subject feels propelled, (4) seeing a bright light at the end of the tunnel, and (5) entering the light or another world at the end of the tunnel.

This last stage may include meeting departed relatives, religious figures, and often a review of one's life. At this stage the experience is very difficult to describe, reminiscent of other mystical experiences. It is estimated that only between 10% to 50% of people facing death are likely to experience an NDE.

Among people who have experienced NDE, most have reported only the 1st stage of feeling peacefulness (60%). Only 10% report proceeding through to the stage of entering the light or an otherworldly realm. The core content of NDEs is remarkably similar across cultures, times, and

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[271] See **Pāyāsi S** (D 23,14-19/2:332-340), which recounts the macabre experiments of a king to determine whether any life-force or soul exists (SD 39.4).

[272] P Blanke et al, "Linking Out-of-Body Experience and Self Processing to Mental Own-Body Imagery at the Temporoparietal Junction," *J of Neuroscience* 25,3 2005:550-557. G Orru et al, "Targeting temporal parietal junction for assessing and treating disembodiment phenomena: a systematic review of TMS effect on depersonalization and derealization disorders (DPD) and body illusions," *AIMS Neuroscience* 8,2 2021: 181-194.

[273] The term "near-death experience" was first used by John C Lilly in 1972: J Schlieter, *What is it like to be Dead? Near-death Experiences, Christianity, and the Occult*, NY: Oxford Univ Press 2018:205 f. Psychiatrist R Moody, used "near-death experience" as an umbrella term for the different elements (out of body experiences, the "panoramic life review," the Light, the tunnel, or the border): B Greyson, "Ch 12: Near-Death Experiences," in E Cardeña, Etzel et al (eds), *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the scientific evidence* (2nd ed), Washington, DC: American Psychological Assoc, 2014:333-367.

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groups, but few subjects actually experienced all the typical features of an NDE. Age, sex, personality, or religious beliefs bear no significant difference amongst subjects of NDEs.

4.4.4.2 Explanations of NDE can be roughly divided into <u>supernatural</u> (dualistic) and <u>natural</u> (physiological, psychological and neurocognitive). According to the first type of explanation, which can also be called **the afterlife hypothesis**, that is, what happens in an NDE when a nonmaterial soul or self is detached from the body. It travels through the tunnel into another spiritual realm where it meets deceased relatives, and an angelic or godlike being or beings radiating unconditional love.

There, the person's life is reviewed like a movie film, and some sort of self-judgment takes place, as well as a decision whether to go back to Earthly life. After returning, the subjects themselves often feel profoundly transformed and regard <u>the afterlife hypothesis</u> as a self-evident explanation to their experience**.**

The naturalistic explanations are able to account for many of the core features of NDEs, but only by way of speculative and indirect evidence, leaving many open questions. There is no direct evidence that during NDEs the hypothesized physiological or neurocognitive mechanisms would actually be at work and would therefore correlate with specific aspects of the experience or cause them. For this reason and others, current scientific understanding is thus able to challenge the "afterlife hypothesis."

4.4.4.3 According to **the naturalistic explanations**, also called <u>the "dying brain hypothesis,"</u>[274] *changes in physiological processes and brain function* can account for NDEs. First, the feeling of peacefulness, positive emotion and bliss could be brought about by increased endorphin release in the brain under stress. Endorphins may also trigger abnormal or seizure-like activity in the temporal lobe.

Epileptic seizures and direct stimulation of the temporal lobe (or the temporoparietal junction) may induce a variety of anomalous experiences, such as OBEs, distortions of body image, realistic memory images, and feelings of the sense of presence of some other conscious being. Anoxia (lack of oxygen) of the brain might lead to the release of cortical inhibition that is known to induce visual hallucinations in other conditions (eg, drugs, neurological damage of visual pathways).

Tunnels are one of the most common types of visual forms typically experienced when visual hallucinations are induced by drugs, seizures, or other causes. This may be explained as some kind of "memory rush" of one's struggle to exit the dark and narrow mother's womb into the open world of light.

Although we have no direct evidence during NDEs of increased endorphin levels, cerebral anoxia, or seizure-like cortical activity in the occipital, parietal, and temporal lobes. This is not to say that such things do not occur, only that it is extremely difficult to get direct measures of them while a person is having an NDE.

4.4.4.4 Another feature that may be difficult to explain by referring to abnormal or pathological brain activity is the well-organized nature and relative universality and uniformity of NDE. Hallucinations induced by epileptic seizures in the temporal lobe, drug states, or dreamlike states have enormous variability of experiential content both within and between subjects. A uniform and seemingly well-organized experience such as NDE would seem to be based on some mechanism that is widely shared and activated in a roughly similar manner and order in different people, rather than by a variety of processes running wild in a brain under high metabolic stress, very low arousal (unawareness and unresponsiveness to the external world), and burdened by pathological electrophysiological seizures.

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[274] This is the hypothesis of the British psychologist Susan Blackmore (1993): G Bassham, *Critical Thinking: A student's introduction* (2nd ed), Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005:485. Blackmore, "Near-Death Experiences, in M Shermer (ed), *The Skeptic Encyclopedia of Pseudoscience*, Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2002:152-157.

4.4.4.5 A 3-year longitudinal study has revealed that some Buddhist meditation practitioners are able to willfully induce near-death experiences at a pre-planned point in time. Unlike traditional NDEs, participants were consciously aware of experiencing the meditation-induced NDE and retained control over its content and duration.[275] The Dalai Lama has also affirmed that experienced meditators can deliberately induce the NDE state during meditation, being able to recognize and sustain it.[276]

Meantime, there seems to be no clear acceptable explanatory model that would satisfactorily predict the existence or occurrence of NDEs, and that would account for the remarkably universal and seemingly well-organized phenomenological features of NDE. With the close working and bridging between modern science and Buddhism, the chances are that we will be knowing better regarding it.[277]

4.4.5 Mystical experiences

4.4.5.1 Outside of Buddhism, **mystical experiences** are perhaps the "highest" of all the higher states of consciousness. Both early Buddhist **dhyana** (*jhāna*) experiences and mystical experiences in general have parallel features in that they point to some "higher states"; they both involve feelings of joys, peace and timelessness. While theistic believers are likely to see their mystical experiences as some profound "communion" with the higher being of their faith, the Buddhist practitioner is likely to see dhyana as an experience of being free, at least for the duration of their experience, from the gravity field of the physical senses.

Whether the subjects are theistic believers or Buddhist practitioners, they both are likely to feel the long-lasting and life-changing effects of these higher states upon their subsequent lives. Such profound experiences, even if relatively brief, are profoundly felt and vividly recalled for years and they are often regarded as among the most significant moments of life.

4.4.5.2 William James (1842-1910), an early father of modern psychology,[278] regarded mystical states as closely related to *personal religious experience* rather than a crowd phenomenon. Mystical states are difficult to describe in words, much less to communicate to other people. James saw this feature, <u>ineffability</u>, as one of the defining features of mystical states.

Mystical states involve both cognitive and emotional aspects. <u>Cognitively</u>, mystical states may involve unusual visions or other forms of imagery, or seeing the ordinary perceptual world as unusually bright, radiant, clear, and beautiful. They are characterized by a sense of heightened reality and significance, and the sense of distortion (usually a sense of transcending) time.

These powerful experiences occur unexpectedly and suddenly, and cannot be summoned at will. However, certain practices (such as ritual prayer, yoga or meditation) or drugs (hallucinogens) may enhance the likelihood of their occurrence. Even then, they are usually very brief, like a flash of lightning that lights up the whole of one's being, or it may persist for about an hour at most, cutting one off from the rest of the world. Yet their aftereffects are likely to last for the rest of one's life.

<u>Emotionally</u>, mystical states are intensely positive, involving overwhelming feelings of awe, elation, joy, love, harmony, calmness, peace, or bliss. Either way, these mystical states seem to communicate highly significant visions or purpose for the subject regarding the true nature of life, or some revelatory clarity, or divine guiding principles that are well above oneself.

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[275] W Van Gordon, E Shonin, T J Dunn, D Sheffield, J Garcia-Campayo, M D Griffiths, "Meditation-induced near-death experiences: a 3-year longitudinal study." *Mindfulness* 9,6 2018:1794-1806. doi:10.1007/s12671-018-0922-3. [Pubmed] [Springer] [WorldCat] [PMC].

[276] Tenzin Gyatso, *The Universe in a Single Atom,* NY: Morgan Road Books, 2005:157.

[277] A Vanhaudenhuyse, M Thonnard & S Laureys, "Towards a neuro-scientific explanation of near-death experiences?" *Intensive Care Medicine*. [Sl], 2009:961-968. 15 June 2023.

[278] See SD 60.1d (4.1.1.2).

4.4.5.3 Cosmic consciousness is a term introduced by Canadian psychiatrist Richard Maurice Bucke (1837-1902) in the early 1900s to describe a typical mystical experience (quoted by William James in *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). The prime characteristic of cosmic consciousness is an awareness of the cosmos, that is, of the life and order of the universe. Along with cosmic consciousness there is an intellectual enlightenment that places the person on a new plane of existence, transforming them almost into a member of a new species.

To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and a powerful quickening of the moral sense, with enhanced intellectual power. Often one also feels blessed with a sense of immortality or deathlessness, a consciousness of eternal life, or transcending time. This is not just a belief or conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has gained it. A classic example of such an experience is that of the Buddha's awakening.

Cosmic consciousness thus entails a widening or freeing of consciousness to encompass the whole universe and its unseen principles. Although such insights are experienced as being absolute truths by the subject, outsiders may remain doubtful, and rightfully so. The conviction of the subject and the felt authority of the experience are no guarantee that the insights gained during the mystical state of consciousness carry any truth or validity in the objective sense.

4.4.6 Spirituality of meditation

4.4.6.1 "Cosmic consciousness" is often a great tag for glib gurus to seize and hold an adoring, mindless crowd. No one has experienced cosmic consciousness, but most would wonder whether there is anything there, something that we may not know, much less understand. Cult Gurus love this as a one-way blindside to leash up their followers in the Guru's hands. At best, we may say that an "experience" of some cosmic reality should bring us down to earth to have the compassion and wisdom to deal with the world's sufferings. The Buddha does just this.

Rejecting the extremes of the scripture-based class exclusivism of the brahmins and the plain silliness of pretentious wanderers, the Buddha seeks his own way with what defines our humanity and the path to spirituality: by cultivating his own mind. Through the self-effort of **meditation**, the Buddha calms his mind of the wild emotions and clears it of bewildering views; he awakens to the true reality of things. Seeing through the religion of words and ways, the Buddha awakened to nirvana, the full freedom from space-time suffering.

4.4.6.2 The Buddha calls his liberation **awakening** (*bodhi*), the ultimate mystical or spiritual experience, the highest conceivable state of consciousness while one lives. In practical terms, awakening is an experience where, through moral discipline and meditative practices, one gains complete and clear understanding of the true nature of reality, and of the nature of oneself in relation to reality.

Both the key terms "awakening" (*bodhi*) and "the awakened (one)" (*buddha*) come from the same Sanskrit root √BUDH, "to understand." Awakening thus is a mystical experience that frees and purifies ordinary consciousness so that it is able to see true reality. The mind is thereby transformed into a qualitatively higher form, perhaps in a somewhat similar manner as becoming *lucid* reveals the true nature of the dream-world to the dreamer whose conscious state thereby transcends the ordinary dreaming mind.

According to early Buddhism, awakening entails the cessation of all selfish desires and clinging to material things, power status, sensual pleasures, socializing, and other passing worldliness. The true nature of everything is seen to consist in impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself (emptiness). Thus, even one's own self is seen to be a mere illusion—at best a convenient convention for communicating with the world so that it, too, benefits from this awakening.

4.4.6.3 The term *samādhi* is well known in Indian religions and post-Buddha Buddhisms, where it often refers to an enlightening or salvific state as defined or envisioned by their various sectarian

tenets. In early Buddhism, *samādhi* or concentration is the last limb of the "meditation aggregate" (*samādhi-k,khandha*), and the 8th limb of the noble eightfold path. It comprises meditative training and practice—watching the body, feelings, the mind and realities—so that we unify the mind to up-root itself from the prison of the senses, and free the defiled mind to gain full mental freedom by way of **dhyana** (*jhāna*).

Instead of samadhi, early Buddhism uses the dvandva, **calm and insight** (*samatha,vipassana*), especially after emerging from a dhyanic state. If we see dhyana as a mystical state, then, calm and insight are the benefits of dhyana, since they are the twin-lenses with which we see true reality. All these experiences function together in harmony in a mystical union of subject and object that dissolves any idea of self or abiding entity, leading to full awakening.

Early Buddhist awakening (*bodhi*) differs from later revised notions of enlightenment in significant ways. Basically, awakening leads to **nirvana** (*nibbāna*)—an absolute non-state beyond time and space—a truth unique and universal.[279] There is nothing that can really define or describe a fire that has been extinguished: such is nirvana.

The revelatory insights and experiences are supposed to bring about an absolute emotional calmness, mental peace, cessation of suffering, and unconditional love and deep compassion for the unenlightened beings who continue to suffer. In the earliest days of the Buddha, he calls this **silence**, the way of the sage (*muni*) who has mastered *inner silence,* that is, the true peace that heals and frees.

4.4.7 The inner silence

4.4.7.1 From a careful study of the historically earliest records of awakening—including the Buddha's own awakening—such as those recorded in the oldest of the Pali texts, **the Sutta Nipāta** — we will notice the predominance of *apophatic language*, such as that of an ecstatic and awakened silence (*moneyya*) of the *muni,* the silent sage. In fact, the Buddha is often referred to as **Sakya,-muni**, "the silent sage of the Sakyas."[280]

This awakened "silence" is the calm and clear face of spiritual freedom, seen in the first 5 monks. During the early years of the ministry[281] up to the "great commission" (the sending out of the first 60 monks),[282] all the monks are "silent sages." They are *silent* inwardly, but more so they are neither loquacious firebrand preachers nor diplomatic salesmen engaged with the world. They are each themselves an embodiment of full awakening, still and radiant. They are each like the "holy man"—the 4th sight—seen by Siddhattha just before his renunciation.

Assaji, one of the first 5 monks, is a classic example. When the wanderer Sāriputta first sees him, Sāriputta is at once impressed by his calm and radiant demeanour (like the young Siddhattha's vision of the renunciant, the 4th sight). When questioned by Sāriputta, Assaji is very reluctant to speak. Only after Sāriputta's insistence does Assaji utter his famous terse ***Ye dhammā* quatrain**:

Ye dhammā hetu-p,pabhavā	Of all things that arise from causality [a cause],
tesaṁ hetuṁ tathāgato āha	their cause the Tathāgata has told,
tesañ ca yo nirodho	and also how these cease to be—
evaṁ vādī mahā,samaṇo	This, too, the great sage has told. (V 1:40; J 1:85)[283]

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[279] Technically, *sub specie aeternitatis*, "under the aspect of eternity," ie, as a particular manifestation of a universal law, without any relation to time. See SD 26.8 (1.1.3).

[280] See **Muni S** (Sn 1.12), SD 49.20; SD 44.1 (1.4.1); SD 40a.1 (1.3.1); Ob the "the sage at peace" (*muni santa*), see **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,30-32), SD 4.17. See also Princeton DictB 741f Sakyamuni.

[281] Esp the first 10 years of the "first period" of the Buddha's ministry, but may extend to the first 20 years. The "second period" refers to the remaining years, ie, the last 20-25 years of the Buddha's ministry. See SD 1.1 (2.2) & 40a.1 (1.3).

[282] Mv 1.11.1 (V 1:20-23) = (Māra) Pāsa S 2, S 4.5/1:105 f; Mvst 3:415 f; see SD 11.2 (6).

[283] See **Skillful Means**, SD 30.8 (2.2.6.4+3.4.2.2).

Hearing only the first 2 lines, Sāriputta gains streamwinning (his inner silencing has begun).[284]

4.4.7.2 Interestingly, there is hardly any mention of the stages of sainthood, even arhathood, which is often stated as the climax of the later canonical suttas of the Nikayas. The suttas often re-count how the early disciples approach the Buddha and listen to him—even as they listen[285]—they become arhats. In other words, these early listeners are all right and ready spiritually: they only need to hear the Dharma from the Buddha to awaken at once, as it were, as arhats.

The early awakened disciples are already renunciants or spiritually inclined individuals even be-fore knowing the Buddha. They are by nature morally virtuous and naturally take to meditation: their body and speech are habitually still compared to most others, and their minds easily stilled un-der the right conditions. Thus they easily experience "inner silencing" upon listening to the Buddha on the liberating Dharma.

It is only later—especially after the great commission—when many are drawn to the peaceful way of the early sages (*muni*)—those who lack moral virtue and a calm ready mind have to start by learning the ropes of the contemplative life. As the Buddha's teaching becomes better known and receives more public support, more candidates turn to renunciation as Buddhist monastics. They have to be weaned off their old worldly ways, and their minds be primed for inner peace.

4.4.7.3 If we take "**inner silencing**" as the hallmark of awakening, then the stages of the training (*sikkhā*) comprise a deepening and broadening of this inner silence, that is, the stilling of the body, speech and mind. In terms of meditation, this is moral training (*sīla,sikkhā*) (restraint in body and speech) and training of mental concentration (*samādhi,sikkhā*), the first 2 of the "3 trainings." Both these trainings form the bases for the 3rd training, that is wisdom training (*paññā,sikkhā*), the gradual seeing into true reality. Thus, we must begin with the practice of "outer silencing" (*tuṇhī,bhava*). This is essentially the "social" silence of body and speech, that is, the proper practice of moral conduct (*sīla*), which helps us with social distancing for the sake of mental cultivation (*samādhi*), both of which conduce to the arising of insight wisdom (*paññā*).[286]

Hence, "**social silence**" or moral virtue entails a respect for others by way of moral conduct, that is having a mindful body that acts and speaks, so that no unwholesome karma arises to hinder our meditation and spiritual progress. To help still the body and silence the mind, meditators, depending on their personality or inclination, are often advised to practise one of **the inspiring meditations** [3.2.1.2]: *the recollections on the 3 jewels, on moral virtue, on charity and on the deities*. [0.3.1]

4.4.8 The outer silence

4.4.8.1 If our purpose is to study the mind, especially **the meditating mind**, then we should begin by either examining a properly trained regular meditator, or become one ourself. In fact, it is just a matter of time before mind scientists themselves (the more serious and dedicated ones, any-way) who will turn to meditation: this is proverbial man studying himself, a human studying themself.

Further, it would be more rewarding to begin with a careful study of the **silent** or stilling aspect of Buddhist meditation than the insight or vipassana aspect. The reason for this is clear enough. The popular vipassana meditation today does not place any importance on dhyana (*jhāna*) or the joyful silence, the still silence of samadhi following mindfulness (*sati*). Many Vipassana teachers even warn their students from "getting lost" in the joyful aspects of meditation or being led away by it instead

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[284] See SD 5.16 (1.2.2).
[285] See **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,24/3:68): "And while this discourse was being given, the minds of the group of 5 monks were, through non-clinging, freed from the influxes" (SD 1.2).
[286] For a study, see **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1.

of watching the molecules of experience.[287] Modern Vipassana meditation, as a rule, stresses on the attaining of **insight** (*vipassanā*).

4.4.8.2 The only way, it seems, that a modern meditation scientist can study meditation is through some "specific physiologically mappable trajectory, or pattern of development."[288] Scholars like Alberto Chiesa and Alessandro Serretti of the University of Bologna, Italy, for example, reported heightened activity in the anterior cingulate cortex, frontal cortex, and prefrontal cortex, specifically in the dorsal medial prefrontal area of the brain during Vipassana meditation.[289] There are many other such reports.[290]

The question here is: What are we measuring and what are we reading? Are these the actual neural correlates of Vipassana meditation, or those of some brain-states of the meditator? How significant are brain-states compared to mind-states? This question is especially relevant now that we are more aware of the "extended nature" of the mind[291]—that the mind does not reside in the brain (alone) but pervades wherever we direct our attention. The point is that it is such an interesting new area, and the dedicated scientists are all pioneers in the field in the Millennium of the Mind.

4.4.8.3 Let's get down to the nitty-gritty of meditation studies: What can we, each of us, usefully study for ourselves? The answer clearly must be: the mind. If we are to follow early Buddhism closely, even this answer is not exact enough. For we can further ask: which aspect of the mind are we referring to: *citta, mano* or *viññāṇa*? [4.3.1.1]. These important and common early Buddhist terms may be succinctly explained as follows:

citta: our thoughts (especially in the preconscious mind, while contemplating an action), or
mano: the conscious mind working through the physical senses, making sense of them, or
viññāṇa: consciousness itself (including the unconscious (the latent tendencies) and the sub-
             conscious (rebirth consciousness).

The most helpful answer is that we cannot really choose which to watch—the 3 constitute the mind —we can and must watch "it" as it arises, noting them for what they are and responding to them as we have been trained in moral conduct and mental concentration. Basically, we *avoid the unwholesome processes, cultivate the wholesome ones, and purify the mind*.[292]

4.4.8.4 Sadly (for the scientist), there's nothing "scientific" in the practice of moral conduct and mental concentration (Dh 183) (other than the quest for "right knowledge," *sammā ñāṇa*, the goal of the noble eightfold path). On the other hand—as we have noted earlier [4.4.8]—the proper practice of the teachings of **Dh 183** constitutes the *joy* of the "outer silence." Of this, the Buddha declares: "The Dharma-farer (who practises the "outer silence") lives happily" (*dhamma,cāri sukhaṁ seti*).[293]

The joy (*pīti*) or happiness (*sukha*) referred to here gives the inspiration for moral conduct, and the foundation for calm meditation, that is, mental concentration, that is, at least the rise of calm-

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[287] See SD 60.1b (11.2.2.2).

[288] J Tempone-Wiltshire, "Seeking the neural correlates of awakening," 10.

[289] Chiesa & Serretti, "A systematic review of neurobiological and clinical features of mindfulness meditations," *Psychological Medicine* 40,8 2010:1239-1252.

[290] See eg M T Treadway & S W Lazar, "The neurobiology of mindfulness," in F Didonna (ed), *Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness,* Springer, 2009:45-57.

[291] On "the extended minds," see SD 60.1e (12.7).

[292] *Sabba,pāpassa akaranaṁ, kusalassa upasampadā, sacitta, pariyodapanaṁ, etaṁ buddhāna sāsanaṁ,* "Not doing any bad, attaining the good, purifying the mind—this is the teaching of the buddhas" (Dh 183): SD 16.1 (6.1).

[293] Dh 168 f; Ap 2:590, 596; **Dhamma,dhaja J** (J 384 v64); DA 2:657; DhA 3:164; ApA 94; J 1:90, 3:268; VA 5:1007.

ness (*samatha*). Properly sustained, this calmness leads to dhyana (*jhana*), the "noble silence."[294] Either way—the calmness of ordinary meditation or the clear stillness of emerging from dhyana— the calm mind is the best tool for seeing into true reality that is profoundly liberating.

When we are well-rooted in moral conduct (keeping the precepts) and in our meditation (enjoy-ing samadhi, even dhyana), it alters our mental state from the ruffled state of the mundane mind to the "higher mind" (*adhicitta*) of the practitioner: we are habitually happier, more peaceful and often wiser. This is the kind of mind that the meditation scientists call an "**altered state of consciousness**."

4.4.9 "Altered states of consciousness" and meditation

4.4.9.1 Meditation in itself is not a higher or altered state of consciousness, but rather a set of practices and techniques for controlling and refining consciousness. Properly cultivated, meditation may lead to an altered state; in fact, often this is the goal of meditation. There are far too many radi-cally different meditation techniques and traditions to cover in this context; thus, only some of the most central principles and techniques can be mentioned here.

In one way or another, different meditation techniques involve deliberate control or manipula-tion of attention. In concentrative types of meditation, the scope of attention is kept narrow and highly selective, as only a particular content of consciousness (an object, a mental image, a sentence or a word, a repetitive action such as breathing) is fixed into the focus of attention for prolonged du-rations whereas everything else, all distractions, are driven out of consciousness.

4.4.9.2 In mindfulness meditations, by contrast, the scope of attention is widened to be aware of and accept all available sensations, feelings, percepts, emotions, etc, to be vividly aware of all of them in as much detail and intensity as possible. In Buddhist and Yoga literature, the term *samādhi* refers to a higher state of meditative consciousness in which profound concentration is reached, and where the distinction between the object of meditation and the subject who meditates totally dis-appears.

This state is characterized by mental one-pointedness and a merging together of the object and the subject. According to some traditions, the systematic practice of meditation to reach samadhi states can lead to progressively higher mystical states of consciousness, such as dhyana, or "cessa-tion,"[295] or even nirvana (full awakening) itself [4.4.6.2].

Some forms of meditation combine the attentional and the emotional components of higher states and deliberately focus on diminishing negative emotions or strengthening positive emotions, such as lovingkindness, compassion or altruistic joy. Such meditation practices may lead to higher states of consciousness—the dhyanas—with intense positive emotional experiences. There is evid-ence from brain-imaging studies that certain Buddhist monks who have practised this type of medi-tation for decades actually do reach a state of consciousness unreachable by beginners or ordinary practitioners. These adepts show evidence of strong changes in their brain activity that correlate with their meditative state.

4.4.10 Meditative altered states of consciousness

4.4.10.1 Altered states of consciousness (ASCs) can be defined as temporary states of con-sciousness when the relationship between inner conscious experience and the world outside of one's consciousness has been changed, usually in a positive way. Thus, in altered states, the patterns of thought and the sensory-perceptual and emotional experiences in some way represent the world

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[294] Strictly speaking, the "noble silence" (*ariya tuṇhī,bhāva*), refers to the 2nd dhyana: SD 8.4 (5.1.3); SD 44.1 (4).

[295] Cessation (*nirodha*), or fully, "the cessation of perception and feeling" (*saññā,vedayita, nirodha*) is the experience of nirvanic bliss here and now, that is, while one lives. It is a normal experience for most arhats, but may be experienced by some nonreturners who are very good meditators. On cessation, see SD 30.2 (4).

or ourself in a way that does not seem to match with the actual state of affairs apparent to others.

Often, though not always, ASCs also involve highly unusual patterns of thought and experience. Furthermore, we usually are able to recognize when we are in an ASC and when not, or at least after returning to the normal state we can infer that we were in an altered state. When we are overcome by an intoxicated state, we become less inhibited to the extent of misconducting ourselves. However, when we are in an ASC, we are, as a rule, in a joyful self-contained state although we may be oblivious of the ambience.

4.4.10.2 Exceptional or higher states—what we often know as "mystical" experiences (like young Siddhattha's 4 sights)—are a variety of ASCs that involve very positive, desirable and insightful experiences that are felt to be personally deeply meaningful, often leading to profound and long-lasting, even permanent, transformations of personal beliefs and lives, as happened in the Buddha's case.

Altered and exceptional states of consciousness reveal the wealth and depth of our mental life. Any theory of consciousness should be able to explain not only the typical features and mechanisms of normal waking consciousness, such as sensory and perceptual experiences in response to physical stimuli, but also the beauty and truth of altered states.

This is often a challenge for the scientific study of consciousness, because many altered states are difficult or impossible to initiate, much less to control experimentally. They are highly subjective in that their occurrence or content is impossible to be verified by outsiders (if they are indeed genuine ASCs). Often their precise experiential nature is difficult, even impossible, to describe verbally.

After the "experience," we may then wonder if it was simply mundane, or whether it should be seen in a larger context in the "intentional" language of dreams, visions and epiphanies.[296] Nonetheless, there is growing evidence from neurocognitive studies of ASCs such as dreaming, OBEs, and hypnotic hallucinations that ASCs are real in the sense that they have specific, objectively measurable neural correlates and mechanisms in the brain.

Furthermore, brain stimulation studies of the temporal lobe have established that OBEs and even mystical experiences can be triggered by simply stimulating the brain in the appropriate location.[297] Such replicable experiments seem to promise hope that even the most mysterious of ASCs are not entirely beyond the reach of scientific experimentation. But they also raise another question, whether such states are *hardwired*[298] into our brain or our mind. If so, what is its significance?

4.5 ASCS IN THE BODHISATTVA SIDDHATTHA

4.5.1 ASCs in 7-year-olds

4.5.1.1 The modern psychological idea of "altered states of consciousness" (ASCs) helps us better understand and interpret some key episodes in **the life of the Buddha** as handed down in the early Buddhist tests, all of which are ultimately related to his awakening. This bridging of modern science with ancient myths is a mutually rewarding way to both study early Buddhism and modern psychology.

Modern psychological terms or categories describing mental states and psychological behaviour, when properly defined and insightfully used, can help us better understand not only the nature of the mind and meditation, but also the Buddha's teachings by way of the events in the Buddha's life,

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[296] On "intentional" language, see SD 26.11 (6.5); Dh 97, SD 10.6 esp (5).

[297] M A Persinger, "Religious and mystical experiences as artifacts of temporal lobe function: a general hypothesis," *Perceptual & Motor Skills* 57 3,2 Dec 1983:1255-1262. doi: 10.2466/pms.1983.57.3f.1255.

[298] Our brain is hard-wired with connections, much like our houses, a skyscraper or an airplane is hard-wired with electrical wiring. In the case of the brain, the connections are made by neurons that link the sensory inputs and motor outputs with centres in the various lobes of the cerebral cortex. Beyond the brain, early Buddhism accepts the reality of an "extended" mind, that exists and grows beyond the brain [3.1.1.1].

which puts the life of the teacher in proper perspective with his teaching. The modern concept of ASC helps put in <u>psychological</u> perspective what appears to be merely textual or mythical.

This new reading of an ancient biography should not merely be some kind of "psychoanalysis" of an ancient story, interesting as it may be. Even more useful is our ability to relate such a refreshing view of an ancient teaching to our own life and experience. We then not only better understand the Buddha's mind and the perspectives of his life, but it all brings the Buddha's teachings to stand out in sharp relief to our own lives and the situation in our own time.

4.5.1.2 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36) relates a famous story showing that the child Siddhattha is spiritually precocious: At only <u>7 years old</u>, at the height of the ploughing festival (a fertility rite) in Sakya country (at the border of Nepal with India), Siddhattha sits under a shady jambul tree and gets into **the 1st dhyana**. This is the oldest canonical record we have of the attainment of an <u>altered state of consciousness</u>.[299]

Let us first examine the significance of "<u>7 years old</u>" in early Buddhism. Late in the 1st year of the ministry, in Phagguna (Feb-Mar), the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu. There, when his only son, 7-year-old **Rāhula**, asks him for his inheritance, the Buddha has him initiated as a novice (*samaṇera*) by Sāriputta and Moggallāna. Rāhula is an eager learner, delighting in the fact that his own father was Buddha. On reaching 20 lunar years, he is ordained as a monk (*bhikkhu*). Shortly after that—as recorded in **the Cūḷa Rāhul'ovāda Sutta** (M 147)[300]—taught by the Buddha himself, Rāhula becomes an arhat.[301]

4.5.1.3 The Dhammapada Commentary records stories of some <u>ten</u> 7-year-olds, all of whom except for one are arhats, including a girl:[302]

		Dhammapada Commentary	***Buddhist Legends*** (1921)
Cīrā	a girl novice	DhA 14.2/3:210 f	DhA:B 30:43 f
Cunda	a boy novice	DhA 14.2/3:311	DhA:B 30:44
<u>4 novices</u>		DhA 26.23/4:176-180	DhA:B 30:297
Paṇḍita	a boy novice	DhA 6.5/2:127-147; 26.23/4:177	DhA:B 29.176, 30:297
Revata[303]	a boy novice	DhA 7.9/2:188-200; 26.23/4:177	DhA:B 29:209, 30:297
Saṅkicca	a boy novice	DhA 8.9/2:240-253; 26.23/4:177	DhA:B 29:238, 30:297
Sopāka	a boy novice	DhA 26.23/4:176-180; 26.23/4:177	DhA:B 30:297-299
Sanu	a boy novice	DhA 23.5/4:18-25	DhA:B 30:207-211
Sukha	a boy novice	DhA 10.11/3:87-99	DhA:B 29:318
Sumana	a boy novice	DhA 25.12/4:120-137	DhA:B 30:264
Tissa	a boy novice	DhA 5.15/2:84-103	DhA:B 29:150

While nearly all of these 7-year-olds are boys, only Cīrā is a girl and an arhat. Sanu, however, is said to have only gained "breakthrough into the Dharma" (*dhammâbhisamaya*), that is, very likely, attained streamwinning.[304] That 7-year-olds—who are <u>prepubescents</u> (unblemished by bodily and emotional changes driven to be caught up in the natural world)—points to an early Buddhist model, even archetype, of *childlike innocence and purity*. This idea of angelic innocence is epitomized in the

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[299] On the Bodhisattva's 1st dhyana, see SD 52.10 (5.2.2.2).

[300] M 147/3:277-280 (SD 70.7) = **Rāhul'ovāda S** (S 35.121/4:105-107), SD 93.6.

[301] Mahv 1.54 (V 1:82 f); J 1:85-92, 2:393; DhA 1.9/1:116 f; SnA 1:340-344.

[302] The refs below are from (DhA stories tr) E W Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends* 1-3 [DhA:B]*,* Harvard Oriental series (HOS) vols 28-30, Harvard, 1921; since repr PTS 1969, 1979. For helpful refs (on details), see its fnn.

[303] Revata becomes, in due course, Khadira,vaniya Revata, "of the acacia forest," and is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of forest monks (A 1:24). For useful crossrefs, see DhA:B 2:209

[304] *Dhammâbhisamaya* (DhA 4:25,1). See SD 52.5 (1.2.2).

figure of the Mahā Brahmā **Sanaṅkumāra**,[305] the "ever young," one renowned for his <u>moral purity</u> characterized by love, compassion, joy, and inner peace (the divine abodes, *brahma,vihara*).[306]

4.5.1.4 The spiritual significance of such "consciousness-altering" events is threefold.[307] Firstly, it hints at the impending <u>renunciation</u> of the world (the ploughing festival) by Siddhattha. Secondly, the renunciant Siddhattha will, in due course, resort to this very same method of meditation to awaken to the goal of that renunciation, <u>buddhahood</u>. Thirdly, even a young child is able to experience pro-found levels of consciousness: whether monastic or lay, meditation will enable us to develop our minds well beyond the mundane life of cyclic routine (*saṁsāra*) for deeper and higher liberating men-tal and spiritual states. The mind is the open door out of the prison of the senses that keep us world-bound so that we enjoy the truth and beauty of the liberated mind.

When we reflect on the Buddha's life—as **Buddhânussati**—we see these "acts of the Buddha" as symbolic of spiritual transformation, a process which we need to understand and in time experience for ourselves or at least be inspired by them to live nobly. As the significance of this Buddha-act be-comes clearer to us, we begin to see how we have become creatures of habit spawned by our child-hood, our family and friends, our beliefs, our social status, our job, our race.

We are like caterpillars growing in our cocoon of culture and conditionings. Often our parents or gurus tear us out prematurely from our cocoon of childhood by their self-righteous fiats. Torn from our pupal case before eclosion (emerging from the cocoon), we emerge maimed and stunted emot-ionally and spiritually, not yet <u>humanized</u>, mere shadows of potential higher powers. [5.3.8.3]

4.5.2 Saṁvega and pasāda

4.5.2.1 Or, we could be made to stay safe in our cocoon's comfort, pleasure and routine, obli-vious of the real world—like Rapunzel in her high tower.[308] Young **Siddhattha** is caught in this predi-cament. When he is born, soothsayers prophesize that he is destined to be a world monarch if he were to be a man of the world, or a world-teacher if he renounced it. The young brahmin Koṇḍañña is certain that Siddhattha would, upon seeing <u>the 4 sights</u> (an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and a renunciant), renounce the world to become the Buddha.

Suddhodana, Siddhattha's father, is determined to keep Siddhattha in the world. He builds 3 pleasure palaces, one for the cold season (Oct-Mar), one for the hot season (Apr-June), one for the monsoons (July-Sep). It's like a virtual game-world we play in today: there is no decaying, no disease, no death (the 3 "evils")—just a game for the pleasure of it.

Games do not grow, buildings do not see; but those who play them, who live in them do, that is, when they are well *humanized*, when they learn to think and feel for themselves. Ironically, in hold-ing the world from young Siddhattha, Suddhodana is only winding up the drama of true reality to the

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[305] A 1st-dhyana brahma. See Sanaṅkumāra S (S 6.11/1:153), SD 86.13. He also appears in Mahā,samaya S (D 20/2:261), SD 54.4; SD 54.3d (2.2.3). See Punnadhammo, *The Buddhist Cosmos,* 2018:3.6.10.

[306] Comys (MA 3:33,20-25; SA 1:219,13-16) tell us that, in his former birth, he cultivated dhyanas while yet a boy with his hair tied in 5 knots (*pañca,cūḷaka,kumara,kāle*), and was reborn in the Brahma world with his dhya-na intact. He liked assuming the guise of a boy (*kumāra*); hence his name. His earliest mention is in Chāndogya Upaniṣad (ch 7), where the ideal saintly warrior teaches a true brahmin the highest truths, an ancient boy-hero with warrior nobility. T W Rhys Davids (D:RD 2:292 n3; cf 1:121 n1) sees the Sanaṅkumāra myth as the Indian parallels to the European legend of Galahad and tale of Peter Pan. In the Chinese boy-god Nezha 哪吒 his warrior quality is prominent. See *J of the Royal Asiatic Soc* 1894:344, 1897:585 f; *Revue de Histoire des Religions* 31:29 ff.

[307] **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31), SD 49.4.

[308] See SD 40a.8 (5.3.2); SD 52.1 (4.4, 7.2.2.1); SD 54.8 (6.4.1).

psychological level of "<u>flooding</u>"[309] when Siddhattha sees the 4 sights in quick succession <u>on the same day</u>.[310] <u>These visions have the spiritual force of an epiphany</u>:[311] <u>he is a mature 29.</u>

4.5.2.2 For someone so spiritually precocious as Siddhattha—he experiences the 1ˢᵗ dhyana when only 7 [4.5.1.2]—clearly the 4 sights have brought upon him a profound altered state of consciousness [4.4.9], but it is a troubling state. It is just the opposite of the childlike delight that Dorothy and her friends feel upon looking behind the curtain to see that the Wizard of Oz is all pretence. Rather what Siddhattha feels must be comparable to when Dr Frankenstein's monster realizes the profound burden that to be sapient entails.[312]

On the night of the 4 sights, Siddhattha will be overwhelmed by another vision, this time in his own pleasure palace. As soon as Siddhattha arrives in his chamber, the servants and dancing girls perform their duty of entertaining him. The sights and sounds seem jarring before his tired mind. He soon falls into an uneasy slumber.

In the still of the night, Siddhattha suddenly wakes up and sits surveying the dimly lit hall. He sees that the women dancers have lain aside their musical instruments and fallen asleep. Some of them are drooling, some with their bodies wet with saliva, some grinding their teeth, some talking in their sleep, some groaning, some with gaping mouths, some with their clothes in disarray, even exposing themselves indecorously.

These women who are trained with their bodies and being to give pleasure now lie like corpses —it is a dim sea of bodies where sleep looks no different from death, a veritable charnel ground. His palace may as well be consumed by fire: "Alas! Such affliction! Alas! Such crowdedness!" (*upaddutaṁ vata bho upassaṭṭhaṁ vata bho*). His heart was greatly drawn towards renunciation.[313]

The early Buddhist texts have a special term for such an altered state: ***saṁvega,*** a kind of cognitive dissonance. It is as if his turban and clothes are on fire, and he simply wants to flee from that burning ground. He is ready to free himself from his cocoon of false pleasures and fleeting powers.[314]

It is the 4ᵗʰ sight—the very antithesis of the first 3—that of a calm and radiant joyful renunciant: this is clearly what he wants to be. This sight evokes ***pasāda***, a sense of joy, light and freedom: it inspires great <u>faith</u> in oneself as the source of that joy, light and freedom. It is time for Siddhattha to renounce the prison of pleasures for the open space of spiritual freedom.[315]

4.5.3 ASCs: Modern meditations and traditional meditations

4.5.3.1 We will here use the framework of <u>altered states of consciousness</u> (ASCs) [4.4.10.1] to briefly examine the salient characteristics of modern Buddhist meditations. By "**modern Buddhist meditation**" is meant Buddhist meditation that has originated from an Asian country but is practised in some organized form outside of Asia over the last few generations, that is, for at least 50 years or more.

<u>Modern Buddhist meditation</u>, defined in this way, conveniently comprises two broad spectrums of meditation groups: the traditional meditation groups and the modern meditation groups. The term "**group**" is very convenient because the Buddhist meditation traditions today (and in recent times), even within the same tradition, under the same founding teacher, are, as a rule, fiercely independent.

This independence is clearly well known in **the traditional meditation groups**. Even within a well known group like that of Pa Auk Sayadaw that focuses on attaining dhyana and using the ASC for

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[309] On the psychological aspects of these visions, see SD 52.1 (8.3.1).

[310] See **Sukhumāla S** (A 3.38), SD 63.7; BA 2 f. Cf **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26) + SD 1.11 (1), where this is not mentioned.

[311] On epiphany, see SD 52.1 (7.2.3 f).

[312] See SD 60.1e (1.1.4.5 f).

[313] J 1:61,13-31; BA 6,4-6, 281,8-33.

[314] On the 4 sights and samvega, see SD 1.11 (3); SD 9 (7.6).

[315] For more details on the 4 sights and Siddhattha's renunciation from the palace, see SD 52.1 (7 f).

watching "molecules" of reality,[316] those who claimed they could "see" these mental phenomena are a rare handful.[317] Others mostly practise, as a rule, the breath meditation,[318] and if that is diffi-cult, too, the meditator may choose from a range of meditations such as the cultivation of loving-kindness,[319] any of the 4 "protective meditations,"[320] or some other simpler practices (such as watch-ing colours, perception of light, and so on).[321] This latitude is often seen in any Buddhist meditation group depending on the experience and skill of the teacher.

4.5.3.2 The suttas on meditation often relate how our understanding is applied to our own body, especially in terms of the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and conscious-ness). We are instructed to be well aware of the "rising and falling" that is impermanence and unsatisfactoriness in the manifestations of every one of these aggregates leading to our seeing nonself in the process. Essentially, this is the **dynamics** of early Buddhist meditation: we watch the changes in our body, and what these changes uncover under it all.

In modern Buddhist meditation, however, the stress, as a rule, is in the "**mechanics**" of mindful-ness: we apply the method we are taught to our body and mind. Our teachers teach us what to watch out for in our meditation, and what to do so that we can see those states. In modern medita-tions, we are taught *what* to watch out for or what *not* to watch out for (as in Zen). It is contemplat-ive choreography taught by the maestro: we simply execute it. Zen is not meditation.

In early Buddhist meditation, on the other hand, we are *not* told what exactly nonself is or is like (it would not have helped anyway): we are simply instructed to *experience* it for ourselves. It's like: go clean the toilet or clear the refuse, and we know what to do and we do it. We then learn that the lesson is about learning to listen. It's like learning to drive or play a musical instrument: we are coached but we learn by doing, wrongly and rightly, and we progress by listening to ourself, by see-ing ourself.

4.5.3.3 A key difference between the traditional meditations of Myanmar and Thailand and the **modern meditations** of East Asia (especially Japan) is that the SE Asian meditations tend to be more method-based, seeking to reprise *the early Buddhist experience*, while the East Asian meditations stress on listening and emulating the teacher*:* the *shifu*, the *sunim*, the *sensei*; we must first learn to walk, talk and sit like our teacher. Then, we must *think* like our teacher; we must lose our self to our Dharma ancestor so that we can return to what we were before we were born (and so on). Our teacher will decide when we get this right, and then certify the Dharma-transmission (the ancestral lineage of the patriarchs 祖師 *zǔshī*)[322] and our enlightenment.

Hence, the Zen master proudly declares, "Zen is not meditation" [3.3.3]. It is certainly not the "narrow" (or inferior) way (*hīnayāna*) of the traditional schools. Zen, according to D T Suzuki, is the way of Japan, whose culture (because of its enrichment with Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism) is the "most superior" of cultures. After all, Enlightenment, according to Zen, is just a status the Master certifies or transmits to you.

Indeed, it is not Buddhism but Zen that is the "Religion of Science." This was how D T Suzuki pre-sented Zen to the West at the turn of the 20th century.[323]

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[316] SD 60.1b (11 f).

[317] On these "clusters" (*kalāpa*) of realities, see SD 60.1b (11.2.1.2).

[318] On Pa Auk's breath meditation, see SD 60.1b (8.4.1-8.4.3).

[319] On lovingkindness and the divine abodes, see SD 60.1b (9).

[320] Comprising lovingkindness, recollection of the Buddha, perception of foulness, and the recollection of death: SD 60.1b (10). A better known set is that of the 6 "inspiring meditations" [3.2.1.2].

[321] These are technically "kasina" meditations: SD 60.1b (8.6).

[322] The system is patriarchal, reflecting the Confucian background of East Asia.
https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/ChanAncestors.pdf.

[323] See SD 60.1c (8.4).

4.5.3.4 Historically, the Zen as practised in the US and the West was rooted in the Soto Zen School[324] that teaches meditation mainly through a meditation called "Just Sitting" (*shikantaza*),[325] a profound opening up to what is true here and now [3.3.3.3]. In this practice, one abandons the very idea of gaining enlightenment (*satori*) or of being anywhere else. Wherever we go, there we are. It goes without saying.

It is said that one of the greatest American Soto Zen masters, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi (1904-1971), in his teaching, never spoke of satori. There was also never a need to explain why he never did so. It would simply be our view, a perception. In Soto Zen, all altered perceptions and visions are called *makyō* 魔境 ("the realm of demons")*,* "hallucination or illusion," and are ignored. Suzuki's wife, Mitsu, once joked that he never spoke about satori because he never had it![326] Ironically, religion, at its best (promoting peace and fellowship) is to just *know and smile*, free of dogmas, priestcraft and vows! Zen makes a big deal of it—in prolix lessons and prodigious tomes.

For a Zen meditator—for anyone—to sit still and be relaxed in this manner may be either the result of cultural conditioning or religious conditioning. Either way, it is still a remarkable achievement when we can affirm that stillness and relaxation with modern neural technology that it is an ASC. To be able to sit still and enjoy it is *an acceptable definition of meditation*. Enlightenment, after all, is a status granted by the sensei, a lamp (*dīpa*)[327] handed down through the patriarchs going back to the Buddha himself.[328] [3.3.4.3]

Buddhism, as a religion (like any religion), is based on fiats, the "word" of authority. The word is much more dulcetly spoken in Buddhism, especially in modern Zen. People are even more fascinated when they see that the words don't make sense, or contradicting themselves. It's not worth chasing after what makes sense: we already know that! But there is something profound when we say, "Zen is not meditation" [3.3.3]. It's almost as dramatic as declaring "Zen is not Buddhism," as Hakamaya No-riaki and Matsumoto Shirō have courageously done.[329]

4.5.3.5 The traditional schools are those that, as a rule, follow the ethnic traditions of Burmese Vipassana teachers and the Siamese[330] Kammatthana teachers. Both traditions see meditation as a means of attaining ASCs for the sake of having direct insight into the true reality of the "here and now" to reach the path and awakening. Vipassana or Insight Meditation is, however, a broad term for various groups or schools that use powerful concentration techniques and long intensive retreats to raise the meditators' consciousness beyond that of their everyday level.

Instead of seeking to transcend what the Zen teachers see as self-made moments or to "just sit" with the here and now, the Vipassana teachers basically teach that we should watch the "rise and fall" of the moment and see beyond it into true reality. It is not that "true reality" *lies* behind the rise and fall of things, but rather that fully "seeing" that fluctuation, we see ourself comprising of the aggregates that "rise and fall." We are then experiencing the reality for ourselves.

4.5.3.6 Whatever meditation tradition or method we follow—traditional or modern—whenever we calm our mind down, we are likely to lift it up in wondrous ways. More often than not, we are likely to experience joy, peace and visions that even our teachers have never dreamed of. When we choose to ignore or deny them, in keeping with our teacher's instructions, we become true followers (but just that).

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[324] See SD 60.1d (6.3.2.7).

[325] 只管打坐 Chin *zhǐguǎn dǎzuò*.

[326] J Kornfield, *Path With Heart,* Bantam Books, 1993:121.

[327] On *dīpa* as "lamp" or "island," see SD 31. (3.3).

[328] On the Zen lineage, see SD 40b.5 Transmission outside the scriptures.

[329] On Critical Buddhism, see SD 60.1c (18).

[330] Siam is the country's name until 1939, when it was changed to Thailand. When referring to the country's Buddhism, I have usually used Siam, Siamese, etc; in political and modern matters, I have usually used Thailand, Thai, etc.

Jack Kornfield, in his *A Path With Heart,* from his experience, warns us:

> The value of transcendent states is the great inspiration and compelling vision that they can bring to our lives. They can provide a powerful vision of reality beyond our day-to-day consciousness and guide us to live from this highest truth. The experiences we have of them can, at times, be profoundly healing and transforming.
>
> But their dangers and misuses are equally great. We can feel ourselves special for having had them; we can easily get attached to having them; and the drama, the body sensations, rapture, and visions all can become addictive and actually increase the craving and suffering in our life.
>
> The most pervasive danger of all is the myth that these experiences will utterly transform us, that from a moment of "enlightenment" or transcendence, our life will be wholly changed for the better. This is rarely true, and attachment to these experiences can easily lead to complacency, hubris, and self-deception.
>
> The value of the practice of immanence is its powerfully integrated approach. It brings the spirit alive here and now and infuses our whole life with a sense of the sacred. The dangers include delusion and complacency. We can easily believe we are "living in the present" and still be half asleep, following our old comfortable habits. Our initial sense of love and light can become an excuse to say that everything is already divine or perfect, and cause us to gloss over any conflict or difficulty.
>
> Some students practice this way for a long time without gaining much real wisdom. Stuck without knowing it, they may feel quite peaceful, but their lives have not been transformed and they may never fulfill the spiritual journey, never find true liberation in the midst of the world.   (Kornfield 1993:121)

4.5.3.7 When we seek to understand our meditation experiences—especially the difficult ones—why they arise, and leave them be, like breathing out, then, they become lessons for a better practice. ASCs, characterized by joy and light, can bring great inspiration and guidance to our lives. But, if we take our meditation as an inner journey, then, we should see all such experiences as passing sights and local delights.

When we hold on to any of such experiences, we will lose sight of other experiences that are awaiting us, which are just as interesting, or even more so. In Insight Meditation, we "watch and learn" this present moment as it comes and goes. It's like watching the sunset: we just keep our eye on the sun's setting glow.

Traditional meditation teachers hold similar perspectives on meditation practice. For them, ASCs are just another experience, an impermanent phenomenon—as Ajahn Chah puts it, "Just something else to let go of." Letting go is not dismissing it, but letting it go *into our memory*. To live life fully, we must learn to let go fully: that way we experience life fully. Just as we breathe in, we must breathe out, and we move on the path of life.

5 The self as path and pathy

5.1 THE SELF AS STATE AND ACT

5.1.1 The one way

5.1.1.1 The word **path** (*magga*) has 2 important senses in early Buddhism:

(1) the path of training (*magga* or *magga,paṭipadā,* SnA 2:497) and
(2) the noble path, the path of the noble ones, or the stages of true nobility (*ariya,magga*).

The former, **the path of training**, is that of the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t-taya*), that is, of moral training, of mental concentration and insight wisdom: this is the path we should be following in our daily lives as Buddhists [3.1.1.1]. The latter, **the noble path** (*ariya,magga*), is that of the saints, that is, the stream-winners, the once-returners, the non-returners and the arhats.[331]

However, our journey to the path (and away from it) will take as long as we have not reached at least underlined streamwinning. To start approaching the path, we build for ourself a good foundation in **moral training**, mindfully keeping to at least the 5 precepts, that is, *not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to lie and not to take intoxicants*. In **mental training**, we must constantly endeavour to be mindful (so that we do not break the precepts), be aware (so that we do not forget our commitment to Dharmafaring).

Being mindful and aware, we should act accountably with our body and speech, in the spirit of *the precepts*, and train our mind to see *the rise and fall of things*, so that we cultivate insight wisdom. To expedite this quest for the path, we habitually cultivate **lovingkindness**, which makes our practice easier and we attract true-hearted friends.

The purpose of this **path-training** is for us to reach the noble path in this life itself. So long as we are habitually mindful of *impermanence*—especially by practising the perception of impermanence[332]—we will surely attain streamwinning in this life itself, that is, even if it takes our last breath.[333]

5.1.1.2 The status of saints canonized by Christian Churches are recognized by those Churches in their respective official registry of saints. In the case of the early Buddhist saints, sainthood is not a status conferred by the Buddha or the sangha. Individuals reach the various **states** of the path—streamwinning, once-returning, non-returning and arhathood—by overcoming the 10 mental fetters [5.3.1.2] in stages. Since these path stages are **states** that are self-realized, only those who have realized them will know it, and others who have attained that state will recognize another of the same state or of a lower state.

More importantly, it is neither common nor normal practice to make a declaration of such a state, since we could be mistaken, or worse, we may mislead others into believing we have attained such a state for the wrong reasons. Preoccupation with attaining such a state is itself a fetter—that of **self-identity view** ("I am this!")—and a mental fetter prevents us from attaining even the first stage of the path. A serious practitioner would thus keep up their constant practice and ensure they understand true reality for their own spiritual progress. The measuring of such "attainments" should not be seen as conferring some status or title on anyone. Instead, it should simply inspire us to progress on the path and to live by such qualities for our own happiness and for that of others.

Teachings found in such texts as **the Vīmaṁsaka Sutta** (M 47) remind us to simply watch out for conditions of *greed, hatred and delusion* in oneself and in others, and to overcome them.[334] Thus when we have not yet reached the path, we will not be able to recognize any saints, much less de-

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[331] See **(Catukka) Samaṇa S** (A 4.239), SD 49.14; **Udakûpama S** (A 7.15), SD 28.6.
[332] See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.
[333] See prec n, or any of the 10 suttas of **Okkanti Saṁy** (S 25.1-10).
[334] M 47/1:317-320 (SD 35.6).

clare ourself to be one! However, it is much easier to recognize the mental fetters—especially *self-identify view, doubt and attachment to rituals and vows*—in ourself and in others.

Traditional Buddhism is often mired in the **self-view** of attaining the path—as streamwinner, etc—as a status rather than as being becoming a better person. Then, we are promoting a hierarchy of religious status instead of taking them to be **states** that transform us to be better persons. The Buddhist path is open to everyone to live with love (keeping the precepts), enjoy peace (mindfulness and meditation), and be wise (free from self-view, doubt and superstition). In this sense, the path is open to everyone in the same way: we only have to walk the path. We *are* the path.

5.1.1.3 The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10) famously called the Buddhist path "**the one way**" (*ek'-āyana magga*). Technically, this refers to the practice of the 4 satipaṭṭhānas: the contemplations of the body, of feelings, of the mind, and of realities (as mind-objects).[335] Spiritually, it is the "one-going way"[336] in the sense that we enter it by ourself for ourself. It is also the *irreversible* path: once we are awakened out of ignorance and craving, we no more, as arhats, sleep in ignorance or daydreaming delusion.[337] Even as streamwinners, we may take as long as 7 more lives but no more to gain arhathood.[338]

The early Buddhist vision of the "one-way" path—rooted in a life that is morally mindful of impermanence—is that we will begin by breaking out (*abhisamaya*) of **wrong self-views**. Our living a moral life is one that joyfully respects life and nurtures our *interbeing* with others and the environment [3.1.1.1].

5.1.1.4 We see ourself as **an evolving being**, without identifying ourself with our body or our mind (the 5 aggregates). We understand and accept that our happiness, abilities, success, or freedom are *not* subjected to any external agency or power. We accept the truth that we are fully capable of **self-reliance**, so that we will be free of views and habits that are self-limiting, that is, as the "3 fetters" (*saṁyojana*), which prevent us from true happiness and from reaching the path of awakening:

• We are not merely *our* body or mind but how we harmonize with other persons and other minds (otherwise, we can become **narcissistic**). This is **love** (*mettā*), that is, our joyful moral conduct.
• We should not seek answers and solutions *externally* to problems that are rooted within us which we must ourself work on; we may then become **superstitious** and manipulative: we are then driven to become **Machiavellian**. We need **mindfulness** (*sati*), knowing and remembering truth and goodness for the benefit of self and others.
• We should avoid vows and rituals, especially those that make us *calculative*; we then think only of self-benefit even by being dishonest or devious; as a result, we are likely to show emotional, even **psychopathic** symptoms because of our **doubts** in what is true and good (especially the Dharma). We should thus cultivate **wisdom** (*paññā*) that guides us by our vision of what is true (impermanence) and good (happiness).

As Buddhists, the path is always open to us. We need no empowerment, vow or ritual to walk this path. We can and must embody the 3 refuges: the **love** of the Buddha, the **heart** (or mind) of Dharma; and the **wisdom** of the path (the noble sangha). These are our *daily refuges*: love like the Buddha, feel the Dharma in every breath, and think nobly like the path sangha: *love, feel, think.*

Psychosocially, the 3 fetters form what are called the "dark triad" since they prevent us from evolving *socially,* too. [5.4.1]

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[335] **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,2/1;55), SD 13.3.
[336] On *ekâyana,* see SD 13.1 (3.2).
[337] On nirvana as irreversible, see SD 17.8b (4.2.6).
[338] On "7 lives at most," see SD 60.1d (7.7.2).

5.1.1.5 We seek to understand the Buddha's awakening and the way of the true arhats in **the early Buddhist teachings**, as preserved in the Pali suttas and other sources. We understand that after the Buddha, as Buddhism spread outside India and people outside India were inspired by the Buddha's teachings, they adopted and adapted Buddhism into their own culture, translated the suttas into their own languages, and even wrote their own Buddhist texts, often with innovations and teachings that contradicted those of the Buddha.

We will work to accept such teachings that are not against the spirit of early Buddhism, and work, where possible, to understand why there are teachings that contradict or revise the historical Buddha and his Dharma. While we respect such innovations and contradictions for what they are, we also accept that they are rooted in early Buddhism and should respect it. A tree cut off from its roots will die.

When the modern Buddhists have revised or contradicted awakening (*bodhi*) as realized and taught by the Buddha, we will not, in any way, work to water down or misrepresent what the historical Buddha has taught, and in no way distort the root teachings of early Buddhism. We will tolerate differences of opinion as much as possible in the same way as the Buddha himself has skilfully dialogued with those who disagree with him or differ from his teachings. We accept the reality that we are all at different levels of development in our wisdom but we celebrate our compassion and our fellowship in our **oikoumene**,[339] the Dharma-spirited world.

5.1.2 Psychology, religion and Buddhism

5.1.2.1 If the divergences between early Buddhism and later Buddhisms are significantly distracting, the differences between early Buddhism and other religions are psychologically challenging. If it's any consolation, such dangers and disasters are mostly noticed only by the serious practitioners of early Buddhism or specialists in religious history, comparative religion, sociology, psychology or literature. Most Buddhists, like other religious followers, are often obliviously preoccupied with pomp and piety in their opulent, decaying massive mansions to even know that wildfires are burning ever nearer on all four sides until they are actually burnt, that is, if they are able to feel it.

On the bright side, we are at a very exciting stage in our human evolution and civilized history when the scientific learning is having a handle on religion, and modern psychology is experiencing a growth spurt closely studying meditation and consciousness through Buddhism. In this win-win situation, psychology is modernizing Buddhism, and Buddhism is broadening psychology's theoretical base and quantum horizon.

If we take a "quantum" as the smallest discrete unit of a phenomenon, then Buddhism is right now inspiring modern psychology to rethink and extend its final frontier: **consciousness**. Perhaps Buddhism may even succeed in showing psychology the reality and benefits of a mind freed from the prison of the skull; that ours is an extended mind, that our consciousnesses are interlinked as persons, as beings, as a society, as the world and beyond. The significance of such an open approach to religion, psychology, science and learning is ground-breaking and life-affirming.[340] [5.1.4.1]

5.1.2.2 A professional survey of American and Canadian psychologists in 1982 placed Carl Rogers (1902-1987), the founder of client-centred humanistic psychology, as the most influential psychotherapist in history; Albert Ellis (1913-2007) was second to him; and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) third.[341] In 1922, 20-year-old **Rogers**, after a trip to Beijing, China for an international Christian conference began to doubt his religious convictions. To help him ascertain his career choice, he attended

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[339] On intra-Buddhist dialogue and respect, see **Bahu Vedanīya S** (M 59,5/1:398), SD 30.4; **Pañcak'aṅga S** (S 36.19), SD 30.1; SD 17.3 (4 esp 4.3.2).

[340] SD 60.1e (12.7).

[341] NY Times 16 Dec 2006: "Despite illness and lawsuits, a famed psychotherapist is temporarily back in session" https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/10/nyregion/10ellis.html. D Smith, "Trends in counseling and psychotherapy," *American Psychologist* 37,7 1982:802-809. https://doi.org/10.1037%2F0003-066X.37.7.802.

a seminar on *Why am I entering the Ministry?* Following that seminar, he decided to give up the evangelical ministry for a career that would heal people.

Albert Ellis, the founder of "rational emotive behaviour therapy" (REBT), is generally considered one of the originators of the cognitive-revolutionary paradigm shift in psychotherapy, and an early proponent and developer of cognitive-behavioural therapies.[342] Robert Epstein, writing in *Psychology Today* declares of Ellis that "No individual—not even Freud—has had a greater impact on modern psychotherapy."[343]

Interestingly, all three—Rogers, Ellis and Freud—were atheists.[344] Of them, the most outspoken atheist was surely Ellis who labelled himself as a "probabilistic atheist."[345] Ellis was a sharp-eyed, quick-talking therapist known for his direct and confrontational approach. He is attributed to have quipped, "Neurosis (is) just a high-class word for whining!"[346]

5.1.2.3 One important facet of religiosity is religious belief—specifically belief about **human sin-fulness**. Though it has been the subject of very little empirical investigation, it is widely thought that belief in human sinfulness impedes good mental health. This view is clearly and loudly voiced by Ellis and others. Belief in human sinfulness has been labeled "the direct and indirect cause of virtually all neurotic disturbance" (Ellis 1983),[347] "disastrously harmful psychologically" (Branden 1969),[348] and ''incompatible'' with sound mental health (Watters 1992).[349] According to Ellis, believing in sin not only destroys self-esteem, but it also fosters guilt, maladaptive attribution styles, and interpersonal mistrust (Ellis 1962). Ellis came to this conclusion after years of therapy work with God-believing clients and observing this pathological pattern.[350]

When the doctrine of sin is successfully indoctrinated into believers, it is likely that they are more likely to feel guilt about falling short not only of God's glory, but practically every other thing that the religious authority decides should not be violated or tolerated by the flock. In short, the follower has handed over his remote-control to the religious leader. At its worst, this surrendering to a higher authority may end up as **abdication syndrome** [2.6].

Even the notion of Christ dying on the cross "for our sins"—which has the grand theological term of "substitutionary atonement"—should be carefully re-examined. What does it mean to say that Christ had done for us that which we can never do for ourselves? Isn't the fact that our parents gave us life and lived for us, raising us, so that we can live to this day a realer and greater gift for us?[351]

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[342] P Knapp & A T Beck (2008). "Cognitive therapy: Foundations, conceptual models, applications, and research," *Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria* 30 (Suppl II) 2006:54-64. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19039445.

[343] R Epstein, "The Prince of Reason," *Psychology Today*, 1 Jan 2001: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/200101/the-prince-reason.

[344] Rogers was an agnostic later in his life, and in his final years conceded that there was a realm "beyond" scientific psychology, "the indescribable, the spiritual." R Kramer, "The birth of client-centered therapy: Carl Rogers, Otto Rank, and ''The Beyond','" *J of Humanistic Psychology* 35,4 1995:54-110.

[345] On "probabilistic atheism," see Spectrum of theistic probability - Wikipedia.

[346] This attr is unattested. Ellis could have quipped off the cuff and someone remembered it. Or, it might be a rehash of a line from "The case against religion," (1971, 1985) where he wrote " … neurosis or psychosis is something of a high-class name for childishness or dependency; and religion, when correctly used, is little more than a synonym for dependency." (1983, 1985:15).

[347] A Ellis, Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy, 1962:146, repr 1963.

[348] N Branden, *The Psychology of Self-esteem,* San Francisco, 1969:219, repr 2001.

[349] W W Watters, Deadly Doctrine: health, illness, and Christian God-talk, 1992:140.

[350] See eg A Ellis, "There is no place for the concept of sin in psychotherapy," *J of Counseling Psychology* 7,3 1960:188-192 https://doi.org/10.1037/h0048184. *The Case Against Religion: a psychotherapist's view* [1971]*, and The Case Against Religiosity* [1983], Austin, TX: American Atheist Press, 1985. "Rational and irrational beliefs in counselling psychology," Address to British Psychological Assoc, Leeds, UK, 16 Apr 1988. *J of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy* 8,4 winter 1990.

[351] Punk poet laureate Patti Smith (US singer, songwriter, poet, painter and author) fused rock and poetry in her work. Her song "Gloria" (1975) begins: "Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine … my sins belong to me, to me." [SD 16.1c (14.3.1)] Based on a tune (1964) by Van Morrison (N Irish singer songwriter), the lyrics had

The notion that someone else can die for our "sins" is profoundly meaningless unless we blindly believe it. When we are made to believe in such an absurdity, we can also be made to commit any atrocity. The numerous and lengthy religious wars in European history are painful witness to such atrocities. Even in times of peace, the absurdity of *substitutionary atonement* continued to be exemplified in the royal practice of the "**whipping boy,**" a boy educated along with a young prince or nobleman who took punishment in place of that noble.

5.1.2.4 Ellis [5.1.2.2] explains that Christianity not only teaches sin, but also "God's grace," forgiving sinners even when they do not deserve it. It's comforting to be told that there's God's grace, but a religious idea does not always work the way its preachers hope it would. The point is that often enough the very idea of "grace" from some unseen supreme "Being" makes those with <u>self-guilt</u> suppress it all the more. Ellis claimed that <u>the negative mental health effects of self-guilt</u> appear stronger or are clearer when they are not being masked by a concurrent or buffering belief in God's forgiveness[352]—which makes it more identifiable and easier to correct in a proper way. Ellis' critics[353] charge that he was working only with a small sample, and did not compare it with the wider population, such as **Rodney Stark**'s "Psychopathology and religious commitment" (1971).[354]

We should here differentiate between scholarly surveys and the expert's feedback. **Stark**, in his 1971 paper holds contrary views: "that conventional religiousness is not a product of psychopathology" and that "the neurotic and mentally ill seem to be significantly less likely to exhibit conventional religious commitment."[355] It should be noted that Stark's scholarly survey was a type of "macro" view of the specialist's field (in this case sociology).

Stark's authoritative paper makes interesting reading, especially where he is expertly telling colleagues in the same field how to work with concepts of "psychopathology," "psychopathy," "religiousness," "authoritarianism" and so on. He writes about how to properly define such terms, and how to make proper and useful measurements in sociological studies.

Although we may learn a few things about how scholars think, Stark's views are more useful to the sociologists and are meant so. Ellis, on the other hand, was writing about his own experiences with a certain group of people of interest, and such studies are more useful in helping us understand the workings of the religious mind—at least more relatively useful than Stark's learned overview.

5.1.2.5 Albert Ellis, in his article, *The case against religion* (1971), makes this astute observation, which is of little interest to scholars, but a refreshing wake-up call for the religious:

> In a sense, the religious person must have no real views of his own and it is presumptuous of him, in fact, to have any. In regard to sex-love affairs, to marriage and family relations, to business, to politics, and to virtually everything else that is important in his life, he must try to discover what his god and his clergy would like him to do; and he must primarily do their bidding.   (Ellis, 1971:5, repr 1985)

However, we should not conclude that just because Ellis took the words right out of our mouth means he thinks the way we think (or these words mean just the way we think). While giving Ellis that right, we should be able to think for ourself, too. In the light of early Buddhism, <u>not having an opinion</u> is a remarkable state where our mind is calm and clear, or when we are willing and able to listen to

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been adapted from an early poem, "Oath" (1970s). R Padgett, *Cover Me: the stories behind the greatest cover songs of all times,* NY 2017:104-115. (Thanks to Matt Jenkins for this. 19 Sep 2023).

[352] See eg J E Uecker et al, "Belief in human sinfulness, belief in experiencing divine forgiveness, and psychiatric symptoms," *Review of Religious Research* 2016:58 1-26.2016:4, 14 f.

[353] See eg "Relational Emotive Behavior Therapy" [EncyclopediaPub] 2022: part 7.

[354] Eg R Stark, "Psychopathology and religious commitment," *Review of Religious Research* 12,3 Deviance, change, and religion, spring 1971:165-176.

[355] Stark 1971:175.

others with an open mind, not only to know what they are thinking, but to ask them the right ques-
tions, to get to know them better, or to get them to know themselves better.

Informed Buddhists are unlikely to see moral conduct, as taught by the Buddha, to be simply a
fiat against licentiousness (behaving like "goats and sheep and fowl and pigs and dogs and jackals"[356])
but rather to see **moral conduct** as an act, indeed a life of selfless all-embracing love (*mettā*) for the
lives of others, their happiness, being truthful for their good, respecting their freedom and encourag-
ing mindfulness.

Doing what we feel like doing and enjoying ourselves may be seen as something creative—provid-
ed it is inspired by *beauty and truth* and inspires *beauty and truth.* Our actions (deed and speech) are
beautiful not only because they are pleasing to the senses, but because we embody the 5 values—
those of *life, happiness, freedom, truth and mindfulness*—underlying the 5 precepts, and also because
they are true, not false. This is the foundation of **Buddhist aesthetics**. In early Buddhism, ethics and
aesthetics are intimately related. [5.2.1.2 (b)]

5.1.3 The perfect imperfection

5.1.3.1 Almost all the world's major religions see this world as being created and imperfect, and
offer a way out of it for some divine kind of perfection, but each religion's salvific agendum is differ-
ent from the rest. The God-believers invented the notion of sin—basically a non-acceptance or rejec-
tion of their God-idea—but buffers this with another notion: God's grace of forgiving those who *do*
accept him (after all).

Instead of this roundabout mysterious I-Thou relationship, the early Buddhist teaching is simply
that this is an imperfect world, physically and ontologically (as a place and as the beings that inhabit
it). However, the real imperfection is with *how we view all this*: how we form (*abhisaṅkharoti*) our
virtual world (*saṅkhārā*) out of the imperfect world. This world of formations (*saṅkhāra,loka*)[357] is
the "perfect imperfection" that we have to unravel, see it as is: *to truly see and be free.*

5.1.3.2 The Buddhist worldview starts with the most obvious place: we really do not know what
is going on—**ignorance**. We start by sensing things and making sense of things. As we become more
civilized —by extending our sensing and minding, that is, our minds—we begin to see our "sensing"
capability as the mind, understand better how we have been "minding" what we sense. We learn
through trial and error, painfully slowly over a long time. This is our *collective learning process,* how
we are able to transmit our learning to others and to posterity.

This ability to transmit learning, broaden it and repeat it from this growing pool of common
knowledge is the basis of our **evolution**. Not only is our body changed and improved, but so is our
mind. This can be called our cognitive development rooted in the understanding that we are over-
whelmed by ignorance which puts us at a grave disadvantage, which also threatens our *lives,
property, freedom, learning and minds*. Very crudely, this is what early Buddhism calls **the 1st noble
truth**, that of suffering (on account of ignorance).

In our ignorance, we form views and beliefs from our sense-experiences. Before the Buddha's
time, we had almost no idea that these views and beliefs are very powerful: they actually drive us to
run after those sense-experiences that seem to reward us with *life, things, love (reproduction), know-
ledge and pleasure*. We feel we need these things; so we crave after them. Following the Buddha's
teaching, we learn this to be **the 2nd noble truth**, the arising of suffering, that is, our craving pushes us
to chase after things, and so view our sense-experiences more than what they really are. Craving and
ignorance work together.

5.1.3.3 Despite the constraints of prevalent religions and culture, the wiser and open-minded
amongst our premodern ancestors began to understand how our views, beliefs and attitudes are the

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[356] **Hiri Ottappa S** (A 2.9/1:51), SD 2.5c, SD 51.9.
[357] On the worlds of space, of beings and of formations: SD 15.7 (3.5.1 (2)); SD 17.6 (3.1.3.2).

circumstantial responses and effects of our own <u>thinking</u>: they are <u>the epiphenomena</u> of our minds [4.2.4]. Even before that, over 2500 years ago in northern India, the Buddha knows this and teaches us to look deeper into this vital reality.

Since all these views, beliefs and attitudes have arisen in our minds, clearly we have created them *ourselves*. They are all *in* our minds, and will have no effect on us unless we act on them with our body and communicate them to others. Or, we can learn from the effects of these views, beliefs and attitudes, and adjust ourselves accordingly, and even correct those conditions.

Hence, we can *choose* to act on them or not to act on them; in other words, we can also *end* ignorance and craving in a way that is wholesome (beneficial) for us. This is, in fact, the goal of Buddhist practice—**the 3rd noble truth**: the ending of suffering and the key to our mental liberation. This ideal state is known as "nirvana" (*nibbāna*); perhaps a better term for it is "trans-ideal" since it is free of body and mind, beyond space and time.

5.1.3.4 The Buddha lived in northern India at a time when society was dominated by those who claimed to be "**noble**" (*ariya*), on account of being "high-born," fair-skinned, and masters of sacred lore. The Buddha himself was born into a kshatriya clan, one of 4 Aryan classes.[358] The Buddha highlighted the fact that no one is born pure or good: our actions make us so.

While the brahmins ostentatiously perform **karma** as ritual acts of purification and sacraments ostensibly to acclaim the "twice-born" (those born of the womb and of their high caste) for heaven and for the union of their personal Soul (*ātman*) with the universal Soul (*brahman*). The Buddha redefines <u>karma</u> (*kamma*) as "intention" (*cetanā*), any action rooted in *greed, hate or delusion*; this is what makes one impure, unwholesome with painful results for the doer. He rejects any notion of *ātman* or abiding entity.

We are "noble" (*ariya*)—a specific term for those on the path of awakening—because we are <u>wholesome</u> (*kusala*) or "skillful" in our bodily acts, speech and thoughts, and are <u>selfless</u>, having abandoned all thoughts of self, soul or external agency. Our task as followers of the Dharma, we live the wholesome selfless life. The Buddha rejects the brahminical Dharma of class and external agency and declares the natural Dharma of moral goodness, mental purity and liberating wisdom through personal effort (internal agency). In this way, we are *ennobled* and liberated by our understanding of the 4 noble truths.

5.1.4 Cognitive development

5.1.4.1 While our <u>cognitive development</u> [5.1.3.2], by way of moral conduct, purifies our bodily actions and speech, this *moral virtue* in turn supports the mind, keeping it calm and clear. This helps us to see the true nature of suffering and its main causes: ignorance and craving. In this way, we have <u>understood</u> the 1st noble truth that is **suffering**. Living a moral life that engages in mindfulness, even mental concentration, we are able to <u>abandon</u> the 2nd noble truth, that is, **craving**. Thus far we have mastered our senses so that we are better prepared to work with the mind. Cognitive development thus refers to the proper minding of the senses.

Having mastered our senses well enough, we are ready to work directly on the mind through mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*). Having learned how to <u>cultivate</u> our mind to be free of *greed* and *lust*, we go on to work with freeing our mind from all notions of self and other-agency. We see how any kind of **self-view** makes us see ourself as being disconnected from others. We see ourself as *our self*, and measure it against others as other selves. We see all as *things* to be collected and exploited.

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[358] The 4 Aryan classes (*vaṇṇa;* Skt *varṇa,* "colour") were the kshatriya (*khattiya;* Skt *kṣatriya*), the warrior or ruling landed class; the brahmin (ts, *brāhmana*), the priests or learned class; the vaishya (*vessa;* Skt *vaiśya*), the merchant class; the shudras (*sudda;* Skt *śūdra*), the skilled worker class; and the 5th (*pañcama*) "outcastes," a broad term for the dark-skinned autochthonous people. See **Te,vijja S** (D 13,19 n), SD 1.8; SD 10.8 (6).

We thus fail to see how our mind works in harmony with other minds as the extended mind, the interbeing of minds, beyond ourself. In reality, there is neither self nor soul, but for selfish reasons and purposes *we cling to the notion that there is one*. We are then but a dark empty shadow, a hollow phantom of a *self* (*attā*). To correct this mirage, we cultivate the mind to abandon self-view, along with the notions of blaming "others" for our failures and troubles, or of handing our remote to some outside power or higher agency. In this way, we break the 3 fetters (*saṁyojana*) of self-deception[359] to reach the path of awakening. This is the 4th noble truth, that is **to be cultivated**, since it is the path.[360]

5.1.4.2 Once we are on the path of awakening, we are "always on the move" up the path. We may slow down a bit sometimes, or even seem to stall momentarily, but we will never fall back. No matter how slow we may progress on the path, we will attain arhathood or nirvana within 7 lives.[361] The idea of the "path" is just that: movement; we are the path, we are the journey, by our Dharma practice, heading for nirvana. We should not, of course, take this metaphor too far or oversimply it dismissively: *Wherever we are there we are*! In fact, we have really stagnated, tricked and trapped by tautology.

Those on the path—the streamwinners, the once-returners, the non-returners and the arhats—are naturally moved by positive emotions: *lovingkindness, compassion, joy and equanimity*. They are happy beings who naturally tend to make others happy, too, under the right conditions. Conversely, we, who have not reached the path, may expedite our journey with these positive emotions, especially with lovingkindness.

Our heart of lovingkindness fills us with the positive emotion that simply moves us to unconditionally embrace other beings. The heart of lovingkindness also inspires to move us closer to the path. Lovingkindness is said to hinder the working of bad karma, and to soften the impact of bad karma. Lovingkindness inspires us to keep the precepts, avoid bad and do good. Whether we are moving or still, we try to show good to others. In this sense, we can see the last 2 noble truths as inspiring us on the path of **emotive development**,[362] cultivating positive emotions for moving up the path to **nirvana**, that is, the 3rd noble truth.[363]

5.1.5 Emotive development

5.1.5.1 I've used "cognitive" and "emotive" to psychologically highlight the key developments in the connection with the 1st and 2nd truths, and with the 4th and 3rd truths respectively. The noble truths that are *suffering* and the *arising* of suffering entail **cognitive development** since they have to do much with how we know things through our sense-experiences, and suffering arising from this knowing or cognizing, rooted in ignorance and driven by craving. Feelings and emotions (in connection with liking and disliking) also arise in this causal phase, but they are usually negative, even wholesome feelings and emotions have only a weak effect in transforming us.

5.1.5.2 In the **emotive development** phase, we see feelings and emotions becoming wholesome *moving* us in the direction of moral virtue and mental concentration. In this phase, we are more familiar with the 5 faculties of *faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration* and *wisdom.[364]* Faith is usually

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[359] On the 3 fetters of self-deception—self-identity view, attachment to rituals and vow, and doubt—see SD 60.1d (7.6).

[360] The "teaching model" of the 4 truths are familiarly numbered 1-2-3-4. In terms of practice, the "path" is placed in the 3rd position in the 4 truths. Having reached the path, we finally attain nirvana (the 3rd noble truth). See SD 60.1d (1.2.10.3); also **Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika S** (M 149,11 etc) + SD 41.9 (2.4); SD 53.26 (2).

[361] On "seven-at-most" (*satta-k,khattu parama*), see SD 60.1d (3.3.4.1, 7.7.2.1).

[362] The ideas of "cognitive" and "emotive" developments are inspired by my reading of R Stark 1971:173.

[363] See n on "the path" at the end of (4.5.6.5).

[364] See *Pañc'indriya,* SD 10.4; SD 3.6 (3); SD 54.3h (3.1).

already present in the first phase, but is stronger and wiser here, supported by the other faculties. These faculties are, of course, conducive to meditation and mental cultivation.

Hence, "emotive" as used here means more than just "feeling" or "emotion" (even in a good sense): it is what *moves* (from Latin, *ēmovēre,* "to move out") us. This has the twin senses of *moving* us *into* wholesome actions, and moving us to show wholesome actions *to* others. Here, the mind is wholesomely extended to *touch* other minds and *be* touched by them: wisdom and compassion are at work.

5.1.6 The golden rule

5.1.6.1 Emotive development is our habitual and constant movement towards the real and good, **the divine life** (*brahma,vihāra*) of love, ruth (compassion), joy and peace: even in our human form, we live together like gods. This is not a status we pronounce, but a social state that we culti-vate inspired by the golden rule: *what is good for us, by that rule, should be good for others, too.* Conversely, what is bad for us is also bad for others.

The principles behind the golden rule is summarized in these 2 **Dhammapada** verses:

sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa	All tremble at the rod [violence];	
sabbe bhāyanti maccuno	all fear death.	
attānaṁ upamaṁ katvā	Making oneself the example,[365]	
na haneyya na ghāteyya	one should neither kill nor cause to kill.	(Dh 129)
sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa	All tremble at the rod;	
sabbesaṁ jīvitaṁ piyaṁ	all love life.	
attānaṁ upamaṁ katvā	Making oneself the example,	
na haneyya na ghātaye	one should neither kill nor cause to kill.	(Dh 130)[366]

5.1.6.2 The Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta (S 55.7) elaborates how this principle is applied to each of the 7 unwholesome karmic courses (*akusala kamma,patha*) regarding bodily actions and speech, thus:

3 wrong bodily actions: killing, stealing and sexual misconduct
4 wrong kinds of speech: lying, slandering, harsh speech, idle chatter

The Sutta exhorts us to be pure threefold in the above regard, that is, (1) abstain from the unwhole-some act itself; (2) we exhort others against it; and (3) we speak in praise of abstaining from it. This embodies **the threefold purity of action** (*ti,koti parisuddhi*) in moral terms.[367]

Keeping our actions and speech pure in this manner, we are said to be practising for our own welfare and for the welfare of others (*atta,hitāya ca paṭipanno hoti para,hitāya ca*), as stated in **the Atta,hita Sutta** (A 4.96) and **the (Catukka) Sikkhā Sutta** (A 4.99).[368] **The Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31) applies the golden rule in the practice of reciprocal social ethics between parents and children, teachers and students, spouses and family, bosses and workers, religious teachers and practitioners.[369] In our own daily lives, we should be guided by the spirit of **the 5 precepts** [5.2.1.2 (a)].

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[365] Ie, taking ourself to be the other person or being, putting ourself in the place of another.
[366] **Dh 129** SD 22.8 (4.23); SD 27.3 (3.1); SD 32.5 (3.1); **Dh 129 f** SD 1.5 (1).
[367] S 55.7,6-12 (SD 1.5).
[368] Respectively, A 4.96/2:96 f (SD 64/6); A 4.99/2:99 (SD 64.9).
[369] D 31,27-34 (SD 4.1).

5.1.7 Karma as act, karma as state

5.1.7.1 The Buddha has declared that **karma** (*kamma*) is "intention" [4.5.6.4], that is, our thoughts *count* in all our actions: as we think, so are our actions (Dh 1 f).[370] Karma, then, is our <u>state</u> of mind just before we act, whether it is wholesome or unwholesome. Let us briefly explore this idea here in keeping with the series theme: *a psychopathology of mindfulness*. We will examine the significance of karma as act and as state: karma as what we *do*, and karma as what we *are.*

The Buddha's teaching on karma as **act** is versified in the opening quatrains of **the Dhamma-pada**, as follows:

mano,pubbaṅ,gamā dhammā	The mind precedes (unwholesome) states;
mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā	the mind is supreme; mind-made are they:
manasā ce paduṭṭhena	when, with a defiled mind,
bhāsati vā karoti vā	one speaks or acts,
tato naṁ dukkham anveti	suffering thus follows one
cakkaṁ va vahato padaṁ	like a wheel that dogs a draught-ox's foot. (Dh 1)
mano,pubb'aṅgamā dhammā	The mind precedes (wholesome) states;
mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā	the mind is supreme; mind-made are they:
manasā ce pasannena	when, with a pure mind,
bhāsati vā karoti vā	one speaks or acts,
tato naṁ sukham anveti	happiness thus follows one
chāyā va anapāyinī	like a shadow that leaves not. (Dh 2)

5.1.7.2 The expression, "**karma as act**" refers to our personal accountability for our actions. In this sense, all our cognitive acts—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking—whether conscious or unconscious have karmic potential. Without training in moral virtue and mindful qualities, our thoughts behind our acts are likely to be unwholesome, either rooted in greed or in hatred.

Technically, both greed-rooted and hatred-rooted acts are also likely to be rooted in delusion; hence, we still create karma <u>unconsciously</u> (*acittaka*) (such as a hunter or a robber) or unmindfully (*asampajāna*) (such as driving carelessly or getting drunk).[371] For this reason, the Buddha declares that "heedlessness is the path of death" (*pamādo maccuno pādaṁ*), "the heedless are as if dead" (*ye pamattā yathā matā*) (Dh 21). "The path of death" refers to the cycle of rebirth and redeath (*saṁsāra*)—the "opposite" of the death-free, nirvana.[372]

5.1.7.3 "**Karma as state**" is an expression for our past karma collectively. Such karma is clearly unmeasurable, going back to the time when we started thinking (in this world-cycle); then, there are past world-cycles, in which we have existed, too. To simplify this immense store of bad karma, we can call it "ignorance and craving," or greed, hatred and delusion, since they are always at the root of our unwholesome actions (Dh 1).

Psychologically, we can see "karma as state" as referring to our **latent tendencies** (*anusaya*) [4.2.1.2]. This is a helpful term for all our past karma which habituates what we are now. There are certain bad habits we have (especially in terms of breaking the precepts) that arise from our latent tendencies. These are habitual bad karma which keeps us trapped in a painful cycle of bad rebirth after bad rebirth, and suffering even here and now.

Even if we cannot prove rebirth (and have no psychic or meditative powers to see past lives) the theory or idea of **rebirth** is very helpful in deterring us from creating bad karma. In other words, to

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[370] For tr & nn, see SD 8.3 (3).

[371] SD 17.8b (1.2); SD 51.20 (2.2.2); SD 57.10 (1.3.2.1).

[372] For details on karma as act, see Karma (SD 18.1).

break an old bad karmic habit, it helps to create a new good karmic habit. If we are capable of doing bad, we are also capable of doing good.

5.1.7.4 In fact, it is our <u>capacity for good</u> that gives momentum to our **human and social evolution**: we learn to accept others (including non-humans and nature); to share what we have and help others; to love others, have families and communities; to communicate and learn effectively (with truthfulness); and to train our minds so that we better ourselves as individuals and as a society. These are essentially <u>the 5 precepts</u>, and why they are vital for our prosperity, more so for survival as humans so that we can grow spiritually. [5.1.1.1]

In the spirit of this understanding, it is meaningful to speak of **group karma**—the coincidence and interlinking of wholesome acts as partners, family, community, society, humanity and ecology. Group karma exists as our concerted efforts to *avoid bad, do good, purify the mind*. We can and must do this because of our <u>extended mind</u>.[373] [3.1.1.1]

Very simply, society exists because of our extended mind, our interbeing of minds. The notion of self undermines and shatters this wholesome interbeing. Conventionally, we may refer to our "self" but this is really our own mind. Hence, **self-reliance** [4.2.5.2] means to rely on our own mind, our own selves, to think wisely (*yoniso manasikāra*), that is, *to avoid bad, do good, purify our minds*. To "purify" the mind is to free it from *greed, hatred and delusion*; and to keep that purity, we act communally in charity, love and wisdom. For our personal practice, we cultivate lovingkindness, compassion, joy and equanimity, <u>the 4 divine abodes</u>.[374]

5.2 THE 5 FACULTIES OF DHARMA-SPIRITED INTERBEING

5.2.1 Faith as a socializing faculty

5.2.1.1 We will here examine how **the 5 faculties** (*pañc'indriya*)—faith (*saddhā*), effort (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*)—empower and transform our inter-relationship with others in a Dharma-spirited community.[375] The first and foremost activity of a good Buddhist community—one that defines it as <u>Dharma-spirited</u>—is the willingness and ability of its individual members to listen to one another in a healing and restorative manner: through wise listening, the troubled and disoriented are accepted as a wholesome part of the community again. The special Buddhist term for this is **spiritual friendship** (*kalyāṇa mittatā*), that is, faith in one another through the Buddha Dharma. Although this describes the wholesome partnership between meditator and meditation teacher, its healing potential can be extended to Buddhist counselling or Dharma-spirited pastoral care.

I mention "**pastoral care**" because it is a term often used by modern psychologists to differentiate between professional or clinical counselling and <u>faith-based counselling</u>. The process of modern psychological counselling today often overlaps with faith-based counselling. Religious beliefs and inclinations are often at the roots of personal problems or related to them. Hence, we cannot and should not see them as separate situations. This also means that it is advantageous for the Buddhist counsellor to be familiar with, even master, professional psychological counselling, without watering down the basic Buddhist teachings and ideals.[376]

5.2.1.2 Clinical counselling basically keeps to the rule of helping the client to help themselves. The rationale for this is simple enough: the clinical counsellor had neither the wisdom nor the duty to

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[373] On extended minds, see SD 60.1e (12.7).
[374] On the 4 divine abodes, see **Brahma,vihāra** (SD 38.5).
[375] On the 5 faculties, see SD 10.4; SD 3.6 (3); SD 54.3h (3.1).
[376] For a helpful study in faith-based counselling, McMinn, Ruiz, Marx, Wright & Gilbert, "Professional psychology and the doctrines of sin and grace: Christian leaders; perspectives," *Faculty Publications, Grad Sch of Clinical Psychology* paper 170, 2006.

"help" the client during that window of counselling. **The Buddhist counsellor**, on the other hand, shares a common faith and vision with the counsellee, which gives the counsellor great latitude to help the counsellee. Strictly speaking, counselling is not merely a counselling "session" or "ritual": it is a characteristic of true Buddhist spiritual friendship, or who is at least a "true-hearted friend."

The **Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31) lists the qualities of both a true-hearted friend and a spiritual friend. Essentially, the **true-hearted friend** (*suhada mitta*) is *helpful, constant in joy and sorrow, a good counsellor,* and is *caring.*[377] The qualities of a good counsellor are what every Buddhist could cultivate for a wholesome family and society.

A good counsellor (*atth'akkhāyī*) is a true-hearted friend for these 4 reasons:

(a) **They restrain us from doing bad**. The true Buddhist life is inspired by respect for life, for labour, liberty, light (truth and wisdom), and a level mind (the 5 L's for moral values underpinning the 5 precepts). A true-hearted friend inspires us to live a moral life of truth and beauty.[378] [5.1.1.1]

(b) **They exhort us to do good**. "Good" refers to the *beauty* of the moral life rooted in the 5 L's: a love for *life, work, freedom, truth and mindfulness.* This is the essence of the "good life" of truth and beauty, the essence of Buddhist aesthetics.[379]

(c) **They let us hear what we have not heard before**.[380] Things "not heard before" (*assuta*) usually refers to the Buddha's teaching that is helpful to us; there's nothing secret about it; yet, we have never known it before. These are good simple tips in wholesome living that go a long way to bring us true and lasting happiness.

(d) **They show us the way to heaven**. A "heavenly" life is defined as "divine abiding" (*brahma,-vihāra*), a life here and now of *true love, kindness (ruth),*[381] *joy and inner peace*. We feel loved, safe, happy and peaceful with such a friend.[382]

A good teacher—especially one who teaches us mindfulness and meditation—who shows true friendship (*kalyāṁa,mittatā*) is called a **spiritual friend** (*kalyāṇa mitta*). Their 6 qualities, very similar to those of the true-hearted friend, are as follows, as stated in **the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31):[383]

(a) They restrain us from (doing) bad.
(b) They exhort us in (doing) good.
(c) They, with a good mind, show us compassion. (They teach us mindfulness and concentration.)
(d) They let us hear what we have not heard before. (They teach us the Dhamma.)
(e) They clarify what we have heard.
(f) They show us the way to heaven. (They teach us how to reach the path.)

5.2.2 Effort as a socializing faculty

5.2.2.1 Secondly, a good Buddhist community stresses its individual member's **personal effort**, reflecting the ideal that the Buddha's teaching centres on the efficacy of human endeavour, our quest for self-awakening. We have already highlighted the key idea that "personal effort" rejects any

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[377] On a "true-hearted friend" (*suhada mitta*), see D 31,21-25 (SD 4.1); also **Dūta S** (A 8.16), SD 46.7 (8.2). On the "spiritual friend" (*kalyāṇa,mitta*), esp in terms of meditation, see SD 8.1. **Ṭhānā S** (A 4.192) lists 4 ways of truly knowing a person: (1) through living with another, another's moral virtue is known; (2) through dealing with another, another's honesty is known, (3) through adversities, another's fortitude [moral strength] is known, and (4) through discussing with another, his wisdom is known (A 4.192/2:187-190), SD 14.12.

[378] On moral conduct (*sīla*): its rationale: SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5); helped by lovingkindness: SD 1.5 (2.9); leads to concentration: SD 57.10 (3.1.2).

[379] On Buddhist aesthetics, see SD 59.14ab (1.2.3); SD 46.5 (2.1.2); SD 50.16 (1.1.1); SD 60.1c (9.8.2 (6)).

[380] Ie, he teaches you what you do not know.

[381] I think we should resurrect this beautiful old Anglo-Saxon word.

[382] On the divine abodes, see **Brahma,vihāra** (SD 38.5).

[383] D 31,24+33 (SD 4.1).

notion of "other-agency" in terms of a supreme being, and any theology in that connection. Further, this endeavour is not a *self-centred* effort but a training that frees one from taking the self as some kind of other-agency. [4.5.6.1]

Self-reliance is not a choice between self and other (there are no such alternatives) but a natural recognition that "self-conquest is truly far better than any conquest of others" (*attā have jitaṁ sey-yo | yā câyaṁ itarā pajā,* Dh 104ab).

attā hi attano nātho	One is one's own master [refuge and saviour]; [Dh 380a]
ko hi nātho paro siyā	for, who else can the master be?
attanā'va sudantena	With oneself [the mind] well tamed, indeed,
nāthaṁ labhati dullabhaṁ	one gets a saviour difficult to find. (Dh 160)[384]

Mental development brings greater benefits than mere power. One mentally cultivated frees oneself from the self body and mind. One who loves power is controlled by the power, and in due course destroyed by it. Indeed, self-mastery through mental development is the only path to spiritual liber-ation.

5.2.2.2 By "self-taming" or self-conquest is meant **mental development** in overcoming un-wholesome thoughts and cultivating wholesome ones. Only in mastering the mind do we really mas-ter the self. In other words, it is only when our own mind is calm and clear that we have the wisdom to help ourself. When we are able to help ourself, we are also able to help others since we know how self-effort works.

According to **the Sallekha Sutta** (M 6,16), one who is sunk or stuck in the mud will not be able to pull out another who is similarly stuck in it. Even so, declares the Buddha, "it is possible that one who is tamed, trained, attained to nirvana, will tame, train or be able to help another to attain nir-vana."[385] Even when we have yet to attain nirvana, we are able to help others to the extent we have tamed ourself. We are like fellow travellers telling another who is lost how to safely get back on the right track heading for the same destination.

5.2.3 Mindfulness as a socializing faculty

5.2.3.1 Thirdly, self-mastery begins with **mindfulness**, embodying wise attention, full awareness and good memory. Hence, mindfulness is not merely being "present here and now," but it properly engages with the mind-object (like a skilled archer focused on his bull's eye), either to calm the mind or to clear it radiantly. Calming the mind settles it until it gains samadhi (mental oneness with the object), and when it frees itself from the object (and all sense-objects), it attains full concentration, that is, dhyana (*jhāna*).

5.2.3.2 In the "real" world (that is, our daily life), we need to wisely engage with whomever or whatever is before us. This wise engagement grows with our presence here and now, deeply listen-ing to what is said and unsaid, keenly watching the body language in others. The better we know others, the more previous memories we have of them.

One helpful way to deal with such memories is to regard them as a collection of music and songs played by that person. We may like certain pieces more than others and so on, but in time, as we get to know that person better, those sounds become more meaningful and beautiful—like the cries of our own little children or our own cries when we were a little child.

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[384] For other trs of Dh 160: SD 20.9 II Mod Comy: Tha 1138 (free tr); SD 26.3 (2.1.2); SD 27.3 (3.1) self-mastery; SD 34.1 (5.2) self-refuge; SD 36.1(3.4.3); SD 38.4 (3.3.3.4); SD 49.2 (3.6.2); SD 64.7 (3.2); SD 57.33 (2.3.4.2). See also SD 60.1e (13.1.1); **Spiritual friendship: A textual study**, SD 34.1 (5.2).
[385] M 6,16 (SD 51.8).

5.2.4 Concentration as a socializing faculty

5.2.4.1 Fourthly, having seen how <u>wise faith</u> inspires us with <u>right effort</u> in cultivating <u>mindfulness</u>, we see how this leads to **mental concentration**, that is, a calm and clear mind, or even leading up to dhyana, that is, full concentration. The real idea behind mental concentration is not about knowing or mastering the mind and becoming a respected teacher or some high authority to whom others would look up. This would likely be some inner need for others, a dependence on approval from the crowd.

This thirst for being a teacher or leader is a bottomless hollowness that becomes the core of our lives. It may be hidden behind a shell of narcissism or be imprisoned by a cage of total emptiness. Either way, our mind is driven by the need to be adored: we inexorably end up as a cult guru—like a parasitic plant on a huge tree. When that tree dies, the parasite dies, with it.

5.2.4.2 On a positive level, this mental development begins as our full and wholesome presence with the person or situation before us. We listen to this person or meld with the group as if meeting for the *first* time, and speak with them as if for the *last* time. We speak not only with our mind of calm but also with a heart of joy: rooted in Dharma, we speak of Dharma, exuding Dharma. We inspire others not just with our words or charisma,[386] but more so with our whole being of peace and light: this is **the Assaji effect**.[387]

Essentially, this is the calm radiance of an arhat, like that of Assaji, one of the first 5 monks. We may not be an arhat or have the calm radiance of a deep meditator. This natural personal radiance attests to our habitual practice of lovingkindness and our constant inner smile that keeps our mind positive despite the darkness of circumstances. On the simplest level, this inner radiance is the constant radiance of our heart of lovingkindness that protects us from external darkness, and quickly heals us when we are burdened with such gloom on account of some toxic encounter.

5.2.5 Wisdom as a socializing faculty

5.2.5.1 Fifthly, the end-result and benefit of our *faith*-based, *effort*-driven *mindfulness* and *mental concentration* is that of **liberating wisdom**. Wisdom means not just knowing things, an accumulation of facts that we wear to attract attention, charisma and power for ourselves, but more so about knowing what we really are, how we can better ourself and live in joyful fellowship with others.

<u>The first 2 noble truths</u> teach us about *suffering* and how not seeing and accepting the *impermanent* and *unsatisfactory* nature of all our experiences (formations) keep us caught in the cycle of ignorance and craving. <u>The last 2 noble truths</u> empower us to free ourselves from the prison of our sense-experiences, to see beyond the sense-based reality into true reality, so that we are on the calm and clear path to inner peace and light heading for death-free nirvana, beyond space-time itself.

5.2.5.2 For most of us, **nirvana** (*nibbāna*) may seem many lives away, like the twinkling light of a distant planet. In other words, it is our common Dharma-spirited <u>ideal</u>, a supreme goal we all keep in mind while we continue to live this life. We live joyfully together here and now in the <u>faith</u> that with <u>self-effort</u> we can and must habitually keep up our <u>mindfulness</u> remembering the lessons of the past and the reality of the present. In this way, our minds, rooted in past good and present effort grow in <u>concentration</u> that will fruit in <u>liberating wisdom</u>. This is the working of **the 5 faculties** of mental development applied for our benefit as a community of Buddhist individuals as an interbeing of minds, our extended minds. [3.1.1.1]

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[386] Technically, "charisma" is some kind of attractive quality that we attribute to someone, usu a power figure. However, the "Assaji effect" refers to real spiritual qualities that we *are* on account of our Dharma practice.

[387] On the Assaji effect, see SD 58.1 (1.2.2.2). On Sāriputta's meeting Assaji: SD 42.8 (1.2); 51.5 (5.2.3.10).

So long as we study the Buddha's teachings as handed down to us in the suttas and mental train-ing, and develop our minds and open our hearts, we will, with every breath, grow nearer to the path of awakening. The light of nirvana may be a distant twinkle for most of us, but when we see it with *faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration,* and *wisdom*, we plot our lives' course by that light heading for that safe and certain goal.

5.2.6 The religious and mental health

5.2.6.1 A wholesome community cannot be taken for granted; it is the mutual and extended labour of generations of Dharma-hearted individuals going back to the Buddha himself. For every joyful and wise Buddhist there are many more of those who are unwise and unhappy. Hence, it be-hoves us out of compassion not to rest on our laurels in the cool shade of the Bodhi tree while they suffer in the fire and ice of samsara.

Before we are able to inspire them to change for the better, we need to know how, and possibly *why*, they are suffering. This is no easy task, but like all difficult tasks, we must start by *wanting* them to be well and happy. Then we investigate to the best of our ability their situation how we can better it for them. Such an effort is known as compassion.

5.2.6.2 Unlike just a generation ago (even up to the late 20th century), when it was difficult to get helpful teaching on early Buddhism, we are today spoilt for choice with a number of annotated translations and modern commentaries in the commercial market. On top of that, we have a rich and free flowing flood of information and misinformation on the Internet, and even those who loud-ly claim they have attained streamwinning, once-returning, non-returning and even arhathood [6].

Most Buddhist teachings have a good, even remarkable, impact on people, but as Buddhism be-come more globalized and grows big along entrepreneurial lines, we get more monks and nuns los-ing touch with the spirit of renunciation, becoming wealthy and class-conscious, so that Buddhism becomes very much like the Catholic religion in the Middle Ages, propping up respectable nobles and elitist clergy. In short, we see Buddhism systematically and severely secularized. The Buddhist followers are, as a rule none the wiser about what really is going on; after all, they are *followers*.

5.2.6.3 In our times (the 21st century), Buddhism is often a powerful means for the desperate and cunning to attract tax-free wealth and a comfortable retirement plan. Buddhist writings on al-most any popular subject, and translations of Buddhist texts are profitably marketed and sold in eve-ry large bookshop and online. One does not even need to be Buddhist to work and live off this Bud-dhist bonanza: the magic mantra for the **golden touch** is the word and title "Buddhist."

Like Midas' golden touch,[388] whatever the Buddhist entrepreneur touches today tends to be-come "gold," hard and cold wealth. The Buddhist teachings are seen as objects to be acquired, mas-tered, making one a master of teachings fixed and canonized by oneself. This is Dharma that is very private limited for attracting wealth. Even "renunciation" is seen as a form of retirement plan. Mo-nastic robes now have pockets for wallets and bank-cards.

At the root of the problem is the fact that such "renunciants" are overtly or covertly breaking the Vinaya rules they have vowed to keep. On the broader reality, the spiritual or Buddhist life of these actors have been replaced by commodified relations. These modern clerics see themselves as independent elites at the disposal of society's upper classes. The lower-class Buddhists relate—or

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[388] The most famous person bearing the name **King Midas** is remembered in Greek mythology for his ability to turn everything he touched into gold (called *chrysopoeia* in alchemy). This came to be called the *golden touch*, or the *Midas touch*. This myth might be linked to legends told about one Midas and his father Gordias, credited with founding the Phrygian capital city Gordium and tying the Gordian Knot, indicating that they were believed to have lived sometime in the 2nd millennium BCE, well before the Trojan War. However, Homer does not men-tion Midas or Gordias, while instead mentioning two other Phrygian kings, Mygdon and Otreus.

are allowed to relate—to these modern clerics only on ritual occasions that have to be paid for in some form than making mere donations of almsfood or monastic robes.

5.2.6.4 While it is true that times have changed, it is unhelpful to view that the 3 jewels—the Buddha, the teaching and the spiritual community—must change with the times. The Buddha himself has warned about what should never be changed and what can or should be reinterpreted. **The Ney-y'attha Nīt'attha Sutta** (A 2.3.5+6) records the Buddha as reminding us to correctly read the sutta text. We should note whether it is presented in an <u>implicit</u> manner, that is, whose sense should be "drawn out" (*neyy'attha*), such as stories and metaphors; or it is presented in an <u>explicit</u> manner, that is, whose sense "has been drawn out" (*nīt'attha*), in terms of ultimate reality, such as the 3 characteristics, the 4 truths or the 5 aggregates.[389]

A very significant implication of this teachings is that early Buddhism is defined as our <u>seeing</u> true reality—seeing it, accepting it, transforming ourself as a result. Beyond that, how we present <u>ideas</u> about true reality is like using our finger to point out the moon, or pointing to the moon on the surface of some still water. In an important sense, we can only use <u>language</u> to say *this* is it (explicitly) or *that* is it (implicitly).

Then again, we may misconstrue it—not knowing the difference between this and that—we proclaim, "*That*'s it!" or worse, "I am it!" Then we draw attention away from true reality to our own self: "I am *the* It!": this is the closest I can put into words to show how ridiculous or absurd it sounds. Not only do we not understand true reality, we have divorced ourself very far from it.

Instead of disarming ourself of the self, we have tried to arm ourself with <u>delusion</u>. We have put our self in the place of true reality; but true reality is beyond selfless: it is **nonself**. To say "selfless" means there is a "self" that we have given up: perhaps this is a *view* of the self. But <u>nonself</u> means that it has nothing to do with any self since there is no such thing. Our problem is not that there is a self or soul, but that we are often fixated with **the self-view**, the notion that there is one.

The subtlest and most deleterious effect of self-view is seen in extreme forms of **narcissism**, a preoccupation with one's self to the extent of ignoring others. The main disadvantage of such a fixation is that it is the diametrical opposite of any understanding of <u>the extended mind</u>, that is the basis for personal growth (individuation) and social evolution [3.1.1.1]. This is what we will turn to now.

5.3 NARCISSISM IN BUDDHIST LIGHT

5.3.1 Narcissism as self-centred views and tendencies

5.3.1.1 We have earlier on examined **self-view** as "the root of self-deception."[390] We will here apply what we have learned to the study of narcissism in Buddhism today. In early Buddhist terms, narcissism is a broad term for views and conduct that is "self-centred conceit" (*asmi,māna,* "the conceit 'I am'"),[391] that is, self-views arising from the "latent tendency (*anusaya*) [4.2.1.2] of 'I'-making, 'mine'-making and conceit" (*ahaṅ.kāra,mamaṅ.kāra,mānânusaya*).[392] The "conceit" aspect that underlies both tendencies is the "that's me" attitude, literally, "this I am" (*eso'ham asmi*).

The triad of self-views, "I am," "this is mine," and "that's me," arise from **the "3 graspings"** (*ti,-vidha gaha*) and keep us clinging to these views:

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[389] On <u>the 2 truths</u> in early Buddhism, see SD 1e (10), esp (10.4).
[390] SD 60.1d (7.5.2).
[391] SD 19.2a (6.3) (5); SD 31.13 (2).
[392] SD 19.11 (1.2) esp (1.5.3).

		causal conditions	habits	fetters (*saṁyojana*)
(1) "this is mine"	*etam mama*	craving	craving	*taṇhā*[393]
(2) "this I am"	*eso'ham asmi*	conceit	conceit	*māna*[394]
(3) "this is my self"	*eso me attā ti*	views	self-identity view	*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*[395]

How all this works is summarized in Table 5.3.1.2.

5.3.1.2 In terms of **the 10 fetters** (*dasa saṁyojana*)—those states that hinder us from attaining sainthood on the path—the self-identity view is a shorthand (synecdoche) for the 3 fetters (breaking this triad we attain streamwinning); craving represents the 5 lower fetters (breaking which we attain non-returning); and conceit refers to the 5 higher fetters (breaking which we attain arhathood).

The 10 fetters and how they function can be summarised as follows:

The 5 lower fetters (*oram,bhāgiya saṁyojana*) [SD 50.11]

   (1) <u>self-identity view</u>   <u>*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*</u>

   (2) <u>spiritual doubt</u>   <u>*vicikicchā*</u>

   (3) <u>attachment to rituals and vows</u>   <u>*sīla-b.bata,parāmāsa*</u>

   (4) sensual lust   *kāma,rāga*

   (5) repulsion   *paṭigha*[396]

The 3 fetters (<u>underscored</u>), overcome by <u>the streamwinner</u> and <u>the once-returner</u> (lust, hate and delusion are weakened).

The 5 higher fetters (*uddham,bhāgiya saṁyojana*) [SD 50.12]

   (6) lust for form existence   *rūpa,rāga*

   (7) lust for formless existence   *arūpa,rāga*

   (8) conceit   *māna*

   (9) restlessness   *uddhacca*

 (10) ignorance   *avijjā*

The 5 lower fetters, overcome by <u>the non-returner</u>.

The 5 higher fetters, overcome by <u>the arhat</u>.

Table 5.3.1.2 The 10 fetters and sainthood[397]

5.3.1.3 Succinctly, Buddhist training starts with the courage and determination to overcome this phantom of an abiding self, this Narcissus-like[398] self-love. We must correct this with the healing formula: "this is *not* mine" (*n'etaṁ mama*)*,* "this I am *not*" (*n'eso 'ham asmi*)*,* "this is *not* my self" (*na mêso attā ti*). This is how we should constantly reflect on the 5 aggregates, as the Buddha teaches us in **the Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59),[399] which make arhats of the first 5 monks.

In proper Dharma grammar, we should say that we are what we are *seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching* or *thinking*. What we *have* seen, etc, are gone: it *has past*, rather than it is the past. What we *will* see, etc, have not yet come: it will be the future. The past is a memory: it is how we re-

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[393] Mine: The nature of craving, SD 19.3.

[394] Me: The nature of conceit, SD 19.2a.

[395] See I: The nature of identity, SD 19.1,

[396] In some places, *paṭigha* is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*).

[397] For details, see SD 50.11 (2.2).

[398] In Greek mythology (from the Augustan age), **Narcissus** is a handsome young hunter who is exceptionally arrogant, spurning all advances, even that of the mountain nymph, Echo. As a divine punishment (by Venus or by Nemesis), he is made to fall in love with his own image, at which he longingly gazes at in a forest pool, and eventually turns into a narcissus plant (commonly called daffodil in English). This Greek myth is found in the Roman poet, Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* bk III (8 CE). See SD 34.1 (2.5.2.2); SD 60.1d (7.7.5.4).

[399] S 22.59,12-16 (SD 1.2).

construct what we think of what had happened.[400] The future is what we wonder about or hope will be or not be, but it almost always turns out differently or we will see it differently. Our life is shaped by the here and now.

The key phrase "**the courage and determination to overcome this phantom of an abiding self**" summarizes how the 3 fetters are broken. Since we are still being shaped by the present—a being in process—we cannot speak of any moment as "this is my self." The moment we say it, it is gone. Hence, we cannot hold on to any abiding self: there is none. When we do so, it is merely a "**self-identity view**": we are simply and erroneously identifying with our body or feeling, or perception, or formations (thought) or consciousness.

When we try to identify with a view of "this is my self"—we imagine "this I am"—we will fear losing it. In fact, even as we cling to this non-idea of a self, we feel unsure if "this is mine." There is **doubt**. We are kept in a rut of running after this elusive shadow that is difficult to see in the light of reality.

Whenever we look around, we notice echoes of this view we have of our "self" in someone or something else. We try to identify with this person, "this I am!" or with some status, "This is mine!" or something (power, money, status, sex, pleasure, praise): "This is my self (my soul)!" This is **attachment to rituals and vows**: we keep looking and running after such a thing; we keep up certain habits, even prayers, seeking this self outside of ourself.

To better understand why early Buddhism rejects the idea of self (*attā*) and to understand the nature of nonself (*anattā*), it helps to do some serious study of the modern psychological concept of **narcissism**, and its different forms. This is what we will turn to now.

5.3.2 Narcissism as a modern psychological concept[401]

5.3.2.1 In modern psychology, **narcissism** is excessive self-love or egocentrism.[402] **Narcissism** is basically excessive self-love or egocentrism, often at the expense of others. In ordinary (non-clinical) situations, it can range from normal to abnormal personality tendencies.[403] The concept of excessive selfishness and self-love has been recognized since ancient times [5.3.1.3]. In ancient Greece, it was understood as a form of hubris.[404] In early Buddhism, the various forms of self-view (*attā,vada*), which parallels the modern psychological theory of narcissism, are rooted in the "unconscious tend-ency (*anusaya*) of 'I'-making, 'mine'-making and conceit" (*ahaṅ.kāra,mamaṅ,kāra,mānânusaya*), that needs to be understood and corrected [5.3.1].

"Narcissistic" is when, for example, we choose partners or associates based predominantly on our picture of ourself as we were as a child, or as we would like to continue to be: a deleteriously dark version of Peter Pan. In terms of the self, narcissism refers to any aspect of the complex state of self-esteem, and includes personal traits such as overweening pride, arrogance, and sensitivity to perceived insult. However, in contemporary psychoanalysis, the meaning of the term has been ex-panded to the point of fuzziness. Perhaps a workable definition of narcissism is that it is *a cognitive,*

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[400] See eg D L Schacter (ed), Memory Distortion: how minds, brains, and societies reconstruct the past, Har-vard Univ Press, 1995.

[401] For a critical historical survey of narcissism, see R T G Walsh, T Teo & A Baydala, *A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology,* Cambridge, 2014: ch 9 part 5.

[402] In psychoanalytic theory, the taking of one's own ego or body as a sexual object or focus of the libido or the seeking or choice of another for relational purposes on the basis of his or her similarity to the self. This is a dated theory not accepted by modern mainstream psychology. APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015.

[403] Z Krizan Z & A D Herlache, "The narcissism spectrum model: A synthetic view of narcissistic personality," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*.22,1 Feb 2018:3-31. (PDF) The Narcissism Spectrum Model: A Synthetic View of Narcissistic Personality (researchgate.net) (12 July 2023).

[404] Some religious groups like the Hussites (15th century Czechoslovakia) attempted to rectify what they viewed as shattering and narcissistic cultures of the times. T A Fudge, *Matthew Spinka, Howard Kaminsky, and the Future of the Medieval Hussites*, Lexington Books, 2021:47.

affective and motivational preoccupation with the self: one only knows regarding oneself, feels for oneself, and acts for oneself.

5.3.2.2 The German criminologist **Paul Näcke** (1851-1913) and the British psychologist, **Havelock Ellis** [5.1.2.2], independent of each other, in 1898,[405] were the first to use the term <u>narcissism</u> to refer to a sexual perversion characterized by the taking of the self as a sexual object. **Sigmund Freud**, in his essay "On narcissism" (London, 1915, 1974:74)[406] broadened the term to include any aspect of thinking and feeling that is significantly self-centred.

Freud thought of narcissism as the "love of the self" in terms of the libidinal drive. He viewed this as an explanation of the self-centeredness of schizophrenia, dreaming, and hypochondria. He called the earliest stages of infant development, before the infant achieves the ability to differentiate itself from others, the narcissistic stage of development.

Freud first used the term "narcissism" in a letter to Wilhelm Fleiss in 1899. In the course of his career, Freud used the term to describe 4 different but related phenomena, that is, narcissism as:[407]

(1) sexual perversion;
(2) as a stage of development between the autoerotic stage[408] and the stage of object love;
(3) as a libidinal cathexis[409] (or love of self) of the ego; or "the great reservoir from which object-cathexis are sent out and into which they are withdrawn once more";[410]
(4) as object choice, either anaclitic object choice in which the person loves someone like themself, or attachment object choice, in which the person loves a strong and comforting person.

5.3.2.3 Freud, in "On narcissism" (1914), distinguished between <u>primary and secondary narcissism</u>. **Primary narcissism** is a universal experience of the prenatal foetus and the neonate (a baby up to 4 weeks old), where there is no delay between the experience of need and gratification. "Hunger" as an experience does not develop because satiation is instantaneous.

As a result, the fledgling ego feels as if it is the sum of the world (as felt by it); because need goes with its satisfaction, without distinction between "within" and "without," an internal and external world, self and other. This is the state of <u>primary narcissism</u>, an indistinguishable fusion of experiences, experienced as a sense of omnipotence or "oceanic oneness."

Primary narcissism is a functional fantasy out of which the ego is born. It softens the reality of helplessness and cushions the infant's growing awareness of the separateness of need and gratification, self, and other objects. <u>Individuation</u>[411] is marked by our gradual dispossession of the narcissistic matrix.[412]

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[405] Näcke's 1899 clinical description of "narcissism" as a sexual perversion was qu in Freud's "On Narcissism: an introduction*,"* 1914;73 f: see foll n; H Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* vol 1, Leipzig, 1889:206.

[406] J Sandler et al (edd), *Freud's "On narcissism: an introduction,* Karnac, 2012:x, 56 f (Etchegoyen).

[407] M R Bieber, "Narcissism," *Gale Ency of Sex and Gender,* 2007:1055 f.

[408] "Autoeroticism is the creation of sexual excitement and gratification by the self, whether through masturbation, other sexual behaviours (eg, stimulating non-genital portions of the body), or thoughts (eg, daydreams, fantasies)." (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015)

[409] "**Cathexis** (n), in psychoanalytic theory, the. investment of psychic energy in an object of any kind, such as a wish, fantasy, person, goal, idea, social group, or the self. Such objects are said to be **cathected** when an individual attaches emotional significance (positive or negative affect) to them." (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015).

[410] In Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905:218).

[411] APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015: "**1.** generally, the physiological, psychological, and sociocultural processes by which a person attains status as an individual human being and exerts himself or herself as such in the world. **2.** in the psychoanalytic theory of Carl Jung, the gradual development of a unified, integrated personality that incorporates greater and greater amounts of the unconscious, both personal and collective, and resolves any conflicts that exist, such as those between introverted and extraverted tendencies."

[412] B Richards, Images of Freud: Cultural responses to psychoanalysis, London: Dent, 1989:39.

Secondary narcissism can be "ordinary" or "pathological." Because the total environmental provision (historically the mother) is responsible for meting out need satisfaction in a way where individuation can be gradually realized "safely" in the developing self, it is also the source of problems. While some degree of narcissism is considered necessary for healthy development, the elaboration of pathological forms of narcissism depends on environmental failures, beyond optimal frustration, in responding to a child's needs and emerging individuation.

Freud's contemporaries elaborated the meanings and understanding of narcissism. **Sandor Ferenczi** (1909) described a child's desire to rid itself of unpleasant affects by excluding objects from its perceptions as a form of narcissism. **Karl Abraham** (1924) wrote about the symptomatology of melancholia as being either positive narcissism, self-love, or negative narcissism, a self-hate.

Karen Horney (1885-1952), German psychoanalyst practising in the US, summarizes the twin essences of the diagnostic understanding of narcissism concisely, describing it as "appearing unduly significant to oneself and craving undue admiration from others."[413] Nevertheless, critical orientations in psychology and psychiatry have famously resisted medicalizing and pathologizing "problems of living."[414]

Nearer our time, **Herbert A Rosenfeld** (1910-86) drew attention to destructive narcissism related to the death instinct[415] in contrast to the libidinal aspect of narcissism. His ideas are presented in his book, *Psychotic States* (1965).[416]

5.3.2.4 As psychoanalysis developed, object relation theories, which viewed attachment to other people as the important factor in human motivation, gained prominence. Narcissism was then seen in <u>object-relationship</u> terms. German psychoanalyst **Edith Jacobson** (1897-1978) in *The Self and the Object World* (New York, 1964), developed the concept of self-representations (the images and ideas one has of oneself), and described the intricate interplay of feelings of both love and hate directed toward self-representations in the development of <u>self-esteem</u>.

Those self-representations, which consist of an ideal view of the self and one's view of an ideal love-object and ideal relationship, together form a structure in the mind called the "<u>ego ideal</u>." Self-esteem is, in important ways, determined by the degree of success one achieves in striving to meet those ideals.

By this time, the term narcissism had shed its burden of drive theory and had come to be used almost exclusively to mean <u>self-esteem</u>. The pejorative tone that had invested it began to disappear with the recognition that the term had been used to designate both "good" self-esteem, based on non-conflictual identifications and solid accomplishments, and "bad" self-esteem, based on defensive and compensatory fantasies of grandiosity and the depreciation of others.

In the early 20th century, attention turned to <u>clinical</u> aspects of narcissism. In the 1930s, **Wilhelm Reich** (1897-1957) in *Character Analysis* (New York, 1933) described a common solution to feelings of inferiority and inadequacy (disturbances of narcissism or self-esteem) in women, namely, the choice of a partner who had the aggressive and powerful features that the woman herself had desired.

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[413] A M Cooper, "Narcissism," in A P Morrison (ed), *Essential Papers on Narcissism*, New York Universities Press, 1986:120.

[414] M Adams, "Narcissism, Overview," in T Teo, *Ency of Critical Psychology,* Springer, 2014:1216.

[415] "In psychoanalytic theory, a drive whose aim is the reduction of psychical tension to the lowest possible point, that is, death. It is first directed inward as a self-destructive tendency and is later turned outward in the form of the aggressive instinct. In the dual instinct theory of Sigmund Freud, the death instinct, or thanatos, stands opposed to the life instinct, or eros, and is believed to be the drive underlying such behaviors as aggressiveness, sadism, and masochism." (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2007)

[416] H A Rosenfeld, "On the psychopathology of narcissism: a clinical approach," in *Psychotic States: a psycho-analytical approach,* London," Hogarth Press, 1965:169-179 (ch 6). Repr 1984, 1990, 2000.

5.3.2.5 In the 1970s, **Heinz Kohut** (1913-1981) wrote about narcissism in *The Analysis of the Self* (New York, 1971). He proposed a theory of the development and treatment of narcissistic disorders, which while not entirely new, presented an approach that enabled therapists to work with people who had hitherto been deemed untreatable.

Kohut viewed narcissism as developing in two structures, which together constituted Freud's ego ideal. The first consisted of the grandiose self, which embraced those self-representations—the cathexis of self-representations, not of the ego—which were part of the individual's grandiose fantasies, as, for instance, in young children's normal fantasies that they can do or be anything. The second, the idealized parent imago, comprised the internalized idealized pictures of the more or less perfect parents. Together, these structures determine the individual's ideals and ambitions.

In people who are relatively healthy, these ideals and ambitions become more realistic over time, and self-esteem derives in part from realistic attempts to attain them. In narcissistic disorders, both these idealized views of what one can be and the person's view of who he is may remain grandiose and unrealistic, leading to a fragile and unrealistic sense of self-esteem.

No matter how well developed self-esteem may be it still requires support from others. Kohut called those who provided such support "selfobjects."[417] Kohut described several specific ways in which narcissistic patients make use of relationships. They may idealize the other person and bask in their perfection, or they may treat the other as important only if the other reflects and supports their own centrality.

To Kohut, narcissism is an agency of the personality responsible for factors in relationships. He described 3 forms of narcissistic transferences or relating:

(1) a need to experience mirroring and acceptance (a mirroring transference),
(2) a need to experience union with greatness and strength (an idealized transference), and
(3) a need to experience an alikeness with another person (a twinship transference).

The relationship can be thought of as narcissistic if the individuality of the other is ignored and the focus in one way or another is on the person himself rather than his partner. In therapy, these modes of relating led to specific types of transference and to specific methods of working with them. This in turn led to the development of the school of **self psychology**, and has had an enduring effect on broadening the scope of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

The self psychology he developed from his understanding of narcissism reflected an evolution of psychoanalytic theory from an ego psychology to **a psychology of the self**. In this approach, his ideas make interesting comparisons with the Buddhist idea of "self-view" (*attā,vāda*) [4.2.5]. We should also be aware that in psychoanalytic literature, narcissism came to be applied to many things: sexual perversion, a developmental stage in a line of development, a type of libido or its object, a type or mode of object choice, a mode of relating to the environment, an attitude, self-esteem, and a personality type.

5.3.2.6 In psychological literature, narcissism typically is used to describe the vicissitudes of self-esteem. **Otto Kernberg** (b 1928) described narcissistic patients as individuals with "an unusual degree of self-reference in their interactions with other people, a great need to be loved and admired by others, and a curious apparent contradiction between a very inflated concept of themselves, and an inordinate need for tribute from others." (641-655).[418] These patients exhibit a sense of entitlement [5.3.3] and fantasies of omniscience, omnipotence, and perfection.

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[417] In Kohut's self psychology, "selfobject" (or self-object) is one's experience of another person (object) as part of, rather than as separate and independent from, one's self, particularly when the object's actions affirm one's narcissistic well-being. The need for self-objects can be an aspect of psychopathology, as when an individual's self-esteem requires constant shoring up from others. H Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self,* Chicago, 1971:3. The idea parallels the Buddhist teaching on "sense-objects" that one "owns" or sees as "self." [5.4.4.2]

[418] Kernberg, "Borderline personality organization." *J of the American Psychoanalytic Assoc* 15 1967:641-655.

Affects range from elation to disappointment, anger, and narcissistic rage. In *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York, 1975), Kernberg developed an approach to the treatment of pathological narcissism along more traditional lines. He distinguished normal narcissism from pathological narcissism; *normal narcissism* depends on the structural integrity of the self, a balance between libidinal (desires and wishes) and aggressive drives, a harmony between the ego and superego,[419] and a capacity to receive gratification from external objects. Normal narcissism leads to a balanced self-regard, realistic goals, and the capacity for deep and involved relationships.

Pathological narcissism is seen in primitive demands on the self (such as extreme grandiosity in dress and behaviour), inordinate dependence on others, and poor object relations. It also manifests itself in a sense of entitlement [5.3.3], a need for constant pursuit of perfection, and an impaired capacity for concern for and love of others.

5.3.2.8 Kohut and Kernberg may be considered to be two theorists who have significantly influenced past and current psychoanalytic thinking. Both focused on the observation and treatment of patients who were otherwise thought to be unsuitable for analytic therapy. Their main work has been mostly related to individuals with narcissistic, borderline, and psychotic psychopathology. Still, their perspectives concerning the causes, psychic organization, and treatment of these disorders are considerably different.

Broadly, Kohut is regarded as a self theorist who radically departed from Freud's conjectural conceptualizations, focusing mostly on people's need for self-organization and self-expression. Kernberg in contrast, remained faithful to the Freudian metapsychology, concentrating more on people's struggle between love and aggression. Controversy between Kohut's and Kernberg's psychotherapeutic approaches to narcissistic disorders continues to this day.

5.3.2.9 The term gender identity[420] first appeared in a paper by psychiatrists **Robert Stoller** (1925-91) and **Ralph Greenson** (1911-79) presented at the 23rd International Psycho-Analytic Congress in Stockholm (1964).[421] Stoller distinguished between the psychological and biological dimensions of sex. He used the term gender identity to distinguish socially constructed experiences of masculinity and femininity from sex, the biologically determined traits of maleness and femaleness.[422]

Stoller also made a distinction between gender identity, a person's sense of masculinity or femininity, and core gender identity, a mostly stable sense of maleness or femaleness that typically is consolidated by the second year of life. In contrast to Freud's belief that primary identification is masculine, Stoller believed that both boys and girls begin with a female core gender identity and that it is learned non-conflictually, that is by identifying, or being like the mother, through identifica-

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[419] In psychoanalytic theory, **the ego** is the component of the personality that deals with the external world and its practical demands. More specifically, the ego enables the individual to perceive, reason, solve problems, test reality, and adjust the instinctual impulses of the id to the demands of the superego. **The id** is the personality component that contains the instinctual, biological drives that supply the psyche with its basic energy or **libido. The superego** is the moral component of the personality that represents parental and societal standards and determines personal notions of right and wrong, or conscience, as well as aims and aspirations. The formation of the superego occurs on an unconscious level, beginning in the first 5 years of life and continuing throughout childhood and adolescence into adulthood, largely through identification with the parents and later with admired models of behaviour.

[420] "**Gender identity,** one's self-identification as male or female. Although the dominant approach in psychology for many years had been to regard gender identity as residing in individuals, the important influence of societal structures, cultural expectations, and personal interactions in its development is now recognized as well. Significant evidence now exists to support the conceptualization of gender identity as influenced by both environmental and biological factors." (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015).

[421] Stoller, "A contribution to the study of gender identity," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 45 1964a: 220. See A Byrne, "The origin of 'gender identity'," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 5 June 2023. https://philarchive.org/rec/BYRTOO-7. 17 Oct 2023.

[422] Stoller, *Sex and Gender,* NY: J Aronson, 1968, 1974: vi, ix-xii chs 1, 3, 7.

tion. He believed that a failure to interrupt the maternal symbiosis with pre-oedipal[423] boys results in gender identity disorders.

John O'Leary (William Alanson White Institute) and **Fred Wright** (John Jay College of Criminal Justice) (1986) suggested that <u>shame</u> is the principal affect in narcissistic behaviour, narcissism is a defense against shame, and the way shame is manifested is different in men and women. They described narcissistic men using grandiosity to bypass shame (a scared man may act fearless), whereas narcissistic women are more conscious and sensitive to shame experiences.[424]

Other studies suggest women are more likely to experience *shame*, whereas men are more likely to exhibit *hostility*. **Arthur Heiserman** and **Harold Cook** (both of Teachers College, Columbia University) (1998) also found gender differences in shame propensity, with women being more shame-prone than men. They also suggested that their findings were consistent with other literature in stating that women's narcissistic pathology is linked to idealization needs (the idealized transference [5.3.2.5], being like someone who is greatly admired), whereas men's narcissistic pathology is linked to mirroring needs (the mirror transference, needing love and acceptance). Narcissistic men appear to be more prone to hostility, and narcissistic women to be more prone to depression.[425]

Professor of rhetoric and comparative literature **Judith Butler** (1995) suggested that in melancholia there is incorporation of the lost object, as Freud described, but went on to establish a relationship between that incorporation and the formation of a bodily ego, or identity. Butler argued that under the societal demands of compulsory heterosexuality, individuals have to give up attachments to same-sexed objects and that this results in melancholia and gendered identifications to the bodily ego. These are losses attributable to the societal pressures against those of homosexual love, resulting in melancholic identifications.[426]

5.3.3 Types of narcissist

5.3.3.0 This section is based on the following papers:

Campbell, W Keith; & Joshua D Foster
   2007   "Narcissistic entitlement," in (edd) F Baumeister & K D Vohs, *Ency of Social Psychology,* Sage, 2007 2:606 f.
Dalgleish, Tim; Melissa Black, David Johnston & Anna Bevan
   2020   "Transdiagnostic approaches to mental health problems: Current status and future directions," *J of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 88,3 2020:179-195.
Freis, S D; Ashley A Brown & Patrick J Carroll
   2016   "Bases of entitlement among the narcissistic subtypes," *Entitlement in Narcissism,* Columbus, OH: Ohio State Univ, 2016.
Martinez, Ruth; Carmen Senra, Jose Fernandez-Rey & Hipólito Merino
   2020   "Sociotropy, autonomy and emotional symptoms in patients with major depression or generalized anxiety: The mediating role of rumination and immature defenses." *International J of Environment Research and Public Health* 17,16 5716 Aug 2020:1-15.

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[423] APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015: "**1.** in classical psychoanalytic theory, pertaining to the first stages of psychosexual development, before the development of the Oedipus complex during the phallic stage. During this phase, the mother is the exclusive love object of both sexes and the father is not yet considered either a rival or a love object. **2.** generally, denoting organization or functions before the onset of the Oedipus complex."

[424] J O'Leary & F Wright, "Shame and gender: Issues in pathological narcissism," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 3,4 1986:327-339. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1987-13553-001.

[425] A Heiserman & H Cook, "Narcissism, affect, and gender: An empirical examination of Kernberg's and Kohut's theories of narcissism." *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 15,1 1998:74-92. https://doi.org/10.1037/0736-9735.15.1.74

[426] J Butler, "Melancholy gender—Refused identification." *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 5 1995:165-180. https://web-facstaff.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Butler_MelancholyGender.pdf.

Rose, Karen C; & Phyllis A Anastasio
2014   "Entitlement is about 'others'; narcissism is not: Relations to sociotropic and auto-
            nomous interpersonal styles," *Personality and Individual Differences* 59 2014:50-53.

5.3.3.1 We will briefly here look at **narcissistic personality,** a pattern of traits and conduct char-
acterized by excessive self-concern and overvaluation of the self; it is also called **narcissistic charac-
ter** (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015). We shall see how early Buddhist teachings relate to **narciss-
ism** [5.3.3.1], the 2 types of narcissists [5.3.3.2-4], the dimensions of personality (autonomy and so-
ciotropy[427]) [5.3.6.1], coping strategies (rumination: brooding[428] and reflection subtypes, and im-
mature defences) [5.3.3.9]; and symptoms of depression and anxiety relating to such conditions
[5.3.3.10].

The psychological concept of <u>narcissism</u> may be subsumed under the early Buddhist teaching of
"**conceit**" (*māna*), which is basically an unwholesome "measuring" of oneself against others, on ac-
count of greed, hatred or delusion (the 3 unwholesome roots) [3.2.2.1]. **The (Chakka) Taṇha Sutta** (A
6.106) lists these 3 kinds of conceits, stating that they are "to be abandoned" (*pahātabbā*):[429]

> **The 3 conceits [complexes]**
> (1) conceit   *māna*[430]
> (2) inferiority conceit   *omāna*
> (3) superiority conceit   *atimāna*[431]   (A 6.106/3:445)

The suttas list these 3 kinds of conceits among <u>the 16 kinds of mental impurities</u> (*upakkilesa*) but
only as a pair: ***māna***, "conceit," and ***atimāna,*** "arrogance" or "superiority conceit," (without mention
of *omāna*).[432] We may assume that ***omāna***, "inferiority conceit," is subsumed under the broad term,
māna. Or if we translate <u>atimāna</u> as "narcissism," and take the prefix *ati-* (usually meaning "super-
ior") to mean "beyond" or "extreme," ("beyond (normal) *māna*" or "extreme *māna*"), we may include
"<u>vulnerable narcissism</u>" (as *omāna*) under *atimāna;* its other component being "<u>grandiose narcissism</u>"
[5.3.3.2].

5.3.3.2 We can classify <u>narcissists</u> into *2 broad categories* [5.3.3.0: Freis et al 2016]: the grand-
iose narcissists and the vulnerable narcissists. **The grandiose narcissists** are characterized as holding
high entitlement on account of <u>an extreme measurement</u> (*atimāna*) of the self, without any fair con-

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[427] **Sociotropy** (n) is *"*the tendency to place an inordinate value on relationships over personal independence,
thought to leave one vulnerable to *anaclitic depression** in response to the loss of relationships or to conflict.
Anaclitic depression involves interpersonal dependency. It is characterized by intense fears of abandonment and
feelings of helplessness and weakness." (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015). P J **Bieling**, A T Beck, & G K Brown.
"The sociotropy-autonomy scale: Structure and implications," *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 24,6 **2000**:763-
780.

[428] Recent studies have provided evidence of the transdiagnostic[428] role of **brooding**, linking the vulnerability
of personality dimensions and emotional symptoms [5.3.3.0: Martinez et al 2020]. They also indicate that
reflection and immature defences can operate in conjunction with brooding, depending on the type of vulnera-
bility and emotional context.

[429] Similar teachings are found in **(Māna) Soṇa S** (S 22.49), SD 31.13; giving them up **(Tisso) Vidhā S** (S 45.162),
SD 84.4 (by the path) **(Pahīna) Vidha S** (S 46.41); by 7 awakening-factors (SD 19.2a).

[430] Here, clearly, *māna* refers to "equality conceit," but by itself can refer to any of the three.

[431] A subtype of *atimāna* is "over-confidence" (*adhimāna*), ie, the compelling self-confidence of one powerful
leader or charismatic Guru (or teacher), adored or feared by the crowd. He is likely to exhibit "narrative pro-
pensity," the tendency to exaggerate stories, esp about oneself. See SD 60.1b (5.11.5), SD 60.1f (5.3.3.2).

[432] The 16 mental impurities, **Vatthûpama S** (M 7,3): (1) covetousness + rampant greed (*abhijjhā,visama.-
lobha*); (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*); (3) anger (*kodha*); (4) grudge (*upanāha*); (5) scorn (*makkha*); (6) spite (*palāsa*); (7)
jealousy (*issā*); (8) miserliness (*macchariya*); (9) deceit (*māyā*); (10) fraud (*sāṭheyya*); (11) callousness (*thambha*);
(12) impetuosity (*sārambha*); (13) conceit (*māna*); (14) arrogance (*atimāna*); (15) mental intoxication (*mada*);
(16) heedlessness (*pamāda*) (SD 28.12); SD 2.18 (Table 3.5).

sideration for others. Grandiose narcissists tend to maintain a sense of distinctiveness or elitism by disagreeing with statements such as "Everyone is deserving of this," and use the sense of self-superiority to make claims such as "I am naturally deserving" to explain or rationalize what they feel entitled to [5.3.7].

We will later examine the myth of the "great man" in the light of religious narcissism [5.3.4].

The vulnerable narcissists, on the other hand, tend to have high entitlement through inferiority-based measurement (*omāna*), whereby they feel like a victim. Vulnerable narcissists may thus reason, "I have been disadvantaged in the past" or "Others have this but I do not," to justify what they feel they should be entitled to. In short, the vulnerable narcissists to see themselves as "victims" or have a "victim complex."[433] [5.3.5]

5.3.4 Narcissism in the light of the suttas

5.3.4.1 The suttas provide an interesting embodiment of the grandiose narcissist [5.3.3.2] in the "**great man**" (*mahā,purisa*) as the ideal of *the most entitled person*. The *mahā,purisa* is a late canonical myth of the ideal man (he is male), of whom only one appears during a world period. He is destined to be either a world monarch (*cakka,vatti,* "wheel-turner"), if he lives a worldly life, or a world teacher, the Buddha, if he renounces the world.[434]

What should interest us is the way that the great man is an epitome of **an entitled person of supreme qualities** that make him deeply loved and respected by the populace, that is, as a world monarch or wheel-turning king. An early Buddhist text, **the Cakka,vatti Acchariya Sutta** (A 4.130) says that a world monarch "delights" the 4 social classes—the nobles, the priests, the houselords and the recluses—*with his charisma,* that is, by his looks and his speech; and that they are "dissatisfied when the wheel-turning king is silent."[435]

The late canonical texts, such as **the Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 26), speak of the world monarch as a "Dharma-spirited king (*dhamma,rāja*), conqueror of the 4 quarters, whose country is blessed with stability—he is a possessor of the 7 jewels."[436] These **7 jewels** are the regalia that adorn his majesty, and entitle him as the world monarch, that is:

(1) **the wheel jewel** (*cakka,ratana*): the wheel is a solar symbol, like the sun that shines over all his empire, and never sets;[437]
(2) **the elephant jewel** (*hatthi,ratana*): this magical albino is able to travel through the air at the king's pleasure; this is like modern military equivalent of the modern military airborne division; he also has a herd of war-elephants which is like the modern armoured division;
(3) **the horse jewel** (*assa,ratana*): another magical albino that is able to fly at his pleasure; together with his other horses and horsemen, these are his cavalry;
(4) **the gem jewel** (*maṇi,ratana*) is said to be able to produce a great radiance like daylight, much like modern military searchlights and flares;
(5) **the woman jewel** (*itthī,ratana*): the most beautiful and ideal woman who is his queen and mother of his children who become leaders in the administration, defence, extension and stability of his empire;

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[433] On the "victim complex," see **Self & selves**, SD 26.9 (4.1).

[434] The great man is said to be endowed with 32 marks of physical perfection (*mahā,purisa lakkhaṇa*) (such as feet with well-placed tread; net-like hands and feet; golden complexion; well-proportioned body; 40 teeth): **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30), SD 36.9 (3+4). The early version of the "great man" ideal mentioned in **Mahā,purisa S** (S 47.11), SD 19.6 (1.1.2), + **Tissa Metteyya Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 1040-1042), SD 36.9 (2.1.1.2), do not mention any such marks, but the epitome of one whose fires of defilements have been "quenched" (*nibbuta*), ie, an arhat.

[435] A 4.130/2:133 (SD 36.10(2.1.2)).

[436] D 26,2/3:59 (SD 36.10).

[437] See SD 17.6 (3.1.1.2).

(6) **the steward jewel** (*gaha.pati,ratana*): a person with the "divine eye" (clairvoyance), referring to his genius in preserving the empire's wealth, and keeping it prosperous by locating source of wealth;

(7) **the commander jewel** (*pariṇāyaka,ratana*): he is skillful in all administrative matters, acting as the king's prime minister.

Such a great man, says the Sutta Commentary, if he renounces the world, would become the Buddha for whom the 7 jewels would be **the 7 awakening factors** (*satta bojjhaṅga*): (1) mindfulness, (2) dharma-discernment, (3) effort, (4) zest, (5) tranquillity, (6) concentration and (7) wisdom (SA 3:154 f).[438]

The world monarch, we have already noted, is a "Dharma-spirited king" (*dhamma,rāja*), that is, one who keeps to the moral life rooted in the 5 precepts and rules justly to benefit his people. He rules through his charisma and regalia (especially his formidable armies) that entitle him to be a just and enlightened ruler, who provides "just care, shelter and guard" (*dhammika rakkh'āvaraṇa,gutti*) for his household, for the armies, for the nobles, the vassal chiefs, for brahmin houselords, the dwellers of the market-towns and countryside, for recluses and brahmins, and for even animals and birds.[439]

5.3.4.2 The myth of the "world monarch" climaxes in the story of the wheel-turning king Mahā Sudassana—related in **the Mahā Sudassana Sutta** (D 17)—who creates a sprawling Dharma palace with pinnacled halls (§1.25), a veritable heaven on Earth (§1.26), replete with a palm grove (§1.27), railings (§1.28) and musical bells (§1.29); a dazzling palace, almost a blinding mirage (§1.30). The fabulous Dharma lotus lake opposite the Dharma palace is as big as the palace itself (§1.31), with palm trees of precious materials and musical bells, too (§1.32). The beautiful sounds of the little bells and tree leaves remind us of impermanence. On the completion of the Dharma palace and the Dharma lotus lake, the king makes offerings to worthy recluses and brahmins (§1.33).

Reflecting on how all his glory and majesty have come about, he knows them as his own karmic fruits of charity, self-taming and sense-restraint (§2.1). He enters the pinnacled hall of "great dispelling" to begin his meditation retreat (§2.2), attains the 4 dhyanas (§2.3), and goes on to cultivate the 4 immeasurables (the divine abodes) (§2.4). Now, the king has 14 sets of 84,000 precious possessions, including humans and animals (§2.5), and he treats them kindly (§2.6). This is thus, in fact, **a myth of meditation**.[440]

5.3.4.3 The "great man" is depicted as a "**benevolent narcissist**" when he lives a worldly life as a world monarch, but even then the monarch's person acts as the very centre of a vast empire of both mundane and spiritual goodness (such as meditation). In the case of the "great man" who renounces the world to become the Buddha, he is not regarded as any kind of narcissist (except perhaps by scholars and detractors).

The Buddha cannot be regarded as a narcissist because the Buddha's life and teachings embody the universal principle of **nonself** (*anattā*). The Dharma-training in the teaching begins with moral conduct (*sīla*)—the letting go of *violence, theft, lust and discontent, falsehood* and *ignorance*. Moral conduct is the basis for mindfulness (*sati*) which leads to the transcending of the 5 physical senses to purify the mind. With mental concentration (*samādhi*), the mind, freed from the senses, gains dhyana (*jhāna*). Even without attaining dhyana, when we *abandon self-identity, have faith in nonself,* and *become self-reliant spiritually*, we gain **streamwinning**, the first step on the path of awakening. The Buddha himself embodies all these wholesome qualities and much more: full awakening itself.

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[438] See SD 36.10 (2.3.8).

[439] D 26,5.1/3:61 (SD 36.10).

[440] **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17), SD 36.12. For details on the wheel-turner's 7 jewels, see D 17,1.7-17/2:172-177; cf Miln 37 f; Divy 467.12-16.

5.3.4.4 Furthermore, the Buddha does not stop with his own self-awakening: he could have lived in true peace as a "silent sage" (*muni*) or as one awakened "privately" (*pacceka,buddha*). In fact, un-like the brahmins—who prided in their birth and status that allegedly entitled them to be the one and only true way to heaven and the universal Soul, the only giver of sacraments for happiness here and hereafter—the Buddha rejects the narcissistic ideal of the Self for the universality of nonself; reinter-prets karma ("sacraments" to the brahmins) as morally potent actions for which we are each ac-countable; and teaches self-reliance [4.2.5.2] by which we can attain awakening and free ourselves from suffering. He is **the universal teacher** of nonself.

A beautiful early Buddhist poem (a verse-dialogue), **the Dhaniya Sutta** (Sn 1.2), recounts how the Buddha, in a sort of verbal duel, convinces a wealthy self-sufficient cowherd away from sentiments of entitlement for a higher, truly liberating, ideal, that of awakening.[441] Here are some quotes from the Dhaniya Sutta, with Dhaniya's self-centred exultations and the Buddha's spiritual repartees (the num-bers refer to the Sutta Nipāta verse and line):

Dhaniya		**The Buddha**	
18c	The hut is thatched, the fire is fed	19c	Uncovered is the hut, the fire's quenched
22ab	Obedient is my wife … charming	23a	Obedient is my mind, liberated
24a	My own wage-earner am I, self-supported	25a	No one's hireling am I … no use for wages
28a	The tethering posts are sunk, unshakable	29ac	Like a bull having burst his bonds …
			never again will I come to lie in a womb
	Rain, therefore, rain if you wish![442]		Rain, therefore, rain if you wish!

We may see Dhaniya—as an entitled man of means—to be a "grandiose narcissist," in the sense that he has everything, and feels safe in the approaching storm. The Sutta Commentary tells us that, if not for the Buddha's intercession, Dhaniya, his family and worldly property, would have been washed away in the impending flash flood the following day (SnA 1:29).

5.3.5 Sutta teaching on the vulnerable narcissist

5.3.5.1 The vulnerable narcissist [5.3.3.2] is alluded to in **the Dhammapada**, which advocates its avoidance, thus:[443]

Akkocchi maṁ avadhi maṁ	"He abused me! He beat me!	
ajini maṁ ahāsi maṁ	He defeated me! He stole from me!"	
ye taṁ upanayhanti	those who harbour such thoughts	
veraṁ tesaṁ na sammati	their enmity [anger] does not subside.	(Dh 3)
Akkocchi maṁ avadhi maṁ	"He abused me! He beat me!	
ajini maṁ ahāsi maṁ	He defeated me! He stole from me!"	
ye taṁ na upanayhanti	those who harbour *not* such thoughts	
veraṁ tenûpasammati	their enmity as such subsides.	(Dh 4)

Although these verses seem to reflect the Buddhist ideal of non-violence, **Dh 3** actually serves as a warning against **brooding**: it only feeds and festers one's enmity. **Dh 4** is an admonition that what we brood over are really just *thoughts*, some past memories. When we let go of those thoughts, they

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[441] Sn 1.2/*18-34 (SD 50.20).

[442] This refrain forms the last line of every verse of the verse-dialogue.

[443] On Dh 3 f, see also SD 26.9 (4.1.2); SD 32.12 (1.3); SD 5.18 (Dh 3-6).

no longer have any hold on us. We are free from enmity, and are able to live happily and productively.

5.3.5.2 On a deeper level of practice, the Buddha admonishes renunciants to eschew violence and practise **non-violence**. The rationale behind non-violence is explained by Sāriputta in **the Mahā Hatthi,padôpama Sutta** (M 28). Sāriputta begins his teaching with a reflection on **the 4 elements**: earth, water, fire and wind [air].
First, Sāriputta (as does the Buddha in **the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta**, M 62),[444] explains how our physical body is made up of the earth element (the first of the 4 elements): "head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin," and so on these are the *internal* earth elements. There is also the *external* earth element: *both* the internal and the external earth elements are simply "earth element." We should see them "as it really is with right wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self'." In this way, we see our body (its solid states) as composed of solid matter that is all around us, and become detached from it, especially when parts of our body decay or are lost, just as solid matter outside us changes and vanishes. (M 62,6 f)
The other 3 of the 4 elements (water, fire and wind) are in turn reflected on in the same manner. Sāriputta explains the form and nature of each of these elements by way of the 31 body-parts.[445]

5.3.5.3 With this understanding [5.3.5.2], when others "abuse, revile, scold or harass" us, we (especially a renunciant) understand thus:

> "The painful feeling born of ear-contact has arisen in me. It is dependent [conditioned], not
> independent."   (M 28,8.1/1:185), SD 6.16

We then reflect how each of the 5 aggregates arises on account of dependent arising, thus:

(1) It is dependent on **contact** (*phassa*), that is, results from sense-impression (the meeting of the ear, sound and attention).
(2) With contact, there arises **feeling** (*vedanā*) (liking or disliking), due to:
(3) **Perception** (*saññā*), that is, recognizing the sense-object based on memory (our construction of the past).
(4) Following perception (when we pursue the feeling), we are creating **formations** (*saṅkhārā*); that is, driven by greed, hate or delusion, we are reacting according to our karma, and also feeding that karma (which habituates us to react in the same way in a similar future situation).
(5) All this happens because we are **conscious** (we have a mind): yet, every act we do, consciously or unconsciously (unmindfully or habitually), feeds our unconscious (*anusaya*), as explained under "karma" above, conditioning us to become creatures of habit.

We thus reflect that each of these 5 aggregates (as we notice it) is "**impermanent**." When we do this properly (mindfully), our mind "plunges into that very object that is that element [earth, that is our body], brightens with faith, becomes steady, and is resolute."[446] (M 28,8)

5.3.5.4 Next, in **the Mahā Hatthi,padôpama Sutta** (M 28), Sāriputta instructs us how to deal with physical violence and abuse—"through the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives"—that is: "this body is of the nature that it is assailed by the touch of

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[444] M 62,8-/1:421 (SD 3.11).
[445] Also called "the impurities" (*asubha*). M 62,8-17/1:421-424 (SD 3.11), where the Buddha explains the 5 elements: earth, water, fire, wind and space. See also **Giri-m-ānanda S** (A 10.60,6), SD 19.16. On the 32 body-parts: **Dva-t,tiṁs'ākāra** (Khp 3); **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119,7), SD 12.21.
[446] M 28,8.2/1:185 (SD 6.16). See **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 28), where Rāhula is taught the meditation of the 4 "element-like" meditations (M 28,13-17/1:424 f @ SD 3.11).

fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks, or the touch of knives" (M 28,9). Sāriputta then reminds us of the Buddha's teaching on **the parable of the saw** (in **the Kakacûpama Sutta**, M 21)**:**

"*Bhikshus, even if robbers or low-down people*[447] *were to sever you limb by limb with a two-handed saw, whoever [a monk or nun]*[448] *gives rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be a doer of my teaching.*[449]

So tireless energy shall be roused in me, undistracted mindfulness shall be established, my body shall be tranquil and unagitated, the mind concentrated and unified."
 So even when we are assailed by abusive words and violent acts upon this body—let it be: "for this is just how the teaching of the Buddha is practised!"[450]
We then reflect on any of the 3 jewels—the Buddha, the Dharma or the sangha—until we truly feel mentally <u>equanimous</u>. Whenever, we are unable to do so, or are troubled by violence, we should turn our minds to arousing "spiritual urgency" (*saṁvega*): we remind ourself of the true purpose of being Buddhist—to follow the Buddha, his teaching, and the path of practice—so that we feel equanimous in spite of the violence that assails us. When <u>wholesome equanimity</u> arises within us, we rejoice in the truth that we have kept the faith in the Buddha's teaching. (M 28,9 f)
This is the essence of the early Buddhist ideal of **non-violence** (*ahiṁsa*), the very antithesis of narcissism. Difficult as the practice of Buddhist non-violence may be, this ideal reminds us of those who have shown such great fortitude, such courage. We should at least try our best to stand up against violence of any kind, inspired by this supreme example.

5.3.6 Reactivity in narcissistic persons[451]

5.3.6.1 We will here briefly mention what psychologists call **the dimensions of personality**[452] in terms of narcissism, that is, the dimension of <u>sociotropy</u> [5.3.3.1] and of <u>autonomy</u>. It is known that the personality dimension of sociotropy and of autonomy can predispose people to develop depressive symptoms.[453] <u>Sociotropic people</u> are characterized by an over-valuing of closeness and social acceptance and approval to boost low self-esteem, <u>while autonomous people</u> base their self-esteem on achievement, independence and control.
According to **the vulnerability-stress hypothesis**,[454] <u>the sociotropic</u>, with an essentially interpersonal tendency or orientation, would be more vulnerable to depression when faced with situations related to loss, criticism or abandonment, while <u>the autonomous</u>, with a more intrapersonal (self-centred) orientation, would have a greater risk of depression when faced with situations that threaten their independence, achievements or control. The relationship between these personality dimen-

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[447] "Low-down people," *ocarakā,* also "informers, spies, secret service agents; robbers" (DP) (V 3:52; M 1:129; S 1:79; U 66).

[448] Comy to **Kakacûpama S** (MA 2:102).

[449] **Kakacûpama S** (M 21,20/1:129), SD 38.1.

[450] M 28,9/1:185 f (SD 6.16).

[451] See esp Ruth Martinez et al, op cit, 2020 [5.3.3.0].

[452] The Pali equivalent or near-synonym for "dimension of personality" is probably ***nati***, "(mental) bending, bent, inclination" (M 1:115,22, 3:266,7; S 2:67,4). Def as a term for inclining towards the sense-world (-state) and so on (UA 393, 398,18); an inclination for forms, [sounds, … thoughts], that are pleasant (SA 272,11 f). The dimension of personality comprises the working of the senses and the mind which drives us to seek them (or at least desire them as we notice them) in others, too.

[453] A T **Beck**, "Cognitive therapy of depression: New perspectives," in (edd) P Clayton & J Barrett, *Treatment of Depression: Old Controversies and New Approaches,* NY: Raven Press, 1983:265-290. D A **Clark**, A T Beck, B A Alford, *Scientific Foundations of Cognitive Theory and Therapy of Depression,* NY: Wiley, 1999.

[454] See Beck 1983 (prec n).

sions and depressive symptoms has been well documented,[455] although the results are more consistent for sociotropy than for autonomy.[456]

Moreover, the role of these personality dimensions has also been investigated by psychologists in relation to <u>anxiety symptoms</u>, although this evidence has been more limited and less conclusive. In this connection, **Alford and Gerrity**[457] found significant associations between sociotropy and symptoms of *both* anxiety and depression, but this result could not be replicated with that of autonomy. **Fresco et al**,[458] on the other hand, reported that sociotropy correlated with *anxiety* symptoms, while autonomy was associated with *depression* symptoms.

In sum, narcissists who are *other-dependent* tend to often feel anxious when they feel others do not approve of them; narcissists who are *self-centred* tend to feel depressed when they do not get their way.

According to **Sato, McCann and Ferguson**,[459] <u>sociotropy</u> was associated with the trait anxiety of *social assessment, physical danger and ambiguous situations*, while <u>autonomy</u> positively correlated with *the trait anxiety of daily routines*. Therefore, the question of whether these personality dimensions are associated or not with both emotional symptoms remains an open question, and it requires further study and clarification. [460]

5.3.6.2 Besides determining the nature of the relationship between the vulnerabilities and emotional symptoms of the 2 kinds of persons—the sociotropic and the autonomous—it is important to know how they relate to one another. That is, what conditions (variables) could operate to link them, by which certain personality vulnerabilities would lead to *depressive* or to *anxious* symptoms (a mediating hypothesis).[461] It has been proposed that individuals, depending on their personality, will turn to certain **coping strategies** for emotional resolution[462] and that such strategies may lead to further emotional symptoms.[463]

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[455] C J **Robins**, J Ladd, J Welkowitz, P H Blaney, R Diaz, G Kutcher, "The personal style inventory: Preliminary validation studies of new measures of sociotropy and autonomy, *J of Psychopathology & Behavioral Assessment* 16, 1994:277-300. [CrossRef]. P A **Frewen**, D J Dozois, "Social, achievement, and control dimensions of personality-life event vulnerability to depression," *Cognitive Therapy & Research* 30 2006:1-17. [CrossRef]

[456] N M **Bakhshani**, "Role of personality styles (sociotropy/autonomy) and moderating effects of social support in clinically depressed patients," *J of Medical Sciences* 7 2007:106-110.

J K **Connor-Smith** & B E Compas, "Vulnerability to social stress: Coping as a mediator or moderator of sociotropy and symptoms of anxiety and depression, *Cognitive Therapy & Research* 26 2002:39-55 [CrossRef].

N **Şahin**, M Ulusoy, "Exploring the sociotropy-autonomy dimensions in a sample of Turkish psychiatric inpatients, *J of Clinical Psychology* 49 2003:1055-1068 [CrossRef].

S **Masih**, S H Spence, T P Oei, "Sociotropic and autonomous personality and stressful life events as predictors of depressive symptoms in the postpartum period," *Cognitive Therapy & Research* 31 2007:483-502 [CrossRef].

L **Hernangómez**, "Vulnerabilidad cognitiva a la depresión: Relación entre sesgos atencionales, Auto-representación y síntomas depresivos. PhD thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Jan 2012.

[457] B A Alford, D M Gerrity, "The specificity of sociotropy-autonomy personality dimensions to depression vs Anxiety, *J of Clinical Psychology* 51 1995:190-195. [CrossRef]

[458] D M Fresco, W S Sampson, L W Craighead, A N Koons, "The relationship of sociotropy and autonomy to symptoms of depression and anxiety,*" J of Cognitive Psychotherapy* 15 2001:17-31. [CrossRef]

[459] T Sato, D McCann, C Ferguson-Isaac, "Sociotropy-autonomy and situation-specific anxiety," *Psychological Reports* 94 2004:67-76. [CrossRef]

[460] J M Sutton, S Mineka, R F Zinbarg, M G Craske, J W Griffth, R D Rose, A M Waters, M Nazarian, N Mor, "The relationships of personality and cognitive styles with self-reported symptoms of depression and anxiety," *Cognitive Therapy & Research* 35 2011:381-393. [CrossRef]

[461] R Y Hong, "From dispositional traits to psychopathological symptoms: Social-cognitive vulnerabilities as intervening mechanisms," *J of Psychopathological Behavior & Assessment* 35 2013:407-420. [CrossRef]

[462] A Besser, J Guez, B Priel, "The associations between self-criticism and dependency and incidental learning of interpersonal and achievement words," *Personality & Individual Differences* 44 2008:1696-1710. [CrossRef]

[463] C D'Avanzato, J Joormann, M Siemer, I H Gotlib, "Emotion regulation in depression and anxiety: examining diagnostic specificity and stability of strategy use," *Cognitive Therapy & Research* 37 2013:968-980. [CrossRef]

Studies have so far mostly investigated emotional regulation strategies done consciously and deli-beratively, such as **ruminative thinking**. Rumination is an emotion-based coping response, charac-terized by repetitive and unproductive thinking through which individuals wrongly believe they could have a better understanding of their depressive mood after a situation.[464] Although the concept of *rumination* arises initially through being associated with **depression**,[465] its arousing of **anxiety** has also been noticed.[466]

However, there is very little psychological literature examining the specific mediating role of ru-mination between personality dimensions and emotional symptoms. **Spasojević & Alloy**,[467] eg, ob-served that rumination mediated the relationship between self-criticism and the subsequent arising of *depression*, but this result could not be replicated with dependence. Self-criticism and dependence are theoretically and operationally similar constructs to autonomy and sociotropy, respectively.

The results of another study showed that **avoidant coping** does not directly mediate the relat-ionship between sociotropy and symptoms of depression and anxiety.[468] Both studies involved non-clinical samples and analyzed rumination as a single construct.

The ruminative process, though, has two different components that have been empirically esta-blished in both adolescents and adults, that is, "**brooding**" (*upanijjhāna*)[469] which refers to a passive, cyclical preoccupation with negative emotions, and "**reflection**" (*parivitakka*)[470] which refers gener-

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[464] S Nolen-Hoeksema, "The response styles theory," in (edd) C Papageorgiou & A Wells *Depressive Rumina-tion: Nature, Theory, and Treatment*, NY: Wiley, 2004:107-124.

[465] S **Nolen-Hoeksema**, "Sex differences in unipolar depression: Evidence and theory," *Psychological Bulletin* 101 1987:259-282 [CrossRef] [PubMed]. S **Nolen-Hoeksema**, "Responses to depression and their effects on the duration of depressive episodes," *J of Abnormal Psychology* 100 1991:569-582. [CrossRef]

[466] D M **Fresco**, A N Frankel, D S Mennin, C L Turk, R G Heimberg, "Distinct and overlapping features of rumin-ation and worry: the relationship of cognitive production to negative affective states," *Cognitive Therapy & Re-search* 26 2002:179-188 [CrossRef]. J A **Harrington**, V Blankenship, "Ruminative thoughts and their relation to depression and anxiety, *J of Applied Social Psychology* 32 2002:465-485 [CrossRef]. A **Aldao**, S Nolen-Hoeksema, S Schweizer, "Emotion-regulation strategies across psychopathology: a meta-analytic review," *Clinical Psycho-logy Rev* 30 2010:217-237 [CrossRef]. L C **Michl**, K A McLaughlin, K Shepherd, S Nolen-Hoeksema, "Rumination as a mechanism linking stressful life events to symptoms of depression and anxiety: longitudinal evidence in early adolescents and adults," *J of Abnormal Psychology* 122 2013:339-352 [CrossRef]. D **Thomsen**, "The association between rumination and negative affect: a review," *Cognition & Emotion* 20 2006:1216-1235 [CrossRef]

[467] J Spasojević, L B Alloy, "Rumination as a common mechanism relating depressive risk factors to depress-ion," *Emotion* 1 2001:25-37. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

[468] J K Connor-Smith & B E Compas, "Vulnerability to social stress: Coping as a mediator or moderator of sociotropy and symptoms of anxiety and depression," *Cognitive Therapy & Research* 26 2002:39-55. [CrossRef]

[469] *Upanijjhāna,* "close observation, reflection upon, meditation on," as a comy term is used only in connection with "meditation object" (*ārammaṇ'upanijjhāna*) and its "characteristics" (*lakkhaṇ'upanijjhāna*) in terms of dhyana (*jhāna*) (VA 146,1-11; AA 2:41,3-14; J 5:251; DhA 1:230,13, 3:276; VvA 38,10 213). Here, used outside of meditation in the sense of "brooding."

[470] *Parivitakka* (*pari,* "all around + *vitakka,* "thinking")*,* "wondering, reflection, consideration" usu in a positive or neutral sense (V 1:105,11; D 2:30,15; S 1:71,28, 3:96,2; U 58,9).

ally to emotionally neutral pondering.[471] While the maladaptive function of *brooding* has been wide-
ly documented,[472] the nature and significance of *reflection* are not yet clear.[473]

5.3.6.3 The Buddhist psychological term related to "rumination" is probably *maññana*, "think-
ing, reflecting, supposing, imagining, deeming, believing, considering," with a strong element of
imagining, measuring and wrong view. Its verb is usually *maññati* (rarely, *maññeti*). The verb *mañña-*
ti, in its early sutta usage, means "to know, to be convinced, to be sure (by way of forming views)."
The form *maññe* (1 sg), "I think," is also common in the suttas.
    The Sutta Nipāta gives a number of examples (early positive usage):

Sn 840   "I <u>think</u> that doctrine is foolish [confused] indeed" (***maññe-m-ahaṁ momuham***[474] *eva*
              dhammaṁ).
Sn 1049   "I <u>think</u> you have true knowledge and a developed mind" (***maññāmi*** *taṁ vedaguṁ*
              bhāvit'attaṁ).
Sn 1142   "I <u>think</u> there is no staying away from him" (*ten'eva* ***maññāmi*** *avippavāsaṁ*), that is, one
              will always be one's wholesome teacher.

Maññati is used *negatively* in the sense of "to imagine, to be proud (of), to be conceited, to
boast," for example at:

Sn 382   "and also whoever else <u>think</u> they are debaters (of dogmas)" (*ye vā pi c'aññe vādino*
              maññamānā)
Sn 806   "whatever a person <u>thinks</u>, 'this is mine'" (*yaṁ puriso mama-y-idan ti* ***maññati***)
Sn 813   "therefore one purified does not <u>think</u> | [that purity is] by means of the seen, hear or
              thought" (*dhono na hi tena* ***maññati*** *| yad idaṁ diṭṭha,sutaṁ mutesu vā*)
Sn 855   "Equanimous, ever mindful, he <u>thinks</u> not of any equal[475] nor superior nor inferior to him
              in the world; he has no swellings [haughtiness]" (*upekhako sadā sato na loke* ***maññate***
              samaṁ | na visesī na nīceyyo, tassa no santi ussadā)

In **Sn 813**, we see the early sutta <u>cognitive triad</u>, *diṭṭha suta muta*, "the seen, the heard, the
thought," a phrase encompassing all possible ideas or views imaginable. Interestingly, this is not
used in the *psychological* sense (as in the later but canonical <u>cognitive tetrad</u>, *diṭṭha suta muta viñ-*
ñāta [below], but in a <u>philosophical</u> sense.
    Another early Pali form of *maññati* is ***munāti*** (probably cognate with Skt medium/middle *manu-*
te), but this is usually used in a positive sense (especially in the Commentaries), eg,

Dh 269   "Who <u>knows</u> both in the world is, for that reason, called a sage."
              (*yo munāti ubho loke munī tena pavuccati* (see DhA 3:396).

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[471] W Treynor, R Gonzalez, S Nolen-Hoeksema, "Rumination reconsidered: A psychometric analysis," *Cognitive
Therapy & Research* 27 2003:247-259. [CrossRef]

[472] R A **Burwell** & S R Shirk "Subtypes of rumination in adolescence: Associations between brooding, reflection,
depressive symptoms, and coping, *J of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology* 36 2007:56-65 [CrossRef]
[PubMed]. M L **Olson** & P Kwon, "Brooding perfectionism: Refining the roles of rumination and perfectionism in
the etiology of depression," *Cognitive Therapy & Research* 32 2008:788-802 [CrossRef]. H **Merino**, C Senra, F
Ferreiro, "Are worry and rumination specific pathways linking neuroticism and symptoms of anxiety and de-
pression in patients with generalized anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder and mixed anxiety-depressive
disorder?" *PLoS ONE* 11 2016:e0156169 [CrossRef]

[473] R A **Burwell** & S R Shirk 2007. P W **Harris**, C M Pepper, D J Maack, "The relationship between maladaptive
perfectionism and depressive symptoms: The mediating role of rumination," *Personality & Individual Differences*
44 2008:150-160 [CrossRef]

[474] On *momuha,* see SD 35.7 (3.1.0); SD 60.1e (13.9.1(a)).

[475] He measures not himself against anyone else.

"Both" refers to (understanding) both the unwholesome (*akusala*) and the wholesome (*kusala*), and both one's own 5 aggregates (body/mind conglomerate) and those of others (DhA 3:396).

In its late canonical usage, *muta* assumes the meaning of "the sensed or felt" (in a psychological sense), especially in the phrase "the seen, the heard, the sensed/felt, the known" (*diṭṭha suta muta viññāta*), that is, the 4 modes of cognition (the cognition tetrad).[476] "**Sensed**" or "**felt**" here refers to the experience at the sensing or "internal" (*ajjhatta*) level, that is, how seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching arouses a "sense of it." The mental process is always present behind such an experience so that it is *sensed* or we *make sense* of it. Hence, we can also speak of the mind "making sense" of a thought, feeling it, as in the case of the other sense-experiences.[477]

5.3.6.4 Another psychological mechanism that may be involved in how narcissists deal with depression and anxiety [5.3.6.2] is that of **ego-defence styles**.[478] In classical psychoanalytic theory, an ego-defence or defence mechanism is an unconscious reaction pattern employed by the ego to protect itself from the anxiety that arises from psychic conflict. Such mechanisms range from mature to immature, depending on how much they distort reality: *denial* is very immature because it negates reality, whereas *sublimation* is one of the most mature forms of defense because it allows indirect satisfaction of a true wish. In more recent psychological theories, defense mechanisms are seen as normal means of coping with everyday problems and external threats, but excessive use of any one, or the use of immature defenses (eg, displacement or repression), is still considered pathological.[479]

Ego-defence styles are emotion-based coping responses that, as a rule, operate at an unconscious level, to minimize conflict or discomfort.[480] When a defence is done consciously, for example, when one consciously denies responsibility for an action that one has actually done, it is not a defence but simply *lying.*

The Vaillant classification system[481] organizes defense styles according to different levels of maturity, so that mature defence facilitates good adjustment and mental health, whereas neurotic and immature defences are usually maladaptive and distort the perception that individuals have of themselves or their surroundings.

Both neurotic and immature defenses have been associated with depression[482] and anxiety.[483] Beyond such relationships, only one study[484] has investigated the mediating role of defense styles

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[476] On *diṭṭha suta muta viññāta,* see SD 60.1e (5.1.1).

[477] For negative effects arising from such "sensing," see SD 53.5 (2.2).

[478] A **Besser**, "Self-and best-friend assessments of personality vulnerability and defenses in the prediction of depression," *Social Behavior & Personality* 32 2004:559-594 [CrossRef]. S **Koole**, L v Dillen, G Sheppes, "The self-regulation of emotion," in (edd) D Vohs & R Baumeister, *Handbook of Self-Regulation: research, theory, and applications*, 2nd ed, NY: Guilford vol 2, 2011:22-40. On ego-defence: **Khaluṅka S** (A 8.14), SD 7.9; SD 24.10b (2).

[479] Defense mechanism def: APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015.

[480] P Cramer, "Coping and defense mechanisms: What's the difference?" *J of Personality* 66,6 Dec 1998:919-946 [CrossRef]. U Kramer, "Coping and defence mechanisms: What's the difference?—Second act," *Psychology & Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practrice* 83,2 June 2010:207-221 [CrossRef].

[481] G E Vaillant, *Adaptation to Life*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977.

[482] D A **Azibo**, "Mechanisms of defense: Nepenthe theory and psychiatric symptomatology," *Negro Educational Review* 58 2007:49-68. G L **Flett**, A Besser, P L Hewitt, "Perfectionism, ego defense styles, and depression: A comparison of self-reports versus informant ratings," *J of Personality* 73 2005:1355-1396 [CrossRef]. P **Kwon** & K E Lemon, "Attributional style and defense mechanisms: A synthesis of cognitive and psychodynamic factors in depression," *J of Clinical Psychology* 56 2000:723-735 [CrossRef]. G M **Margo**, R P Greenberg, S Fisher, M Dewan, "A direct comparison of the defense mechanisms of nondepressed people and depressed psychiatric inpatients," *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 34 1993:65-69 [CrossRef].

[483] E Heldt, G G Manfro, L Kipper, C Blaya, S Maltz, L Isolan, V N Hirakata, M W Otto, "Treating medication-resistant panic disorder: Predictors and outcome of cognitive-behavior therapy in a Brazilian public hospital," *Psychotherapy & Psychosomatics* 72 2003:43-48 [CrossRef] [PubMed]. Y **Yuan**, X B Zhang, A Q Wu, "Defense mechanisms in Chinese patients with comorbid anxiety and depression," *J of Nervous & Mental Disease* 190 2002:265-267 [CrossRef].

[484] A Besser, 2004.

between personality dimensions (dependence and self-criticism) and emotional symptoms, finding that immature defenses only mediated the effect of dependence on depression.

5.3.6.5 It is important to note that rumination [5.3.6.2] and defence styles are not repeat mechanisms of the same process in a person. They are alternative ways a person might attempt at coping with a situation, and as such can provide a more detailed picture of the complex process of psychological adaptation.[485]

The most effective personal way of dealing with rumination or anxiety as defence mechanisms is firstly to mindfully accept them as they are: "This is a ruminating," "This is anxiety," or simply, "Ruminating, ruminating … " or "Anxious, anxious … " and so on. Note the language: not using any personal pronouns help us deal with the state itself without blaming anyone (especially ourself). Once we are mindfully conscious of such a defence, it becomes simply a negative emotion we should deal with accordingly, either through breath meditation (to calm ourself) or cultivation of lovingkindness (to displace the negative state with something positive).

Any normal person (who is unawakened) is likely to have moments or periods of narcissistic tendency—either in a grandiose manner or a vulnerable manner—and feel its effects of depression or anxiety. Such a narcissistic episode usually arises from a feeling of "**entitlement**" (*attâdhipateyya*), a sort of "me first" priority demand. We will go on to examine what happens when this becomes habitual and serious.

5.3.7 Narcissistic entitlement[486]

5.3.7.1 The Ādhipateyya Sutta (A 3.40) speaks of the 3 kinds of <u>priority</u> (*ādhipateyya*) to guide our thoughts and actions, that is, self-priority (*attâdhipateyya*), world-priority (*lok'ādhipateyya*) and Dharma-priority (*dhamm'ādhipateyya*).[487] <u>Self-priority</u> is essentially knowing and pursuing the good for oneself in terms of meaning and purpose of life. <u>World-priority</u> refers to being accountable for our actions so that they do not inconvenience or harm others in a negative way, that we do not contribute to social difficulties.

On the highest level, our thoughts and actions should ideally benefit society and the world. <u>Dharma-priority</u> means that we should seek to better understand <u>the real meaning of life</u>—that suffering is universal—and <u>the true purpose of life</u>—that is, to cultivate moral virtue and mental acumen, and develop socially.

This teaching of the 3 priorities can be applied to our current study on narcissism, that is, by translating *ādhipateyya* as "**entitlement**." Hence, we have "self-entitlement" (*attâdhipateyya*), "other-entitlement" (*lok'ādhipateyya*) and "truth-entitlement" (*dhamm'ādhipateyya*).[488] <u>Self-entitlement</u>, may be either wholesome or unwholesome. It is <u>wholesome</u> (*kusala*) in the sense whether we are justly entitled to certain resources or conditions that help our personal development or contribution to the greater good. It is <u>unwholesome</u> (*akusala*), in the sense that although we feel *ourself* entitled to certain things, it does not contribute to our personal growth and actually hinders our mental development.

We will here discuss **self-entitlement** in the negative sense, in relation to <u>narcissism</u> in terms of modern psychological analysis for a better understanding of *ādhipateyya* in our own times.

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[485] P Kwon & K E Lemon, "Attributional style and defense mechanisms: A synthesis of cognitive and psychodynamic factors in depression," *J of Clinical Psychology* 56 2000:723-735 [CrossRef].

[486] See W Keith Campbell & Joshua D Foster, "Narcissistic entitlement," in (edd Baumeister & Vohs), *The Ency of Social Psychology,* Sage, 2007:606 f. M R Bieber, "Narcissism," in (ed) F Malti-Fouglas, Macmillan Reference, *Gale Ency of Sex and Gender,* 2007:1055 f.

[487] A 3.40/1:147-150 (SD 27.3).

[488] In the term *dhamm'ādhipateyya*, *dhamma* also encompasses the senses of "rights," "justice," and related wholesome qualities.

5.3.7.2 The narcissist—whether grandiose or vulnerable [5.3.3.2]—thinks in term of "self-entitle-ment" or "narcissistic entitlement." **Narcissistic entitlement** refers to a belief that one's importance, superiority, or uniqueness should privilege one with receiving special treatment and receiving more resources than others. For example, individuals high in narcissistic entitlement think that they should get more respect, more credit and more money and benefits for doing the same or less work than everyone else. Narcissistic entitlement also includes a tendency to demand this special treatment or extra resources, especially *without any regard for others*.

Narcissistic entitlement has **3 components**. At the root of narcissistic entitlement, narcissists be-lieve that they are *uniquely superior*. That is, they believe that they are different from others in ways that make them superior.

Second, those who often demand for narcissistic entitlement feel that they are more deserving of special treatment and limited resources by virtue of their superiority and uniqueness.

Finally, they are likely to demand the special treatment and resources to which they believe they are entitled (eg, receiving a bigger handful of candy than the other children at a holiday party or a paycheck that is larger than what other colleagues earn). These demands may be in the form of ver-bal statements, but may also include aggressive and even violent behaviour.

Special treatment may include a wide range of situations, but in general refers to an expectation of treatment that is unique from and usually better than how others are treated. For example, those with a high level of narcissistic entitlement may demand the best seat at a restaurant or not to have to wait in line when everyone else does. They may demand to be called "Sir" or "Doctor" or some other title at all times, and expect others to serve them diligently. They may refuse to allow others to be critical of or challenge their thoughts or ideas, but they would freely and often openly criticize or demean others, and not even credit them where it is due (taking the credit for themselves).

5.3.7.3 Narcissistic entitlement is traditionally measured with a short subscale of **the Narcissis-tic Personality Inventory** (NPI) as proposed by Robert Raskin and Howard Terry in 1988.[489] This scale has proven to predict narcissistic behaviour very well, but it lacks in statistical reliability. As a result, W Keith Campbell, Angelica M Bonacci, Jeremy Shelton, Julie J Exline and Brad J Bushman have cre-ated their own stand-alone measures of entitlement that have greater reliability.[490]

Narcissistic entitlement can have both positive and negative outcomes for one who feels enti-tled. When people act in a narcissistically entitled way, they may actually receive better treatment or greater resources than others (and more than they deserve). For example, the person at an airline counter who says he is a very important businessman and demands to be seated in first class might actually end up in a first class seat.

However, acts of narcissistic entitlement are often perceived by others as rude, selfish, and even pathetic. If upon landing, the businessman appears lost, the other passengers are likely to simply ignore him rather than offer him directions. Indeed, narcissistic entitlement by individuals often leads to scorn and replies such as, "Who died and made you king?"

Narcissistic entitlement can be a short-term and contextual state of mind. An individual may dis-play narcissistic entitlement in one situation but not in others. For example, a person may display narcissistic entitlement at home around his younger brother or sister, but not around his peers in school.

Narcissistic entitlement can also be a general feature of an individual's personality. Some indivi-duals display more narcissistic entitlement than do others in most situations. For example, a person may insist upon special treatment from their parents and deference from their younger sibling, de-

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[489] R Raskin & H Terry, "A principal-components analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and further evidence of its construct validity." *J of Personality and Social Psychology* 54 1988:890-902.

[490] W Keith Campbell, A M Bonacci, J Shelton, J J Exline, & B J Bushman, "Psychological entitlement: Interper-sonal consequences and validation of a new self-report measure," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 83 2004: 29-45.

mand an A from a lecturer in a class when they really earned a C, and expect everyone to pay for their drinks when they are out.

5.3.8 Narcissistic personality disorder

5.3.8.1 So far we have discussed narcissism as a trait; but when it is a part of a larger <u>personality disorder</u>, it becomes a more serious problem called "**narcissistic personality disorder**" (NPD). This is what we shall examine next. The symptoms of secondary or pathological narcissism have been documented in clinical work since Freud's development of the term, and "narcissistic personality disorder" has been formally recognized as a diagnosis since the DSM-3 (1980).

Symptoms include self-aggrandizement, overwhelming feelings of vulnerability, hypersensitivity to criticism, idealization of love, disregard for feelings of others, manipulative attitude towards others, envy, and a belief that others are envious of self; persistent fantasies relating to personal success, power, beauty, and brilliance; and pervasive fear of old age and death.[491] [5.4.3.6]

5.3.8.2 In DSM-4-TR (2000) and DSM-5 (2013),[492] <u>narcissistic personality disorder</u> is defined with the following characteristics: (a) a long-standing pattern of grandiose self-importance and an exaggerated sense of talent and achievements; (b) fantasies of unlimited sex, power, brilliance, or beauty; (c) an exhibitionistic need for attention and admiration; (d) either cool indifference or feelings of rage, humiliation, or emptiness as a response to criticism, indifference, or defeat; and (e) various interpersonal disturbances, such as feeling entitled to special favors, taking advantage of others, and inability to empathize with the feelings of others.[493]

5.3.8.3 It is helpful to mention here the negative effects that **narcissistic parents** have on their children, especially in Chinese families (including Buddhists) steeped in Confucian traditionalism. A narcissistic parent (sometimes called "a **helicopter parent**")[494] sees their children as extensions of themselves or as material investments, and induces their children to act in ways that support or enhance the parent's emotional and self-esteem wants.[495]

Due to their vulnerability, children (usually the sons) may be significantly affected by this behaviour.[496] To meet the parents' demands, the child may sacrifice their own wants and feelings.[497] A child subjected to this type of parenting may struggle in adulthood with their intimate relationships, or simply lack the drive to have any such relationship. They are "co-narcissists,"[498] married to their demanding parent.

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[491] See Cynthia Rolston, "Narcissistic personality disorder," in (edd) Kreutzer, DeLuca & Caplan, *Ency of Clinical Neuropsychology* 2nd ed, 2018:2327 f.

[492] DSM-5 PDF [download]; DSM-5 fact sheets: https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/educational-resources/dsm-5-fact-sheets. 20 July 2023.

[493] Orig formulated by psychoanalysts Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957), Otto Kernberg (1928-   ), and Heinz Kohut (1913–1981) and psychologist Theodore Millon (1928-2014). (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015)

[494] The term "helicopter parenting" is a term that describes parents who pay extremely close attention to their child's experiences and problems, particularly in school. The term was first mentioned by Haim G Ginott in his book *Between Parent And Teenager,* which mentions a teen who complains, "Mother hovers over me like a helicopter." (NY: Scribner, 1969:18).

[495] A Rappoport, "Co-narcissism: How we adapt to narcissistic parents," *The Therapist,* 2005. Archived: Microsoft Word - Co-Narcissism Article.doc (alanrappoport.com) 20 July 2023.

[496] S Wilson, C E Durbin, "Dyadic parent-child interaction during early childhood: Contributions of parental and child personality traits," *J of Personality* 80,5 Oct 2012:1313-1338. https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fj.1467-6494.2011.00760.x. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22433002. 20 July 2023.

[497] J I Kepner, *Body Process: A Gestalt approach to working with the body in psychotherapy*, Gestalt Inst of Cleveland, 1999 2001 2008; Routledge 2013:73 f.

[498] A Rappoport, 2005:1.

According to **social learning theory**, social behaviour is learned by observing and imitating oth-ers' behaviour, beginning with how children perceive the parents. Children who are over-valued and over-protected by their parents are likely to grow up to be narcissistic.[499] The parent has created that child in her or his image, a mere dehumanized shadow. That child has missed the formative humanizing stage of early life.[500] [4.5.1.4]

5.4 SELF AND RELIGION

5.4.1 The dark triad
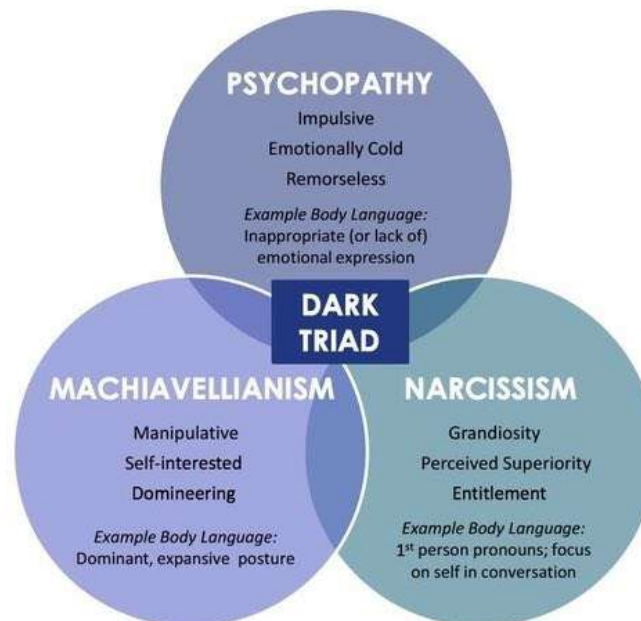
Figure 5.4.1 The dark triad and their sub-traits [Wikipedia]

5.4.1.1 The dark triad is a conglomerate of 3 socially negative personality traits—Machiavellian-ism, subclinical (non-pathological) narcissism and psychopathy[501]—that share certain features, in-cluding emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness. All 3 traits are characterized by a *lack* of empathy[502]—a wholesome feeling or concern for others—which is a core component in understand-ing and experiencing positive emotion. Other characteristics of the dark triad are callousness,[503] dis-agreeableness,[504] and manipulation.[505]

This triad or any of its component are commonly seen in religious group behaviour, such as in the running of Buddhist temples, centres, gatherings and activities. Knowing how this triad works

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[499] A Rappoport, 2005:3 f.

[500] On the first 7 years as the humanizing stage by the parents, see (4.4.9.1).

[501] R **Rogoza** & J Cieciuch, "Dark triad traits and their structure: An empirical approach," *Current Psychology* 39 2018:1287-1302. M **Michels**, "General intelligence and the dark triad: A meta-analysis, *J of Individual Differences* 43,1 2022:35-46 [Download] [Post-publication corr.]

[502] M Wai & N Tiliopoulos, "The affective and cognitive empathic nature of the dark triad of personality," *Per-sonality and Individual Differences* 52 2012:796. DOI:10.1016/j.paid.2012.01.008. [Download]

[503] E A Dowgwillo & A L Pincus, "Differentiating Dark Triad Traits Within and Across Interpersonal Circumplex Surfaces," *Assessment* 3,824,1 2017. [Source]

[504] S Jakobwitz & V Egan, "The dark triad and normal personality traits," *Personality and Individual Differences* 40 2005:331-339.

[505] M Lyons & C Brockman, "The dark triad, emotional expressivity and appropriateness of emotional re-sponse: Fear and sadness when one should be happy? *Personality and Individual Differences* 104 2017:466-469.

helps us in managing or preventing them, and perhaps help correct the negative effects of such conduct in our group for the sake of a truly Dharma-spirited fellowship that is the basis for personal development.

5.4.1.2 We have already noted [5.3.2] that a **narcissist** displays an exaggerated view of self-worth and grandiosity.[506] Narcissism is associated with arrogance,[507] entitlement[508] and the belief of superiority over others.[509] A narcissist will also use controlling and manipulative techniques in an attempt to influence others[510] and as a means through which their need for admiration is met and their self-views are reinforced.[511]

Narcissistic personalities have been described as "disagreeable extraverts"[512] in that they display lower levels of agreeableness and higher levels of extraversion. Individuals who display high levels of narcissism appear confident and assertive around people and feel comfortable speaking up, but are often seen as uncompromising and uncooperative[513] which is often a sign that they feel threatened and vulnerable.

Narcissistic personalities tend to display aggressive behaviours in situations where their ego has been threatened.[514] Individuals with higher levels of narcissism display a preference for relationships that require little commitment.[515] Such individuals report larger numbers of sexual partners and a greater willingness to employ deceptive and manipulative behaviours to satisfy their sexual impulses such as infidelity, mate-poaching and adultery.[516]

5.4.1.3 Machiavellianism[517] is characterized by interpersonal strategies based on self-interest.[518] An accomplished Machiavellian person has the ability to identify and exploit weakness in others and has a cynical perception of the world.[519] This is done through manipulation, deception and exploitation that ultimately benefits oneself[520] as those who demonstrate Machiavellian tendencies hold the belief that manipulating others is better than being manipulated.[521]

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[506] Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012:795.

[507] Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012:795.

[508] V Ziegler-Hill & D K Marcus, "Introduction: A bright future for dark personality features? The dark side of personality: science and practice." in *Social, Personality, and Clinical Psychology* 2016:3-22.

[509] C Miao, R H Humphrey, S Qian, & J M Pollack, "The relationship between emotional intelligence and the dark triad personality traits: A meta-analytic review," *Journal of Research in Personality* 78 2018:189-197. [Download]

[510] Dowgwillo & Pincus, 2017.

[511] Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012:797.

[512] Zeigler-Hill & Marcus, 2016.

[513] Dowgwillo & Pincus, 2017.

[514] R S Horton & C Sedikides, "Narcissistic responding to ego threat: When the status of the evaluator matters," *Journal of Personality* 77,5 2009:1493-1526. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2009.00590.x.

[515] Zeigler-Hill & Marcus, 2016.

[516] P K Jonason & D M Buss, "Avoiding entangling commitments: Tactics for implementing a short-term mating strategy," *Personality and Individual Differences* 52,5 2012:606-610.

[517] From Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), an Italian diplomat, author, philosopher and historian who lived during the Renaissance. He is best known for his political treatise on cunning, scheming, and unscrupulous strategies for gaining power and asserting it: *Il Principe* (*The Prince*), written around 1513 but not published until 1532, five years after his death. Machiavelli was one of the few European philosophers who most deeply influence later philosophers. [Internet Ency of Philosophy]

[518] Jakobwitz & Egan, 2005.

[519] Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012:794.

[520] Miao et al, 2019.

[521] Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012:794 f, 798.

Machiavellianism is also associated with diminished affect (feeling) in interpersonal relationships[522] and an unhealthy lack of real empathy.[523] Machiavellianism is known to influence factors such as romantic partners, relationship quality and the desire to stay in a relationship. For example, individuals bent on Machiavellianism show low levels of commitment and often engage in emotionally detached relationships, they display increased levels of infidelity and demonstrate higher levels of sexual deception.[524]

Controlling behaviours and emotional abuse are prominent in relationships where one partner demonstrates Machiavellian conduct. Here, the Machiavellian partner may diminish their partner's self-esteem, increase their partner's dependency and insecurity surrounding the relationship which leaves the partner vulnerable to manipulation attempts.[525]

5.4.1.4 Psychopathy is known to be the most insidious of the dark triad traits.[526] Psychopathy is characterized by features such as high impulsivity, recklessness, aggression,[527] antisocial behaviour,[528] as well as lack of empathy, remorse and guilt.[529] A severe psychopath is likely to show patterns of dysfunctional interpersonal behaviours, and use superficial charm and manipulation techniques for their own benefit with almost no regard for the cost to others.[530]

Psychopathy has been found to be uniquely predictive of future delinquent behaviour[531] in that a display of high levels of psychopathy is correlated with bullying and responding with aggression to physical threats.[532] The psychopath's relationships are often shallow, short-lived and only meet the material needs and desire for manipulative or strategic companionship.[533]

Psychopathy, as a rule, does not bring relationship satisfaction. Relationships where one partner shows psychopathic tendencies are often strained by infidelity and financial problems.[534] A psychopath in a relationship is likely to desire to dominate or assert control over the partner. Such a relationship often ends up with the psychopath violently abusing the partner.[535]

5.4.1.5 Let us now see how the dark triad are the manifestations of **the 3 fetters** (*saṁyojana*): *self-identity view, doubt* and *attachment to rituals and vows* [5.1.1.4]. In other words, any of the dark triad may manifest in us depending on the situation. In fact, when we embody any *one* of the triad, we are likely to be capable of manifesting either or both of the other two aspects. Their darkness prevents us from seeing the Dharma, much less approach the path of awakening.

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[522] Dowgwillo & Pincus, 2017.

[523] M A Barnett & S Thompson, "The role of perspective taking and empathy in children's Machiavellianism, prosocial behavior, and motive for helping," *The Journal of Genetic Psychology: Research and Theory on Human Development* 146,3 1985:295-305.

[524] G Brewer & L Abell, "Machiavellianism and romantic relationship dissolution," *Personality and Individual Differences* 106 2017b:226-230.

[525] G Brewer & L Abell, "Machiavellianism, relationship satisfaction, and romantic relationship quality," *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 13,3 2017a:491–502. https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v13i3.1217.

[526] Miao et al 2019; Zeigler-Hill & Marcus, 2016.

[527] Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012:794.

[528] R Rogoza & J Cieciuch, "Dark triad traits and their structure: An empirical approach," *Current Psychology* 39 2018:1287-1302.

[529] Miao et al, 2019.

[530] Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012:795.

[531] K M Williams & D L Paulhus, "Factor structure of the self-report psychopathy scale (SRP-II) in non-forensic samples," *Personality and Individual Differences* 37,4 2004:765-778.

[532] H M Baughman, S Dearing, E Giammarco & P A Vernon, 'Relationships between bullying behaviours and the dark triad: A study with adults," *Personality and Individual Differences* 52,5 2012:571-575.

[533] L Leedom, "The impact of psychopathy on the family," *Psychopathy—New Updates on an Old Phenomenon,* 2017:145 f.

[534] Leedom, 2017:147 f.

[535] Leedom, 2017:142, 148 f, 150 f, 155 f.

(1) It is not difficult to see how <u>narcissism</u> is rooted in **the self-identity view** (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*). **The narcissist** is caught up with themself *first and always*; they often stand out in a crowd by their actions and speech. Instead of harmonizing themself with others, they see other people, even the environment, as something to be exploited for their own good whatever the costs. They tend to have <u>grandiose</u> views about themselves, their wealth, status and so on, and feel <u>entitled</u> to everything that they need or want.

(2) Those who lack faith and wisdom in the Dharma are likely to depend on *luck and cunning*. They are likely to hold the notion that opportunities do not come to them: they have to seize them from out there. Every other person, everything else out there is an opportunity for their benefit. To ensure that things will work out for them, they are likely to be **Machiavellian**, manipulative and superstitious. They would even twist Buddhism and bribe the gods to do our will.

(3) When people are blinded by the darkness of **doubt** and insecurity, they are likely to turn to <u>vows and rituals</u>, especially those that make them *calculative*; they then think only of self-benefit even by being dishonest or devious. As a result, they are likely to show emotional coldness, even **psychopathic** symptoms, because of their ignorance of what is true and good (especially the Dharma).

5.4.1.6 Broadly, the dark triad is a set of *socially aversive personality traits*, clearly contradicting <u>the positive emotions</u> or "divine abodes" (*brahma,vihāra*) of *lovingkindness* (unconditional acceptance of others), *compassion* (active engagement for others' welfare), *joy* (altruistic appreciation of others' wellbeing) and *equanimity* (a calm and wise acceptance of the reality of things). In **the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta** (Sn 149), <u>lovingkindness</u> is likened to the love of **a mother** for her only child.[536] Lovingkindness is the root of the other 3 divine abodes, and this root positive emotion is clearly missing from the dark triad.

Psychologically, lovingkindness is the nurturing aspect of Buddhism, characterized as the best of motherliness, of a "mother religion," an embodiment of <u>compassion</u>. In the **Therī,gāthā**, the nun Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī declares that the Buddha, from whom she drank "the milk of Dharma"—this is the Buddha's compassion—and became an arhat, to be her "father," for bringing her "peace without end."[537] This latter is the "**father religion**" aspect, embodied in the Buddha's wisdom.

For our benefit today, the Buddha has ensured that his teachings are preserved and reach us even to this day. In that teaching, he lays down the 3 trainings for our <u>self-purification</u> through moral conduct, our <u>self-development</u> through mental concentration, and self-liberation through <u>insight wisdom</u>. The Buddha, the "parent" of early Buddhism, leaves us the "**self religion**," the teaching of self-reliance.

These are the 3 types or aspects into which scholars have classified religion, which we will discuss next [5.4.2].

5.4.2 Self, narcissism and religion

5.4.2.1 The modern study of religion, including the psychology of religion, began in the late 19th century. By the middle of the 20th century, scholars and thinkers had come up with a number of interesting theories about religion and the mind. Such ideas came from societies that had a high level of intellectual and religious freedom, such as in Scandinavia.

An interesting way of looking at modern religion[538] is how we can broadly classify it. One of the earliest proposals for such a classification is **the 3 types** of religions suggested by the Norwegian

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[536] Sn 1.8/*149/26 = Khp 9,7/8 (SD 38.3).

[537] Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī ThīAp (Ap 531), SD 10.6 (3.4).

[538] Since our approach in this SD series is practical rather than *theoretical,* and due to space constraint, we will not be considering critiques of the classical Freudian theory of religious development, of which there are many reviews; except mention just a few: E **Hitschmann**, "New varieties of religious experience: From William James to Sigmund Freud," in (ed) G Roheim, *Psychoanalysis and the Social Sciences,* NY 1997:195-233; D F **Zeligs**,

brothers **Harald Schjelderup** (1895-1974) and **Kristian Schjelderup** (1853-1913): Harald was a physicist, psychologist and philosopher, and Kristian was a theologian and bishop in the Church of Norway. In 1932, they published their idea in an essay "On the 3 main types of religious experience and their psychological basis" (1932) in German.[539]

On the basis of both historical and contemporary evidence, they identify 3 main types of religious experience: *mother religion, father religion and self religion*, each of which corresponds to a different stage of childhood development. Based on clinical case studies, Schjelderup and Schjelderup (1932) described how people develop their own **mother religions**, especially in Eastern contexts, such as Guanyin devotion in Buddhism. The nature religions of pre-Christian Europe—like Wicca, the Druid religion (with an affinity for trees) and shamanism (common in almost every ancient culture)—with their inclination to be close to nature and a sense of personal and direct experience of the divine, were also forms of mother religions.[540]

In patriarchal societies or societies whose thinkers were mostly male, there was understandably an inclination to see religion as being patriarchal, too. In the Christianity of such societies, for example, God was seen or depicted as a *male*, especially as a powerful, dominating, even angry and destructive, deity—which characterised [used same spelling as below?]the dominant Roman Church up to the Reformation in Europe.

With the Reformation, patriarchal Catholicism was challenged by Protestantism, which can be characterised as a **self religion**, in the sense that each Christian tries to connect themself directly through their faith to God's grace. Instead of Church priests mediating between the believer and God, the individual believer is each a priest themself.

Early Buddhism radically rejects the priesthood of the brahmins as mediators between the human world and the divine, especially the universal Soul. The Buddha advocates self-reliance through the 3 trainings; hence, early Buddhism is an example of **a self religion**, in the sense that we have to make the effort ourself (self-reliance). Yet the goal of this training is to understand the principle underlying all reality: that of **nonself**. Hence, early Buddhism is an interesting paradox on prescribing self-reliance for the realization of **nonself**. We will return to this topic below [5.4.10.1].

Meantime, we will briefly examine how religion transforms a person in a dramatic way; and then how that changed person transforms that very same religion: we will look at some interesting psychological highlights in the lives and stories of the struggles of a few individuals, historical and fictional. **Oser et al** (2006) have written a refreshing overview of the "religious and spiritual development throughout the life span," reviewing how the views of various thinkers and theologians have developed and changed until recent times.[541]

Since the Oser et al (2006) survey focuses on the Western religious situation, almost without mentioning the Buddha or Buddhism, I have freely used some of its insights and passages to highlight related aspects of the psychology of Buddhism and related areas, such as the religious mind, especially in our own time.

Psychoanalysis and the Bible: A study in depth of seven leaders, NY, 1974, on the religious development of biblical figures; A **Bucher**, *Religionsunterricht zwischen Lernfach und Lebenshilfe: Eine empirische Untersuchung zum katholischen Religionsunterricht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,* Stuttgart, 2004; F K **Osel,** W G Scarlett & A Bucher, *"*Religious and spiritual development throughout the life span," in (edd) Damon & Lerner, *Handbook of Child Psychology* vol 1, Wiley, 2006:949; H A **Walton**, "Is religion just a primitive or infantile phenomenon? The psychology of religion beyond Freud," Univ of Amsterdam, 2013.

[539] H Schjelderup & K Schjelderup, *Über drei Haupttypen der Religiösen Erlebnisformen und ihre psychologische Grundlage,* Berlin: De Gruyter, 1932, repr 2019. [Download]

[540] J Dickie, "Mother, father, and self: Sources of young adults' God concepts," *J for the Scientific Study of Religion* Feb 2006:57-71.

[541] Fritz M Oser, W George Scarlett and Antron Bucher, "Religious and spiritual development throughout the life span," in (edd) R M Lerner & W Damon, Hobokwn, NJ: Wiley, 2006:942-998.

5.4.2.2 By the turn of the 20th century, when psychological exploration of religious development began in earnest, **the 3 main paradigms** for explaining *religious* and *spiritual*[542] development had already been well established as:[543]

(1) religious and spiritual development as   <u>maturing</u>,
(2) religious and spiritual development as   <u>coping</u>,
(3) religious and spiritual development as   <u>perfecting</u>.

In the 1st paradigm, **maturity**, loosely defined, is the telos or ultimate goal toward which religious and spiritual development tends. Maturity is a value-laden concept, but the values made explicit in this paradigm are attainable by most people. In this paradigm, <u>to mature religiously and spiritually</u> is not to become a saint, that is, some kind of virtuosi or highly attained being. Rather, it is to become <u>an adult</u> in whatever ways being an adult is culturally defined.

In the 2nd paradigm, **coping**, maturity is also a telos (higher goal), but the emphasis is more on the primitive and immature—so that <u>maturity</u> means coping with *personal limitations and weaknesses*. Here, we see a functional approach—with religious and spiritual development functioning to help us cope. We also see health and maturity being used almost interchangeably. This paradigm is used most extensively in psychoanalytic theory and practice.

The 3rd paradigm, **perfecting**, explicitly embraces *perfection* as the goal of personal or social development. The telos here is entirely *conceptual*—though occasionally the talk is of religious or spiritual exemplars, such as the saints. However, even in the exemplars, the assumption of this paradigm is not that the exemplar is perfect but that the exemplar points to what perfection consists of, to the standard or ideal that defines development. It allows us to evaluate and explain levels or stages of development as approximations to perfection.

5.4.2.3 In **the Buddhist context**—that of <u>the 3 trainings</u> [3.1.1]—that is, in terms of moral conduct, mental cultivation, and insight wisdom, the 3 paradigms of development should be rearranged slightly as follows:

(1) religious and spiritual development as   <u>coping</u>,
(2) religious and spiritual development as   <u>maturing</u>,
(3) religious and spiritual development as   <u>perfecting</u>.

The 1st Buddhist paradigm—**coping**—involves how we wholesomely (that is, ethically) cope with living, working, socializing (including loving), communicating and thinking. These are, in fact, the 5 practical tasks of <u>the good life</u> for ourself and our extended selves, that is, those with whom we live and communicate, and are part of our living environment (that is, society and nature). To those familiar with Buddhist living this is, of course, **moral training** (*sīla,sikkhā*), this disciplining of our body and speech so that a good society is possible. Religion here (that is Buddhism) is not merely for ourself, but how well we treat others whether they are Buddhist or not.

While the 1st paradigm is about our *social evolution* in a moral/ethical network of extended minds [3.1.1], the 2nd paradigm—**maturing**—concerns our <u>personal evolution</u> based on the benefits of living in a morally conducive environment (the 1st paradigm). There are 2 aspects of our personal maturing: the affective and the cognitive, that is, feelings and knowing, respectively. For our **affective** <u>growth and health</u>, we need to constantly cultivate **the 4 social emotions**: *lovingkindness* (accepting others as they are), *compassion* (reaching out to others beneficially), *joy* (truly enjoying the good and well-being of others), and *equanimity* (even when things do not turn out positively, we stoically accept things as they are, and work from there).

For our **cognitive** growth and health, we must have a great <u>love for learning</u> (*sikkhā,kāma*) in both the intellectual and the practical senses. Essentially, these learning and doing are a quest for

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[542] On def of terms related to religion and spirituality, see (0.3.4).
[543] Oser et al 2006:947.

truth and beauty (what is real and good). Understanding the true and real keeps us healthily happy; knowing wholesome beauty keeps us happily healthy. Hence, we work to maintain a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Finally, there is the 3rd paradigm—**perfecting**—that is transformation through self-conquest [5.2.2] by way of cultivating the calm and clarity of the mind. This is done through habitual mindfulness (*sati*)—engaging with the present in a wholesome manner—and whenever the conditions are right, some practice of meditation (*bhāvanā*) leading to mental concentration, that is, keeping the mind charged up with peace, clarity and joy. In this way, we have *a sound mind and heart in a healthy body*. This, in essence, is the Buddhist training, making us a healthy individual in a healthy society.

5.4.2.4 Another way of looking at the 3 paradigms of "*coping*," "*maturing*," and "*perfecting*" [5.4.2.3], is that of socializing, individuating and transformation. In an important way, we can envision these three paradigms in a single term: **individuation**.[544] This is a well known term used by the Swiss psychoanalyst and psychiatrist **Carl Gustav Jung** (1875-1961), the son of a Protestant minister. Understandably, religion played a major positive role in both his personal life and his theory. Following the psychoanalytic tradition, Jung provided a quite different focus than Freud's—with his concept of individuation (1968).[545]

The concept of individuation explains individual development as a gradual integration of psychic structures, creating a "self" where conscious and unconscious are fully integrated and compatible. As for his theory's connection to religious and spiritual development, Jung spoke about a "personal unconscious" or hidden psychic realm that he referred to as the "**shadow**."

Informed Buddhist would at once see a link, at least a parallel, between "the shadow" and the early Buddhist teaching on **latent tendencies** (*anusaya*) [4.4.8.3, 5.3.1.1], the Buddhist conception of the unconscious. Such parallels are useful in a comparative study of the concepts, including a better understanding of how they operate. However, as we should well know *parallels never meet*, except when perceived from a distance. Both systems have their definitions and purpose within a large conceptual structure.

According to Jung, every individual has to cope with and manage what is *suppressed, ignored, and neglected* in personal life. In doing so, individuals develop toward wholeness, becoming *a wholly integrated self*. Religion plays a central role in this process of becoming an integrated self (individuation), especially when the individual's goal is to harmonize the demands of reality with personal needs. This harmonizing is achieved with the help of inherited **archetypes** in a collective unconscious that is a part of every individual's psychological nature.

Numinous archetypes are structuring principles that are produced through dreams, and cannot be produced by thought or reflection. Religions play a central role by effecting this harmony in the way they relate to the archetypes. Because religious myths are projections of the archetypes, the messages of the soul—not as an abiding entity but the heart of one's experience—and the messages of religions are very similar and can be translated each to the other. In doing so, individuals cope better by coming to terms with their shadow. Therefore, whereas for Freud development consists of putting religion behind us, for Jung, as in Buddhism, development consists of embracing and using religion to support development. Of course, in early Buddhism, the Dharma *is* itself that path of training (*paṭipadā*) for self-development.

5.4.2.5 German-American psychoanalyst **Erik Erikson** (1902-94) comes after Freud and Jung, and offers a third variation on the psychoanalytic theme with respect to religious and spiritual development. As with Freud and Jung, Erikson focused on unconscious intrapsychic conflicts to explain

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[544] Oser et al 2006:949.

[545] C G Jung, "Concerning the archetypes, with special reference to the anima concept," in (edd) M F H Read & G Adler, *The collected works of C. G. Jung,* 2nd ed, vol 9, Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ Press, 1968:54-72.

what fuels development. However, Erikson's emphasis was much more on how intrapsychic conflict reflects not only *familial* themes but also <u>societal-cultural</u> themes.[546]

In many ways, Erikson fits more comfortably into present-day discussions about the 3 C's of *context, culture, and change* as the process of personal development. In terms of religious and spiritual development, Erikson works with two main concepts of "basic trust" and "identity." Developing <u>basic trust</u> was, for Erikson, the central religious issue—not only trust in *God* but also trust in a universe that offers enough to make life worth living.

An informed Buddhist would probably read "God" as referring to the "true self," that is, the liberated mind that awakening brings. In fact, for Erikson, too, it is the struggle to achieve <u>a personal identity</u> that is central in development. For Erikson, religion offered one of several ways in which individuals achieve **identity** (Erikson's word for his version of "individuation"). This concept is best illustrated in Erikson's influential book, *Young Man Luther* (1958), in which he shows how Luther used religion to shape and construct his identity. [5.4.2.6]

5.4.2.6 In *Young Man Luther,* Erikson shows how religious ideology and religious institutions provide ways for youth to separate themselves from old identifications with parents to achieve a new identity better suited to weather the storms of adulthood and better suited to render them able to contribute to society. In *Young Man Luther,* Erikson shows how Luther's choice to become a monk, his obsessional behaviour as a young monk, and his becoming a great reformer, all reveal his inner struggle to remain identified with his father and his church while, at the same time, to distance himself to become his own person with his own convictions and purpose in life.

In the early Buddhist version of **the historical Buddha**, it is Suddhodana, the Buddha's father, who identifies with his own son, Siddhattha, to continue his lineage. In his efforts to do so, Suddhodana, like God, creates a Garden of Eden to trap his only son (at that time) as the father's son. Ironically, it is this protectiveness that actually prepares Siddhattha for his greatest role. When Siddhattha sees the wide chasm of suffering separating his Garden and the world, he is compelled to flee from what keeps him as a child (a Peter Pan) in quest of his true self, and awakening as a fully liberated being, an arhat, and a world teacher [5.3.4.1].

Another vital highlight in the Siddhattha story is that of **free will**. We are the creatures of samsara, bound to a cycle of lives and rebirths, of bad and good, caught in habitual loops of liking and disliking. It is our nature to break free from bonds, but we are often distracted by our worldly habits. As humans we realize this; when we do break this bond, we attain the divine and beyond.

5.4.3 Religion as mother, as father, as self and beyond

5.4.3.1 Here we continue our exploration of religion as rooted in the mother, the father, the self and beyond begun in the previous section [5.4.2]. Let us see what **object relations theory** [4.2.5.3] has to say about religion. Object relations theory has given us a broader understanding of the origins of the God-concept. Rizzuto (1979),[547] for example, argues that Freud picked too late a period in dating the beginnings of the representation of God in the Oedipal phase [5.3.2.9 n]. She located the origin of the representation of God in *early childhood*.[548]

Regardless of whether they are raised in a religious manner or not, children form a representation of God-figure or a sacred figure such as the Buddha. These representations or images may derive from the mother, father, or combinations of significant others. Furthermore, the quality of the relationships depicted in these images depends on the quality of their own early human relationships. These representations or images provide, at best, protection. Hence, there is ultimately an element of <u>the self</u> in such a projected image. Later on, they may be held onto, updated, or discard-

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[546] Oser et al 2006:949 f.

[547] A-M Rizzuto, *The birth of the living God: A psychoanalytic study*, Chicago: Chicago Univ Press, 1979.

[548] Oser et al 2006:951.

ed—to conform to official doctrines or to contradict them. The point remains that we have created God or Buddha in our own image.[549]

5.4.3.2 We started this discussion with the 3 paradigms of religion, *as coping, as maturing and as perfecting* [5.4.2.3]. We have discussed how religion arises as our coping process [5.4.2.4] and as our maturing process [5.4.2.5 f]. They do not seem very remarkable, at least not as remarkable as the perfecting process. For a good example of the perfecting religion model, we turn away from Freudian theory to **William James** (1842-1910) [4.4.5.2] and his monumental work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).

The *Varieties* is arguably the single most influential book in the psychology of religion. Even after a century since it was written, readers find in it insights that are directly relevant to our times.[550] However, the *Varieties* is not normally thought of as a text on religious or spiritual *development*. For one thing, it hardly makes any mention of children. For another, it gives us religious types, but the types themselves seem ordered more along a *horizontal* plane than along a *vertical*, developmental one.

This seems especially true of James's two major types: "The Healthy-Minded" or "once-born" and the "Sick Soul" or those who feel themselves in need of being "twice-born." Nevertheless, a closer reading of the *Varieties* shows James to be very much a developmentalist as defined by the 3rd paradigm (the perfecting religion). In particular, James saw the "sick soul" as having a more mature grasp of reality than that seen in the healthy minded—and a greater potential for developing spiritually.

James shows this developmental ordering of the two types when he turns from writing about the "once-born" healthy-minded to writing about the sick soul in need of being "twice-born," that is born again spiritually. James writes:

> Let us then resolutely turn our backs on the once-born and their sky-blue optimistic gospel; let us not simply cry out, in spite of all appearances, "Hurrah for the Universe!—God's in his Heaven, all's right with the world." Let us see rather whether pity, pain, and fear, and the sentiment of human helplessness may not open a profounder view and put into our hands a more complicated key to the meaning of the situation.
>
> (James, 1902:135 f)

In short, the sick soul has a better grasp of reality and so is in a better position to develop spiritually. And what might that development consist of? Later on, James tells us when he discusses saintliness. After a second (spiritual) birth, the previously sick soul is more sensitive to the world's contingencies. This is essential to growth, which shows how James can be seen as a developmentalist in the tradition of the 3rd paradigm.[551]

5.4.3.3 Saintliness is James's way of providing a telos, an ideal end needed to define, evaluate, and explain religious and spiritual development. He makes this clear by characterizing his picture of saintliness as a composite picture, an ideal type, rather than as a picture of specific individuals. In short, James's saint is a standard of perfection that helps define what it means to develop religiously and spiritually.

James's concept of **saintliness** is not the everyday concept of a moral exemplar who uses religious language. His is not a moral concept of saintliness but is essentially religious or spiritual. In his words, to be a saint is to have "a feeling of being in a wider life than that of this world's selfish little

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[549] J Greenberg & S Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ Press, 1983:12.

[550] C Taylor, *Varieties of religion today: William James revisited*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ Press, 2002.

[551] For this and the foll sections: Oser et al 2006:951 f.

interests; and a conviction, not merely intellectual, but as it were sensible, of the existence of an Ideal Power" (272).

He adds that the saint has "a sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control" (273). For James, religious and spiritual emotions (that is feelings) are central. Morality is not absent, but a by-product. In other words, we should not merely be morally good, but be happily accepting of the "sick soul." By accepting the "Ideal Power" (things as they are) as it is, we accept ourself just as we are. Only then are we able to accept others as they are. This is not "amazing grace" but more than that: it is amazing love.

In the *Varieties*, the saint is an ideal type defining the endpoint of religious and spiritual development. For James, the experience of being a divided self, a self in need of being saved, a lost or sick soul was instrumental for developing toward saintliness. To develop religiously or spiritually meant that things might get worse, not better—at least for a while.

For James, simply coping and becoming mature are not, by themselves, enough to define what can ultimately develop when we speak of religious and spiritual development. For James and anyone else working in this 3rd paradigm, it matters little whether anyone actually reaches sainthood and perfection. What matters is that we can conceive of sainthood and perfection and in so conceiving, we can become better able to define, evaluate, and explain religious and spiritual development.

5.4.3.4 Perhaps by now, we may already have an inkling that **religion** is the most common source of narcissism. As a rule, when we join a religion, we surrender ourselves completely to the tribe and its beliefs and rules. In the God-religions, the narcissism arises from loving the one true God, and none other, not even our own family if they are not God-loving.

In Buddhism, we are warned repeatedly not to be burdened by **views**, by which we are then bound by narcissism, as clearly stated in such early texts as **the Kalaha,vivāda Sutta** (Sn 4.11), **the Cūḷa Viyūha Sutta** (Sn 4.12) and **the Mahā Viyūha Sutta** (Sn 4.13). Hence, we are likely to see those who felt unloved or were violated as children, tend to become vulnerable narcissists [5.3.3], arming themselves with Buddhism as measured learning and titled status, lacking any ability to love or befriend others, fearing criticism and rejection. Their self-view is fully identified with themselves, with what they are entitled to by their learning, titles and status. They are the very contradiction of individuation in the Buddhist sense.[552]

5.4.3.5 Interpretations of religious phenomena, therefore, that utilize Freud's understanding of narcissism are unremittingly negative; focusing on its regressive, defensive and grandiose nature. However, **Heinz Kohut's** [5.3.2.5] highly influential psychoanalytic revisioning of narcissism has opened up a much more positive dialogue between narcissism and religion.[553] Kohut believed that the pejorative classical Freudian evaluation of narcissism which cast it in an inverse relationship to object love reflected an intrusion of western altruistic cultural values into psychoanalysis.[554]

While accepting Freud's stage of primary narcissism, Kohut asserted that narcissism developed on its own where the two primary archaic configurations of narcissism—the grandiose self and the idealized parent imago—had the potential to transform respectively into a cohesive sense of self with healthy self-esteem and a set of mature goals, values and ideals. Crucial to this transformation was the ability of the primary caretakers to act as selfobjects. [5.3.2.5]

Kohut coined the term **selfobject** [5.3.2.5] to describe how an infant's earliest experience of the other is not as a separate object but as a part of oneself. Parents are the earliest selfobjects and

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[552] One way to deal with this problem is to openly mention it in Dhamma terms, esp the practice of self-acceptance and self-forgiveness as early as possible, or by some proper counselling for self-healing.

[553] H Kohut, Analysis of the self: A systematic approach to the psychoanalytic treatment of narcissistic personality disorders, Chicago & London: Univ of Chicago Press, 1971, 2009; The restoration of the self, Chicago & London: Univ of Chicago Press, 1977, 2009.

[554] Ann Gleig, op cit, "Narcissism," 2010:5.

they perform crucial psychological functions which the child's own psychic structure will later trans-mute into internal structures. In positive terms, this is the <u>humanization</u> stage of the child [4.5.1.4].

However, if caretakers fail to respond empathetically to the child's experience, or if the child is subject to premature or traumatic separation, the integration of archaic narcissism is disturbed and the repressed strands emerge unresolved in later life; in a clinical condition designated as <u>the narcis-sistic personality disorder</u>. This is characterized by states of emptiness and despair, feelings of un-reality, excessive self-consciousness, oscillation between experiences of inferiority and grandiosity, an intense desire to merge with an idealized other, uncontrollable rage and an absence of empathy. [5.3.8]

5.4.3.6 Unlike Freud, however, Kohut believed that narcissistic disturbances could be rectified through the establishment of empathetic communication in the analytic relationship which enabled the working through of traumatic failures of early selfobjects and a more conscious negotiation of legitimate narcissistic needs. Kohut claimed that a mature ego had the capacity to tame and employ narcissistic cathexes[555] for its highest developmental aims, namely: *creativity, empathy, contemplat-ion of one's own impermanence, a sense of humor and wisdom*.[556]

Moreover, Kohut saw **mysticism** as engaging the developmental line of narcissism and affecting a transformation of the narcissistic elements of one's personality into the higher religio-ethical goal of what he termed, "<u>cosmic narcissism</u>." This is the transformation of narcissism into a type of ma-ture, state-like mysticism in which the subject participates in a supra-individual and timeless exist-ence.

Although rooted in the mother-child symbiosis, this differs from the transient oceanic feeling of unitive mysticism which Kohut reads as the preservation of the early mother-child unity. Neither transient nor unitive, *cosmic narcissism* is an ethical and existential developmental achievement of an autonomous ego. Kohut hoped that the transformation of narcissism into cosmic narcissism would signal the emergence of <u>a new unchurched tradition of mystical rationality</u> which would re-place traditional religions and rejuvenate the West.[557]

5.4.3.7 Following Kohut, **Peter Homans** (1979) has claimed that *unchurched psychologized relig-iosity*, such as that of Carl Jung, displays an authentic engagement with narcissism. Homans argues that due to secularization, traditional religion lost its ability to organize personal and social life and this has resulted in the emergence of a diffused and heightened form of self-consciousness in which legitimate narcissistic needs are now satisfied primarily in the context of personal and psychological experience.[558]

Hence, while psychologized spirituality, with its themes of unity, wholeness, self-actualization and individuation, is indeed reflective of the contemporary emergence of narcissistic disorders, it is also an authentic attempt to maturely heal and transform them.

Concerned Buddhists today probably feel the same about **a non-clerical Buddhism**, especially <u>early Buddhism in dialogue with modern psychology</u>, with psychologists meditating and meditators trained in some psychology for a better understanding of their meditative oceanic experience. Sadly, in most cases, organized Buddhism today is little more than class elitism and religious business often on a global scale. The lotus can rise again from the mud.

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[555] **Cathexis** (sg), "in psychoanalytic theory, the investment of psychic energy in an object of any kind, such as a wish, fantasy, person, goal, idea, social group, or the self. Such objects are said to be **cathected** when an indi-vidual attaches emotional significance (positive or negative affect) to them." (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015).

[556] Ann Gleig, op cit, 2010:6.

[557] William B Parsons, The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling: Revisioning the psychoanalytic theory of mysticism, NY & Oxford: Oxford Univ Press, 1999:159 f, 163-165.

[558] P Homans, *Jung in Context: The making of a psychology,* Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press. 1979. [<u>Preview</u>]

5.4.4 When self religion hurts

5.4.4.1 Self religion is the 3rd and last of the 3 religious types of the Schjelderup brothers [5.4.2.1].
Early Buddhism, as we have stressed, is a self religion in that it emphasizes self-reliance. However,
there are forms of Buddhism (and other religions) that stop at self-training without going on to under-
stand nonself as taught by the Buddha. A case in point is Chan Buddhism (Chinese) and Zen Buddhism
(Japan), that are deeply rooted in Confucianism (such as its lineage) and in Daoism (in its basic philos-
ophy). Its Japanese form is "Buddhism" only in name.[559]
As **self religion**, (Japanese) Zen Buddhism and (Indian) yoga tend to be a quest for and fantasies
of self-deification, which is a result of narcissistic withdrawal of libido from external objects and a
regression to infantile self-grandiosity. The Schjelderup's analysis anticipates psychoanalytic readings
of contemporary forms of self-spirituality, such as the New Age[560] and the human potential move-
ment, which have also been interpreted as *narcissistic*.

5.4.4.2 Psychologists nearer to our time have noticed how religion, especially the New Reli-
gions,[561] tended to be *narcissistic*. **Mel D Faber** (1996), for example, argues that New Age thinking is a
regression to primary narcissism [5.3.2.3] in which the adult returned to an infantile state of omni-
potence, magical wish fulfillment and merger with the mother.[562] Other writers, drew on Kohut's con-
cept of the selfobject [5.3.2.5] to interpret and legitimize religious phenomena. **Robert C Fuller** (1989),
for example, claims that New Age healers act as mature selfobject for analysts and clients.[563]
Christopher Lasch's influential *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) explains the rise of the new psy-
chospiritual therapies and their quest for self-realization as being both a product and perpetuation
of a narcissistic personality structure that because of recent socio-cultural changes has become the
predominant psychopathology of contemporary life.[564]
To counter this narcissism, Lasch suggests a return to and renewal of Christian commitment and
ethics. However, this assumes that Christianity is immune from narcissism, an assumption rebutted
by **Paul Pruyser's** (1978) targeting of the narcissistic strands within evangelical Christianity. He
claims the evangelic practices of witnessing and testifying are often beset by "reflective narcissism,"
the need to have one's own self-love mirrored back in the affirmation and admiration of others.
However, unlike self-spirituality, Pruyser argues that Christianity contains abundant resources
to counter such narcissistic trends. For example, the story of Paradise in the book of Genesis rejects

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[559] Zen groups outside of Japan, as a rule, are not hostile to early Buddhism, and often include it in their teach-
ings and practices. See "When Zen is not Buddhism," SD 60.1c (19).

[560] "New Age" was orig a buzzword that achieved widespread popularity in Europe and the US during the
1980s. It referred to a wide array of spiritual practices and beliefs perceived as "alternative" from the perspect-
ive of mainstream Western society. The immediate roots of New Age philosophy were in the "Hippie" counter-
culture of the 1960s US (California). New Agers generally claimed a profound transformation of Western society
culminating in a vastly superior culture—the "Age of Aquarius." See "New Age movement," *Gale Ency of Religion*
2nd ed, vol 10 2005:6495-6500.

[561] A "New Religion"—in academic lingo, "New Religious Movement" (NRM)—is a scholarly euphemism for
"cult," which orig referred to an organized system of worship (and is still used in that sense in several disci-
plines). "Cult" began to take on negative connotations in popular discourse in the 1960s-70s, when a variety of
unconventional religions appeared in the US. The word "cult" conveys a stereotype that prevents objective
research into these religions. Moreover, NRMs are so different from one another that it is difficult to generalize
about them. Essentially, a "new religion" claims to be "new," that is, different from the established religions, and
is, as a rule, centred on a living cult-figure. See "New religious movements: An overview," and related articles:
Gale Ency of Religion 2nd ed, vol 10 2005:6513 ff.

[562] M D **Faber**, *New Age Thinking: A psychoanalytic critique,* Ottawa, ON: Univ of Ottawa Press, 1996. On this
section, see Ann **Gleig**, "Narcissism," in (edd) Leeming, Madden & Marlan, *Ency of Psychology and Religion,*
Springer, 2020:7-9.

[563] R C Fuller, *Alternative Medicine and American Religious Life,* NY: Oxford Univ Press, 1989. [Preview]

[564] C Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism,* NY: W W Norton, 1979.

the desire to become omnipotent and omniscient like God—which Pruyser interprets as a mythic expression of primary narcissism—as the root of "original sin."[565]

In other words, for Pruyser—and for many trained in the object relations tradition—the decisive step in religious and spiritual development is choosing between alternative imaginings. For Pruyser, the truth or value of imagining lies not so much in its structure as in its content, and in the value of its content for supporting healthy psychological development. The gentler, nurturing imagery promoted in Pruyser's warm mother's "tender-and-firm hand" home life seemed healthier to Pruyser than the strict, sombre and punitive imagery promoted in his school life.

Once again we are reminded of the "mother metaphor" in **the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta** (Sn 1.8), where the Buddha inspires us to evoke unconditional love to all beings: "Just as a mother would guard her own child—her one and only child, with her own life—even so, towards all beings let one cultivate a boundless heart!" (Sn 149)[566] [5.4.1.5]. This is the very basis of spiritual friendship, the ground in which spiritual training roots itself.

5.4.4.3 The concern among informed practitioners is not whether their faith is a "**self religion**" or not—"self religion" is after all a technical term useful perhaps only to the academics and psychologists. Self religion, however, may include in its useful definition the private views and misinterpretations of the wholesome teachings of their faith. Informed Buddhists, for example, will find such a term useful to identify misconceptions and malpractices in our community or social media. We can then initiate discussions, investigations and rectifications of those misconceptions and malpractices.

The matter is more serious when we look deeper into any religion. It is well known that religion doesn't always have a positive effect on its followers' **mental health** or social well-being [5.4.4.4]. How negative the impact is depends on a person's beliefs and commitment, how widely the religion is generally accepted by the larger community.

For example, if instead of promoting love and compassion, a religion advocates hate of non-believers, such negative beliefs and attitudes would also become part of the way their brains work. This would turn on areas of the brain involved in thinking about hate, and will stimulate the release of stress hormones, increase stress and encourage violence. Furthermore, when people believe that a health condition—such as addiction—is a punishment from God or simply "one's karma"—they may be less likely to seek treatment, with adverse consequences on their health and their social network.[567]

5.4.4.4 Contemporary clinical psychologist **Ken Pargament** of Bowling Green State University (Ohio, US), coined the term "sacred moments" for numinous experiences that occur in clinical contexts. Pargament argued that these experiences are already occurring in therapy rooms, and that they can actually enhance the therapeutic process when explicitly acknowledged. In a 2014 article, Pargament and his coauthors described several of these sacred moments.[568]

Here is one from a patient (a God-believer):

I also felt safe because I knew my therapist was/is there for me and that she has my best interests at heart. She was very supportive and loving. She extended my session by another hour and made sure I was safe to go home. This moment brought us closer and deepened my trust in her. [This moment] was sacred to me because I knew, all the way to my spirit

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[565] P Pruyser, "Narcissism in contemporary religion," *J of Pastoral Care* 32 1978:219-231.

[566] Sn 1.8/*149/26 = Khp 9,7/8 (SD 38.3).

[567] See D B Yaden & A B Newberg, *The Varieties of Spiritual Experience,* Oxford*,* 2022:Ch 5.

[568] K **Pargament**, J Lomax, J Mcgee & Q Fang, "Sacred moments in psychotherapy from the perspectives of mental health providers and patients: Prevalence, predictors, and consequences," *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 1,4 2014:248-262. K I **Pargament** & A Mahoney, "Sacred matters: Sanctification as a vital topic for the psychology of religion," *International J of the Psychology of Religion* 15,3 2005:179-198, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327582ijpr1503_1.

that I was not alone in this anymore and that I had not only my therapist on my side but it brought home that God was pained by what I went thru.

(Pargament et al, 2014:256)

In **Buddhist counselling** (where both counsellor and client are Buddhist or open to Buddhism) — which has more spiritual latitude than clinical counselling—the counsellor, where needed, would try to define or clarify difficult aspects of the session with a suitable Buddhist teaching or even use short moments of meditation-sitting to help the client collect themself. In fact, Pargament also made the point that it's not only the clients, but also the clinicians who can experience such sacred moments. Here is one therapist describing an experience that occurred while the patient was expressing gratitude about the therapeutic process:

He said I was different than all other providers in the sense that I was genuinely caring about him and paying attention to what he was saying and also to what he was not saying. It was like time had stopped and we were two vulnerable human beings connected at a very deep level. A "sacred" moment.   (Pargament et al, 2014:252)

Pargament and his colleagues also addressed the mental health benefits of spiritual experiences *outside* of the clinical office. They found that spiritual experiences (the "sacred moments") are associated with less caregiving burden but with greater relationship satisfaction among family caregivers of adults with **dementia**,[569] and with greater growth in the aftermath of spiritual struggles in an adult situation.[570]

5.4.4.5 The Buddhist term for this healing engagement is spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇa,mittatā*), a wholesome interbeing characterized by *love, ruth (compassion), joy and equanimity*, that is, the 4 divine abodes [5.1.7.4]. **Love** (*mettā,* "lovingkindness") is the unconditional acceptance of self and others, which means "happy deep listening" to others even when they are not in any difficulty, and with our wisdom we help to *prevent* problems and pain from arising by skillfully explaining to others how this will happen or working with others so that they do not suffer through lack of mindfulness [5.2.1.2].

Ruth[571] (*karuṇā,* compassion) is when someone actually falls into some difficulty (losing a job or a loved one) or commits an unwholesome act (such as breaking a precept), we act to be a support for such a grieving or suffering person. This is not an easy task, but one that is a valuable learning link with others. Ruth also means we help others even when, especially when, they do not deserve it, but without putting them in any greater disadvantage.

Joy (*muditā*) is an altruistic exultation when our counsellee heals or someone well earns their gain, success or happiness. We express our altruistic joy by smiling, congratulating the person, or simply reflecting: "This good person deserves this benefit, sadhu!" Such words empower both others and self in mutual joy. We are happy at another's happiness.

Equanimity (*upekkha*) is a calm and clear mindfulness at the true state of things, whether they turn out well or otherwise. No one is to be blamed. Things do *not* happen for a reason (we reasoned it out ourselves); things happen because of related conditions (the present), or because of karma (how our past affects us now). Having shown our *love, ruth and joy* to others, the wheel of samsara still rolls on relentlessly, and we move along gingerly with it, until we awaken to true freedom.

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[569] S Wong, K I Pargament & C A Faigin, "Sustained by the sacred: Religious and spiritual factors for resilience in adulthood and aging: Concepts, research, and outcomes," in (edd) B Resnick, L P Gwyther & K A Roberto, *Resilience in Aging,* 2018:207.

[570] J A Wilt, K I Pargament, J J Exline, T L Barrera & E J Teng, "Spiritual transformation among veterans in response to a religious/spiritual struggle," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 11,3 2019:266-277. https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000208.

[571] On usage of "ruth" here, see SD 38.5 (2.3.2.1); SD 48.1 (5.2.1.3).

In the meantime, still unawakened, we have to relate to others: we notice how alike we are to others in some ways, and yet we are so different from them in other ways. There are certain things we like, or fear, or don't know about: this is universal. Yet what we like, or fear, or are ignorant of may differ from person to person. Looking deeper, we will notice that there are two kinds of people: those who merely look for immediate and <u>pragmatic</u> solutions to these issues, and those who seek to understand more deeply the way things are, even to the roots of things: we seek a more <u>radical</u> solution, or at least explanation, for the way things are. Either way, we *struggle* with such issues. This is what we will now turn to: our struggle to understand these things.

5.4.5 Life as a struggle

5.4.5.1 So long as we are thinking individuals, we have to struggle with life and its vicissitudes, that come in 4 pairs: *gains and losses, fame and obscurity (or ill-fame), praise and blame, joy and pain*; to which we may add: love and hate, life and death. The first 4 pairs constitute the 8 worldly conditions (*attha loka,dhamma*) with which we must all struggle in the world.[572] The last 2 pairs are deeper aspects of our lives that concern those of us who look deeper into our lives and into things around us.
We can, for the sake of discussion at least, divide humans into 2 broad groups:
(1) those who live day by day, seeking **pragmatic** solutions to this worldly struggle in the daily grind and living needs, that is, <u>the 4 supports of life</u> (*catu paccaya*): *food, clothing, shelter and health*;[573] and
(2) those who try to rise above these immediate mundane needs and question where we are all heading: why we love and hate, why we live and die; they struggle to find **radical** answers to these questions.

<u>Pragmatic worldlings</u>, on the other hand, mostly live like **chickens**, scratching the soil for their morning meal, and again scratching the soil for their evening meal—*kais pagi makan pagi, kais petang makan petang,* as the Malay saying goes—that is, "living from hand to mouth," not from poverty, but from lack of mental creativity and spiritual lack.
Aesop admonishes us with his fable of <u>the grasshopper and the ants</u>: an idle grasshopper spends the summer singing and dancing while the ants work to store up food for winter. When winter comes, the grasshopper finds itself starving and begs the ants for food. An ant rebukes the grasshopper's idleness and tells it to dance the winter away now.[574]
In a counter-fable also attributed to Aesop, a zealous man was always busy farming. Not satisfied with his harvest, he stole his neighbour's crops at night. Zeus (the king of the gods), angered, turned him into an ant.[575] The way of the world is never perfect: we need a higher ideal, one that is nobler.

5.4.5.2 Our struggle for the supports of life makes us industrious or ingenious, but not necessarily always in a wholesome way. We are often driven by *greed;* we hate *losses;* we are haunted by the *delusion* that our labours may be in vain; or the elements may turn against us, that we will lose everything. We offer prayers and perform rites, we bribe spirits and invoke the gods. We even believe that prosperity is God-given, manna[576] from heaven but just for us.

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[572] See **Loka,dhamma S 1** (A 8.5/4:156 f), SD 42.2.

[573] See **Sabb'āsava S (**M 2,13-16), SD 30.3; **Santuṭṭhi S** (A 4.27), SD 104.8.

[574] F R Adrados, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable* 3, Leiden: Brill, 2003:146-149.

[575] This is an origin story of the ant. Aesop's Fables 166 (Perry Index). "Zeus and the ant," <u>Mythfolklore.net</u> 23 July 2023.

[576] "Manna" is an edible substance (Exodus 16:1-36; Numbers 11:1-9). A theory is that "manna" is the sap of the tamarisk tree that oozes at night and dries up in the morning. Another theory is that at certain times of the year, scale insects feeding upon the tender twigs of tamarisk plants excrete a sweet substance known as honey-

For the zealously pragmatic, their religion tends to be rooted in delusion; when their mundane drives are feverish, they are likely to have religious **hallucinations** or interpret events in religious terms. The most common of such hallucinations is that of hearing voices which believers may interpret as messages from God, saints, spirits or demons. The person may also experience visual hallucinations which they interpret as visions.

Living day to day, driven by the desire to accumulate wealth, we measure ourselves against others in terms of what we *have* (rather than what we really *are*)—as countable things, rather than as living beings—we are also likely to see religion in measurable terms. A devout dependence on religion for our worldly desires may arouse hyperreligiosity in us.

5.4.5.3 Technically, **hyperreligiosity** is a psychiatric disturbance in which a person experiences intense religious beliefs or episodes that interfere with normal functioning. Hyperreligiosity generally includes abnormal beliefs and a focus on religious content or even atheistic content, which interferes with work and social functioning.[577] In a non-religious context, this condition sometimes occurs as cathexis [5.4.3.6].

In its milder form, hyperreligiosity—we can call this "overreligiosity"—is characterized by an increased tendency to believe in and report supernatural or magical experiences, spiritual delusions, rigid legalistic thoughts (eg, Malay, *pantang,* customary or superstitious taboo), and extravagant expression of piety (such as excessive faith in persons considered holy). Hyperreligiosity may also include religious hallucinations; and can also be expressed in sectarian or ethnic forms of meditation and in intense atheistic beliefs.

Religion can thus become a double-edged sword: negative religious beliefs—for example, that God is punishing or abandoning us, or that we have violated a spirit taboo—often have harmful outcomes, including higher rates of fear and depression and lower quality of life [5.4.5.4]. Deeply religious people are more likely to have psychotic experiences when they are hyperreligious;[578] or that those who have psychotic tendencies may have "religious" experiences (expressing themselves in a language in which they have been conditioned).[579]

5.4.5.4 According to Professor **Pargament** [5.4.4.4], people who believe in God tend to feel negative when they think that they lack faith in that belief. When people fear that God has abandoned them, or when they question God's love for them, they tend to experience greater emotional distress, and even face an increased risk of an earlier death (sometimes dying within 2 years from the onset of their faith crisis).

"These kinds of struggles have to do with the aspects of life that you hold sacred," Pargament said. "When you get shaken to that level, then … it's going to be very distressing." Pargament said some people can come out of a religious struggle feeling more whole, particularly those who have support from the community throughout their struggle. Sociologically, it is clear that others' approval, especially society's sanction, helps or encourages such a situation.[580]

5.4.5.5 In late 20th century Malaysia and Singapore, there were signs of hyperreligious devotion to certain Myanmar Vipassana teachers and certain Thai Kammatthana teachers. There were groups of devotees and fund-raisers who promoted and publicized *exclusively* this sectarian meditation. Although they were local Buddhists, they never supported any local teachers or centres at all. Fol-

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dew, which has been gathered for use as a food source and sweetener for thousands of years. F S Bodenheimer, "The Manna of Sinai," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 10,1 Feb 1947: 2-6.

[577] K M Heilman & E Valenstein, *Clinical Neuropsychology,* Oxford Univ Press, 2011:488.

[578] See eg Murray, Cunningham & Price, "The role of psychotic disorders in religious history considered," *J of Neuropsychiatry & Clinical Neurosciences* 24,4 Fall 2012:410-426.

[579] T D Brewerton, "Hyperreligiosity in psychotic disorders," *J of Nervous & Mental Disease* 182 1994:302-304.

[580] Pargament & Exline, "Religious and spiritual struggles," APA 1 Nov 2020 [download] 26 July 2023.
https://www.foxnews.com/health/the-science-of-religion-how-spirituality-impacts-mental-health. 25 July 2023.

lowing their favoured teachers, these groups, as a rule, rejected "intellectual" Buddhism (scholarly studies) and held the bias that "local teachers" were never good enough, that the foreign teachers were "better" (whatever that meant). This bias seems less intense today, partly due to the rise and influence of Western Buddhism.

It is worthwhile to note that there are very successful meditation groups like **the Samatha Trust** of the UK. Although it started with an ethnic Thai teacher, the Trust not only practises Thai Kammat-thana methods, but are open to other Buddhist meditation methods, too. They do not root them-selves in an ethnic Buddhism but are open to authentic teachings, especially early Buddhism.[581]

5.4.6 The faith that truly frees

5.4.6.1 Buddhism, like the other world religions, started off nobly, as a quest for human dignity and freedom. After the Buddha's death, during the centuries when Buddhism spread beyond India, true renunciants, though not in great numbers, were still found in the forest solitude. In the urban areas or crowded communities, Buddhism was often adapted and revised by local theologians, ideo-logists and zealots for their own narrow, often narcissistic enterprises. The virtuosi who claimed to have mastered the teachings brahminized themselves as an elitist class funded and feared by their followers.

The Buddhisms of the later clerics and preachers revised the early teachings to resurrect the soul-view, to transfer merit like commodity for the dead who are stuck in some Hades (instead of being reborn according to karma), and to live as priests served, funded, even feared, as elites of a higher class. Understandably, today we see organized Buddhism everywhere becoming a hotbed for lust, hatred, injustice, racism and other delusive situations.

In almost every Buddhist society, or where Buddhism has any influence, we are likely to see **2 social classes**. The first, we have already mentioned, are the brahminized clerics and elitist preach-ers. The other comprises those who chicken-scratch daily for their living—the hoi polloi—who are supposed to feed, fund and fear the upper classes defined by status, wealth, power and religiosity. They are the ants, legion; the grasshoppers, fed by legion.

The ants die in droves smothered by earth, drowned by water, burnt by fire, blown off by the wind; but they are legion. They labour daily to serve the grasshoppers who fiddle, sing, dance, play— and reproduce their kind: that's their life, too; they know no other. This is how they live until their time is up. Then there are other ants, other grasshoppers, without end: ants and grasshoppers are forever, it seems.

Amongst them, there are those who realize they don't have to be ants and grasshoppers. They can evolve and transform themselves into <u>humans</u>, to think, to feel, to speak, to write, to learn about this path of freedom, and move on it. They are able to hear, they must be willing to listen. Failing to hear and listen, they live the cycles of ants and grasshoppers. When they closely hear and listen, they grow as individuals, as a society and lead others, other societies. They are able to live in a better world and enjoy greater freedom because of such fables, and more so because of liberating ideas of great thinkers.

5.4.6.2 Many great thinkers have arisen in history with great ideas for our progress, freedom and peace. We are able to live today writing and reading this mainly because their ideas have been heeded and lived. English-born US Founding Father, political activist, philosopher, political theorist, and revolutionary **Thomas Paine** (1737-1809), in his classic work, *The Age of Reason* (1794, 1795, 1807), writes this in Part 1, chapter 1 (the author's profession of faith):

> All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

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[581] On the Samatha Trust, see SD 60.1b (6).

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise; they have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man, that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbeliev-ing; it consists in <u>professing to believe what he does not believe</u>.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and in order to qualify himself for that trade, he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive anything more destructive to morality than this?

(Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason,* 1794)[582]

What does Paine mean when he writes: "Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbeliev-ing; it consists in *professing to believe what he does not believe*"? A simple interpretation of Paine's saying is that it is <u>self-contradictory</u> when we *know* that many, if not most, religious teachings are false or imaginative, cannot be empirically proven, and are often violently divisive—such as belief in an unseen being that preachers claim created us and this universe, and so on—and yet we claim to *believe* in them! When we allow ourselves to believe in this manner, we are likely to be capable of committing atrocious acts against others and insidious acts to ourselves in the name of religion.

Paine is unpopular in the US because of the uncomfortable truths he speaks regarding religion in general, and of Christianity in particular, despite the acclaim for his ingenuity in writing, poetry, sci-ence, and engineering. Many of Paine's contemporaries ridiculed him for his criticisms, and only a handful of people attended his funeral following his death in 1809. Even today the US school systems are loath to promote the works of Thomas Paine because of his negative views on organized religion. Paine's **deism**—the belief in God, but the eschewing of organized religion—is often erroneously con-fused with atheism. Yet, without Paine's pen, Washington's sword would not have been so mighty.[583]

Both Paine and Washington are gone and seem forgotten. Many Americans seemed defiantly moved by grandiose narcissistic ideas, lies and antics of Donald Trump [2.6.1.3]. One likely explana-tion is probably that Trump is perceived as being very rich, and as a brash speaker who voices the frustrations and views of his followers. Trump's **grandiose narcissism** seems to work very well with the <u>vulnerable narcissism</u> of his zealous audience. Trump is thus a clear symptom of a very sick social trend in the US. The legal system may bring him to justice, but only <u>a wholesomely human-centred educational and socioeconomic system</u> will prevent the 2nd comings of another Trump and his legion of like-minded followers.

5.4.7 Psychotic disorders in religious history

5.4.7.1 Evan D Murray et al (2012) wrote a provoking study considering "the role of psychotic disorders in religious history" with a humane appeal for our compassion and understanding for per-sons living with mental illnesses. The rationale is very simple: The key religious figures of Western civilization and the Abrahamic world religions—Abraham, Moses, Jesus and St Paul—all had experien-ces that resemble what are now defined as <u>psychotic symptoms</u>, suggesting that their experiences might have been manifestations of primary or mood disorder-associated psychotic symptoms.

The researchers' rationale for their proposal is discussed in each case with a differential diagno-sis. Limitations inherent in a retrospective diagnostic examination are assessed. Social models of

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[582] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason,* Feedbooks [<u>Download</u>] 26 July 2023.
[583] H G Unger, *Thomas Paine and the Clarion Call for American Independence,* NY: Da Capo Press, 2019. [<u>National Archives News</u>]

A. Characteristic symptoms: Two or more of the following, each present for much of the time during a 1-month period (or less, if symptoms remitted with treatment).

Delusions

Hallucinations

Disorganized speech

Grossly disorganized behaviour or catatonic[584] behaviour

Negative symptoms: affective flattening, alogia, or avolition.[585]

Note: Only one Criterion A symptom is required if the delusions are bizarre or hallucinations con-sist of a voice keeping up a running commentary on the person's behaviour or thoughts, or two or more voices conversing with each other.

B. Social/occupational dysfunction: For a significant portion of the time since the onset of the disturbance, one or more major areas of functioning, such as work, interpersonal relations, or self-care, are markedly below the level achieved prior to the onset.

C. Duration: Continuous signs of the disturbance persist for at least 6 months. This 6-month pe-riod must include at least 1 month of symptoms (or less, if symptoms remitted with treat-ment).

D. Schizoaffective and mood-disorder exclusion.[586]

E. Substance/general medical condition exclusion.

F. Relationship to a pervasive developmental disorder.

(Adapted from DSM-4-TR, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Assoc, 2000:297-343; DSM-5-TR, 2022:102-139 Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders.)[587]

Table 5.4.7a Diagnostic Criteria for Schizophrenia

(M G Murray et al, "The role of psychotic disorders in religious history considered," *J of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 24,4 2012:413 Table 2)

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[584] Catatonic (adj), showing symptoms or onset of **catatonia** (n), "a state of muscular rigidity or other disturb-ance of motor behavior, such as catalepsy, extreme overactivity, or adoption of bizarre postures. It is most fre-quently observed in catatonic schizophrenia, but it can also occur with other disorders, such as bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, and neurological conditions such as encephalitis, among others. Also called **catatonic state**." (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015)

[585] The 5 A's of schizophrenia refer to negative symptom: **Affective flattening,** a lack of emotional display or not showing facial expressions ("flat affect"). **Alogia**, an inability to speak because of dysfunction in the central nervous system. In a less severe form, it is sometimes referred to as dyslogia. **Anhedonia**, a lack of interest in being with others or doing things that use to be pleasurable. **Asociality**, decreased interest in relationships with others; decreased social interactions. **Avolition**, a failure to engage in goal-directed behaviour, occasionally occurring in severe major depressive episodes. (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015)

[586] **Schizoaffective** (**disorder**), in DSM-4-TR, an uninterrupted illness featuring at some time a major depressive episode, manic episode, or mixed episode concurrently with characteristic symptoms of schizophrenia (eg, delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech, catatonic behavior) and, in the same period, delusions or hallu-cinations for at least 2 weeks in the absence of prominent mood symptoms. DSM-5 identifies the mood episodes only as either major depressive or manic and emphasizes that mood disturbances must be present for a majority of the time; also called **schizoaffective psychosis**; **schizoaffective schizophrenia**. **Mood-disorder** is a broad term for a psychiatric condition in which the principal feature is a prolonged, pervasive emotional disturbance. (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015)

[587] For related papers, see **Murray** et al, 2015: refs; (edd) S G **Mijares** & G S Khalsa, *The Psychospiritual Clinician's Handbook: Alternative Methods for Understanding and Treating Mental Disorders*, Binghamton, NY: Haworth Reference Press, 2005.

Abraham (2000-1630 BCE)

Auditory and visual hallucinations[a]: Genesis 12:1–3; 12:7; 13:14; 15:1-11; 17:1-21;22:1-2; 22:11-12 [2012: Figure 1].[588]

Paranoid Type (PS subtype) thought processes[b]: Genesis 12:3 (implies a very Abraham-centered worldview of dispensing universal blessings and curses based on one's interactions with Abraham); 12:11-13; 14:22; 17:14; 20:11; 21:11-14 (potential mistrust, as seen by the sending-away of his first-born son to eliminate competition for his second son); 23:4 (He referred to himself as a stranger in a land he understood to be his inheritance from God); 24:3 (potential mistrust seen in the rejection of intermarriage for his son Isaac with any women in his region); 25:6 (potential mistrust as seen by the sending away of all his sons so as to remove Isaac's competitors).

Moses (1550-1200 BCE)

Auditory and visual hallucinations of a grandiose nature with delusional thought content[a]: Exodus 3:2 [2012: Figure 2][589]; Exodus 33: 21-23 related to 34:5-6 Paranoid Type (PS subtype) thought content[b]: Exodus 32:25-29 Phobia: Exodus 34:33.

Referential Thought Processes: Exodus 8:12-13, 8:31, 9:23, 9:33, 10:13-15, 10:22 (possible sandstorm).

Jesus (7-2 – 26-36 CE)

Paranoid-type (PS subtype) thought content[b] Matthew 10:34-39, 16:21-23, 24:4-27; Mark 13:5-6; Luke 10:19; John 3:18; John 14:6-11 Auditory and visual hallucinations[a]: Matthew 3:16-17, 4:3-11; Luke 10:18; John 6:46, 8:26, 8:38-40, 12:28-29.

Referential thought processes: Mark 4:38-40 [Figure 3][590]; Luke 18:31.

Paul (Saul of Tarsus) (1st century CE)

Auditory and visual hallucinations[a]: Acts 9:4-6,16:9,18:9, 22:7-11 [Figure 4],[591] 26:13-18; 2 Corinthians 12:2-9.

Paranoid-type (PS subtype) thought content[b]: 1 Corinthians 10:20-22; 11:29-32; 1:20-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 7:1; 11:12-15; 11:21-23.

[a]Hallucinations in PS are typically related to the themes of delusions [Figure 2].

[b]Paranoid-type (PS subtype) thought content: Delusions are typically persecutory or grandiose or both. Delusions with other themes, such as jealousy, religiosity, or somatization may also occur. They are usually organized around a theme.[592]

All biblical references are from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*, ed H G May & B M Metzger, NY, Oxford University Press, 1977.

Table 5.4.7b Selected Bible passages suggesting psychiatric symptoms

(Source: M G Murray et al, "The role of psychotic disorders in religious history considered," *J of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 24,4 2012:413 Table 1)

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[588] *Illus:* Laurent de la Hyre: Abraham sacrificing Isaac (c1650); Musée Saint-Deni, Reims, France.

[589] *Illus:* Moses before the burning bush (1613-14) by Domenico Feti; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

[590] *Illus:* Storm on the Sea of Galilee by Rembrandt van Rijn (1633); whereabouts unknown since the Isabella Stewart Gardner robbery in 1990).

[591] *Illus:* The conversion of St Paul by Michelangelo Buonnarroti (CE 1542-1545); Cappella Paulina, Vatican Palace, Vatican City, Italy.

[592] APA Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed, Text Revision (DSM-4-TR), Washington, DC: American Psychological Assoc, 2000:297-343 Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders; DSM-5-TR 2022: 102-139 Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders.

psychopathology and group dynamics are proposed as explanations for how their followers grew in number and their new belief-systems emerged and were perpetuated.[593]

The researchers proposed <u>a new DSM diagnostic subcategory</u> as a way to distinguish this type of psychiatric condition. These findings support the possibility that persons with *primary and mood disorder-associated psychotic symptoms* have had a monumental influence on the shaping of Western civilization. It is hoped that these findings will translate <u>into increased compassion and understanding for persons living with mental illness</u>.[594]

5.4.7.2 Murray et al, "The role of psychotic disorders in religious history considered" (2012: 420-423) gives a number of rationales for the credibility of their study and proposals.

(1) First, schizophrenia research has produced compelling evidence for <u>genetic vulnerability</u>, along with <u>environmental and psychosocial stressors</u>—the so-called **diathesis-stress model** or vulnerability-stress model[595]—as the conditions for schizophrenia.[596] We know, for example, that cross-cultural clinical characteristics[597] would have been present in persons living in the ancient world, with an increased risk of having the disorder according to degree of kinship to those affected. There is a host of identified genes adding to the risk for developing schizophrenia; and a greater prevalence of subtle brain developmental abnormalities in persons with schizophrenia.[598] All this suggests interactions between genetic and environmental influences.[599]

(2) Second, there is the identifying of **reports of or allusions to psychosis**—known by many exotic names—in ancient writings. The term "**psychotic**" is today understood as referring to a host of symptoms that may vary to some extent across diagnostic categories, but it generally refers to <u>delusions</u>, any prominent hallucinations, disorganized speech, or disorganized or catatonic conduct.[600]
Delusion overwhelms one progressively. The depictions of the biblical figures indicate that they might have either found their own experiences not entirely believable, understood that their experi-

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[593] One of my proofreaders, Dr Vera Ries, a German research scientist and senior medical administrator in Dusseldorf, notes that Murray et al "completely forgets to discuss the possible occurrence of absence seizures. Not all seizures can be recognised by repetitive moving behaviour, only the motor cortex seizures will. Absence seizures occur in the sensory cortex without any movement pattern at all, patients are not moving but in a day-dream-like state." (Personal communication, 30 July 2023).

[594] E D Murray, M G Cunningham & B H Price (all MD's), "The role of psychotic disorders in religious history considered," *J of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 24,4 2012:410-426 [<u>Download</u>]. For other refs: [Wiki <u>Religion & schizophrenia</u>]. 29 July 2023.

[595] The diathesis-stress model or vulnerability-stress model is a psychological theory that attempts to explain a disorder, or its trajectory, as the result of an interaction between a predispositional vulnerability, the diathesis, and stress caused by life experiences. [<u>Wikipedia</u>]

[596] J **Zubin** & B Spring, "Vulnerability: a new view of schizophrenia," *J of Abnormal Psychology* 86 1977:103-126. J **Russo**, P P Vitaliano, D D Brewer, "Psychiatric disorders in spouse caregivers of care recipients with Alzheimer's disease and matched controls: a diathesis-stress model of psychopathology," *J Abnormal Psychology* 104, 1995:197-204. P **Portin** & Y O Alanen, "A critical review of genetic studies of schizophrenia, II: molecular genetic studies," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 95 1997:73-80.

[597] US Dept of Health and Human Services (USDHHS), Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity, A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, Rockville, MD: US Dept of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2001:26.
Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General, 2001:26.

[598] E D **Murray**, N Buttner, B H Price, "Depression and psychosis in neurological practice," in (edd) W G Bradley, R B Daroff, G M Fenichel, *Neurology in Clinical Practice*, 6th ed, London: Butterworth Heinemann, 2012. US Dept of Health and Human Services (USDHHS): Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, MD: Dept of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General, 1999:269-284.

[599] **USDHHS** 1999:269-284. J **van Os** & S Kapur, "Schizophrenia," *Lancet* 374, 2009;635-645.

[600] DSM-4-TR 2000:297-343; DSM-5 2013:87-122; DSM-5-TR, 2022:102-139. See SD 60.1e (13.1.1).

ences would be hard for others to believe, or that they were perceived by their contemporaries as being mad.

Genesis recounts that God made promises of blessings, progeny, and land to **Abraham**. Despite these assurances, Abraham, fearing death, surrendered his own wife for the pleasure of kings on two occasions in order to forestall his own execution. (Gen 12-20)

Moses, says the Bible, points out to God (Exodus 4:1) that the message he was given to bring to the Israelites stood a good chance of not being believed by a people whom we would today characterise as being polytheistic,[601] superstitious, and therefore more likely to have accepted such happenings. Their rapid reversion to their old religion despite a series of miracles (Exodus 32) appears to support Moses' concern.

Mark records an occasion where **Jesus'** friends and family viewed him as being mad or "beside himself" (Mark 3:21). It is intrinsic to his narrative that the people of his hometown and the religious authorities of the day also did not accept his message (Mark 6:1-6). **St Paul**'s contemporary Festus, the local Roman governor of Judaea, exclaimed that Paul looked "mad" or not sane (Acts 26:24).

These events are closest in time to our subjects and might suggest <u>psychotic-type thought-processes</u>, assert Murray et al (2012).

(3) Third, there is the concern that **religious and cultural factors of the day** need to be taken into account. DSM-4-TR (2005) and DSM-5-TR (2020) recognize that visual and auditory hallucinations with a religious content may be a part of normal religious experience in some cultures.[602] There are interesting discussions on this point.[603]

In response to these thoughts, Murray et al emphasize that their intent is not to prove that the experiences of the biblical subjects could not have resulted from normal religious experiences in the context of cultural factors; it is to apply a modern neurobehavioural paradigm to the experiences of these subjects and thereby advance a dialogue about the rational limits of perceptual experience.

Murray et al point out here that cultural experiences (despite being accepted as "normal" by that culture) may also be conceptualized as on a psychotic spectrum because of their resemblances, by way of their recurrent nature, intensity, subject matter, grandiose-like qualities, and similarity to psychotic auditory-visual phenomena. It is psychologically recognized that the content of schizophrenic delusions and hallucinations is significantly influenced by sociocultural background. Different cultural experiences can result in different delusional form and content.[604]

According to Murray et al, the earliest believers found the experiences of the subjects sufficiently removed from the sphere of normal life so as to be understood as a product of a highly unusual relationship with a divine force.[605] Those who did not believe may have had various reasons, some of which would have been that the message was too far from their reality to be accepted.

The surviving literature of Classical Greek, Roman period, and of biblical origin, does not support the view that such auditory-visual phenomena were commonplace in the ancient world. The populations of the earliest followers of such new belief-systems, as those of our biblical subjects, would constitute small groups able to accept the beliefs before the emergence of social pressures related to larger group dynamics (Murray et al, op cit, 2012:421).

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[601] M S Smith, The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's polytheistic background and the Ugaritic texts, NY: Oxford Univ Press, 2001:135-157.

[602] DSM-4-TR 2005:206; DSM-5-TR 2022:118 f.

[603] See eg J Rediger, "Bipolar disorder and Western anosognosia," in (edd) Mijares & Khalsa, *The Psychospiritual Clinician's Handbook, op cit,* 2005:205-231.

[604] S Mohr & P Huguelet, "The relationship between schizophrenia and religion and its implications for care," *Swiss Medical Weekly* 134, 2004:369-376. K Kim, H Hwu, L D Zhang, "Schizophrenic delusions in Seoul, Shanghai, and Taipei: a transcultural study," *J of Korean Medical Science* 6 2001:88-94.

[605] B D Ehrman, The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings, 5th ed, NY: Oxford Univ Press, 2011.

(4) **Social models of psychopathology** may be useful for understanding how mental illness may arise in special individuals. Social-distance theory[606] and communications-disorder theory[607] suggest that sanity is differentiated from psychosis, depending on how far beliefs hinder or facilitate communication and acceptance by a social group.

Those who deviate excessively from the societal norms and do not relate to the populace, being misunderstood, become socially isolated and stigmatized, and are seen as mentally troubled or *insane*.[608] This viewpoint may thus define as *sane* any person who is able to maintain acceptance and communication with a social group.

This theory, however, does not account for individuals who appear to demonstrate sustained paranoid, grandiose, messianic-type delusions, who, in more modern times, attracted crowds of followers. Two such individuals were David Koresh of the Branch Dravidians,[609] and Marshall Applewhite of the Heaven's Gate cult.[610]

There are others in recent times who claimed to be *prophet*, *messiah*,[611] *Jesus*,[612] avatar,[613] *Buddha*,[614] or *mahdi*,[615] who have gained followings. If David Koresh and Marshall Applewhite are seen as having psychotic-spectrum beliefs, then the diagnosis of psychosis cannot strictly imply an inability to maintain a social group.

A subset of individuals with psychotic symptoms appears able to form strong social bonds and communities despite having an extremely distorted view of reality. The existence of a better socially functioning subset of individuals with psychotic-type symptoms is corroborated by research indicating that psychotic-like experiences, including both bizarre[616] and non-bizarre delusion-like beliefs,

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[606] In sociology, **social distance** describes the separation between individuals or social groups in society, incl dimensions such as social class, race/ethnicity, religion or gender. Members of different groups tend to mix less than members of the same group. The concept dates back to George Simmel's discussion of the stranger in his *Soziologie* (1923). Emory Bogardus (1925) came up with a measuring method for social distance. It is the measure of nearness or intimacy that an individual or group feels towards another individual or group in a social network or the level of trust one group has for another, the extent of perceived likeness of beliefs, the deference that one group expects from others. See "social distance" in (ed) G Ritzer, *The Blackwell Ency of Sociology,* 2007:4406-f. For refs [Wikipedia].

[607] A **communication disorder** is any disorder that affects a person's ability to comprehend, detect, or apply language and speech to engage in dialogue effectively with others (*Greenwood Dict of Education* 2011:86). The delays and disorders can range from simple sound substitution to the inability to understand or use one's native language. J B Gleason, *The development of language,* Boston, 2001.

[608] M M Vardy & B M Kaplan, "Christ/messiah delusions revisited: toward an anthropological definition of religious delusions," *Psychoanalytic Review* 96 2008:473-487.

[609] D J Reavis, *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation*, Syracuse Univ Press, 1998.

[610] R L Snow, Deadly Cults: The crimes of true believers, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.

[611] "The MI5 Messiah: Why David Shayler believes he's the Son of God," *Mail Online*, London: Dailymail.co.uk; 2007.

[612] "Visit from the 'Siberian Jesus'," *The Argus*, 9 Nov 2002.

[613] H Akimoto, "The Aum Cult leader Asahara's mental deviation and its social relations," *Psychiatry & Clinical Neurosciences* 60 2006;3-8.

[614] B Kalchuri, Meher Prabhu, *Lord Meher, The Biography of the Avatar of the Age*, Meher Baba Manifestation, Inc, 1986.

[615] R Hardy, "Confusion surrounds Najaf battle," BBC News, 31 Jan 2007. Accessed 29 July 2023.

[616] **A bizarre delusion is** a belief that is clearly fantastic and implausible but is nonetheless maintained with conviction. For example, an individual with schizophrenia may believe that external forces are removing the thoughts from their mind (see "thought withdrawal," APA *Dict of Psychology* 2015). While an overvalued idea is an unreasonable, sustained belief that is held with less than delusional intensity (meaning that the person may acknowledge, to some degree, that the belief may be false), **a bizarre idea** is pathological (psychologically unhealthy). See SD 60.1e (13.4.1).

are frequently found in the general population. This supports the idea that psychotic symptoms are likely to occur in progressive stages.[617]

(5) **Political-psychology models** of leader-follower relationships may give useful insights as to how the early followers could have gathered around the biblical subjects. **Ann R Wilner** (1984)[618] surveyed the literature on <u>charismatic leadership</u> and defined it as a relationship between a leader and a group of followers. The followers believe in the "leader-image" as comprising the following characteristics:

(1) The leader is perceived to have <u>superhuman</u> qualities or to have an extraordinary degree of the qualities highly esteemed in their culture.
(2) The followers are blindly receptive to the leader's statements and ideas.
(3) The followers unconditionally obey the leader's directives without question.[619]
(4) The followers are emotionally committed and attached to the leader.

Willner further identifies <u>4 "catalytic factors"</u> that characterize charismatic leaders as follows (1984: 60 f):[620]

(1) The leader assimilates one or more of the dominant myths of their society or culture.
(2) The performance of what appears to be an extraordinary or heroic feat.
(3) The projection of the possession of qualities with an uncanny or a powerful aura.
(4) Outstanding rhetorical ability.

We can reasonably say that a charismatic leadership-follower group dynamic was present between the biblical prophets and their followers. Moses felt himself not to be a good speaker, and asks God (in their personal communication) to appoint his brother Aaron to speak on his behalf to the community (Exodus 4:10-16). This raises interesting questions—says Murray et al (2012:422)—about the roles community members might contribute to the functioning of a leadership-follower dynamic in order to supplement the leader's deficiencies.

(6) Creating and sustaining groups would be dependent on additional mechanisms: Wilfred Bion[621] observed **3 patterns of group behaviour** of healthy, mature adults, where they act as if they were dominated: the dependent group, the pairing group, and the fight-or-flight group.
<u>The dependent group</u> looks up to the leader as one all-powerful, behaving as if they do not have independent minds of their own.[622] Followers blindly seek directions and follow orders without question. They tend to idealize the leader, putting him on a pedestal. When the leader fails to meet the standards of omnipotence and omniscience, there is a period of denial, then anger, and finally disappointment.

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[617] R **Pechey** & P Halligan, "The prevalence of delusion-like beliefs relative to sociocultural beliefs in the general population," *Psychopathology* 44 2011:106-115. J S **Strauss**, "Hallucinations and delusions as points on continua function: rating scale evidence," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 21 1969:581-586. L **Ellett**, B Lopes & P Chadwick, "Paranoia in a nonclinical population of college students," *J of Nervous & Mental Disease* 191 2003: 425-430. I **Kelleher** & M Cannon, "Psychotic-like experiences in the general population: characterizing a high-risk group for psychosis," *Psychological Medicine* 41 2011:1-6.

[618] A R Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic political leadership*, New Haven, CT: Yale Univ Press, 1984:6 f.

[619] This is also called the "abdication syndrome" [2.6].

[620] **Rūpa S** (A 4.65) mentions a set of 4 "catalytic factors" or charismatic "measures" of a teacher by looks (*rūpa*), by voice (*ghosa*), by austerity (*lūkha*) and by religiosity (*dhamma*) [2.6.4.4].

[621] W R Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers,* London: Tavistock, 1961:74, 78-86, 119-122, 166, 188.

[622] This is the notorious "abdication syndrome" [2.6].

In the pairing group, the members act as if the goal of the group is to bring forth a saviour or messiah, someone who will save them. There is an air of optimism and hope that they are building a New Society or that a new world is coming.[623]

The fight-or-flight group organizes itself in relationship against a perceived outside threat. The group itself is idealized as part of a polarizing mechanism, while the outside population is regularly seen as malevolent in motivation. The threatening or failed outside world is at once a threat to the existence of the group and the justification for its existence.

Each of these group-types characterizes the followers in charismatic leader-follower relationships.[624] It is possible that one or more of these types of group dynamics were present to varying degrees, simultaneously or sequentially, in the biblical subjects' groups as they developed their beliefs over time.

(7) How do individuals with mental illness rise to positions of leadership and attract followers? Nassir Ghaemi (2011) proposes a hypothesis that there are **key elements** associated with mental illness that may be beneficial for leadership abilities, which he discusses in detail: *creativity, realism, empathy, and resilience*.[625] His analysis of several notable political, military and business leaders and review of psychological research leads to his proposal that **depression** promotes leaders' being more realistic and empathic, while **mania** promotes their being more creative and resilient.[626]

Ghaemi adds that when depression and mania occur together in bipolar disorder it may result in a further increase in leadership skills. Such individuals, he proposes, benefit indirectly from entering and leaving these mood states in addition to being in their well state between episodes.[627] We can imagine all this working with more dramatic effect in an old religion rooted in faith and God.

A shared psychotic disorder,[628] is another means by which the earliest biblical followers may have received their beliefs, with each of our subjects being a primary case. Although occurring primarily in the form of a dyadic relationship, paranoid delusions have been reported to occasionally occur in larger sect-like groups whose members become infused with the paranoid ideation of a dominant member.

Norman Cameron termed this relationship a "**paranoid pseudocommunity**."[629] This term is used to denote an imagined persecutorial conspiracy directed at the group member(s). However, once separated from the group's social fabric, many members have been observed to regain the ability to relate to others without undue levels of suspicion.[630] This pattern of group behaviour may lie along a continuum with that of the fight-or-flight group described by Wilfred Bion [(6) here].

(8) Lastly, Murray et al (2012:423) responded to critics' proposal that the biblical texts should be read non-literally (419). Since the earliest of times, we know from ancient records that believers have understood the biblical subjects' experiences as having occurred *literally* as described. As such, a great many of these experiences bear a striking resemblance to well-characterized psychiatric

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[623] On the New Society, see SD 60.1c (1.1.1.3; 5.2.1).

[624] J M Post, Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The psychology of political behavior, Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ Press, 2004:187-199.

[625] N Ghaemi, *A First-Rate Madness: Uncovering the links between leadership and mental illness,* NY: Penguin, 2011: pt 1 creativity, pt 2 realism, pt 3 empathy, pt 4 resilience, pt 5 (mania), pt 6 (depression).

[626] Ghaemi 2011:10-15.

[627] Ghaemi 2011:10 f, 27 f, 44-46, 268.

[628] **DSM**-5-TR 2022:102-139. M **Shimizu**, Y Kubota, M Toichi, "Folie à deux and shared psychotic disorder," *Current Psychiatry Reports* 9 2007:200-205.

[629] N **Cameron**, "The paranoid pseudocommunity," *Am J Sociol* 49 1943:37 f. N **Cameron,** "Paranoid conditions and paranoia," in *American Handbook of Psychiatry*, Vol I, NY: Basic Books, 1959a. N **Cameron,** "The paranoid pseudocommunity revisited," *American J of Sociology* 65 1959b:57-61.

[630] P L Myers, "Paranoid pseudocommunity beliefs in a sect milieu," *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology* 23 1988:252-255.

phenomena. This raises the prospect of an unusual degree of accuracy in the sources with regard to these details.

Since this was a scientific investigation, any discussion about a potential role for the supernatural is outside its scope—with one exception. It is the opinion of Murray et al that a neuropsychiatric accounting of behaviour need not be viewed as excluding a role for the supernatural. In their paper, neuropsychiatric mechanisms have been proposed through which behaviours and actions might be understood.

Murray et al assure us that for those who believe in omnipotent and omniscient supernatural forces, "experiencing" them should pose no obstacle, but rather might serve as a mechanistic explanation of how events may have happened. No disrespect is intended toward anyone's beliefs or these venerable figures. If such is perceived after reading this analysis it might be asked whether there is a stigma in the reader's mind about mental illness. Any stigma toward persons with mental illness is rejected by the authors. (2012:423)

5.4.7.3 Murray et al, "The role of psychotic disorders in religious history considered" (2012) is of interest to us here because it discusses *scientifically* <u>the role of mental illness in a major religion</u>. It gives us a good idea on how we should psychologically study mental illness in any religion, including Buddhism, especially Buddhist meditation today. What we learn from such a scientific analysis of mental illness in religion may be usefully applied to Buddhism today, such as the work and activities of <u>traditional Buddhist meditation teachers</u> such as S N Goenka and his Vipassana meditation.[631] There are, of course, a growing number of such studies of mental illness in religion, which should also be studied in this connection, especially in terms of our own religion.[632]

5.4.7.4 Murray et al (2012) [5.4.7.1] should have included in their paper **Joan of Arc** (Jeanne d'Arc) (c1412-1431), who alone was instrumental in shaping Europe's history by insisting on the coronation of Charles VII of France during the 100 Years' War. Joan heard voices that instructed her to end the siege of Orléans and save France from British invaders. In 1431, at age 19, Joan was wounded in battle, captured by allies of the British, tried for heresy, and burned at the stake. Twenty-four years after her condemnation, she was posthumously re-tried. There are contemporary transcripts of both the trial of condemnation and the trial of rehabilitation. Joan, as it were, speaks to us from the transcripts. [633]

5.4.8 Religious/spiritual struggles

5.4.8.1 With **psychology** as an academic discipline having evolved well over a century, it is now slowly but surely shedding its 3rd-person observer to a personal participation in its field of study, es-

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[631] On Goenka, see SD 60.1b (2.4.10-2.5.2). See also SD 60.1c (12) Buddhist unbelief.

[632] For related papers, see (edd) S G **Mijares** & G S Khalsa, *The Psychospiritual Clinician's Handbook: Alternative Methods for Understanding and Treating Mental Disorders*, Binghamton, NY: Haworth Reference Press, 2005; S **Mohr**, P-Y Brandt, L Borras, C Gilliéron & P Huguelot, "Toward an integration of spirituality and religiousness into the psychosocial dimension of schizophrenia," *American J of Psychiatry* 163,11, 1 Nov 2006: 1952-1959 [View] [Download]; for related topics & more refs, see also Wikipedia: "<u>Religion and schizophrenia</u>" & "<u>Religious delusion</u>." 29 July 2023.

[633] See T D Murray, *Jeanne d'Arc: Maid of Orleans, Deliverer of France*, London: W Heinemann, 1902. For her "autobiography": W R Trask (comp & tr), *Joan of Arc: in her own words,* MY: Turtle Point Press, 1996. Silent movie, one of the best: "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (<u>1928</u>). For more refs: [Download]. H P Bayon, "A medico-psychological revision of the story of Jehanne, La Pucelle de Domrémy," *Proceedings of the Royal Soc of Medicine* 34, 4 Dec 1940:161-170 [Download]; also [*Nature* 1941]. B Schildkrout, "What caused Joan of Arc's neuro-psychiatric symptoms? Medical hypotheses from 1882-2016," *J of the History of the Neurosciences* 32,3 Jul-Sep 2023:332-356 [Preview].

pecially religion and meditation. Although psychologists[634] studying meditation often themselves meditated, many of them have realized that a good command of the related teachings (especially of early Buddhism) gives a more comprehensive and authentic understanding of what they are experiencing or should be experiencing. This is the ideal of 1st-person research and study.

A psychologist who is committed to Buddhist practice (Dharma/sutta study and meditation) is thus, by definition, *Buddhist* (not just a *nominal* Buddhist). A psychologist who has a good grasp of Buddhism will also realize that he has to live a moral life in keeping with at least the 5 precepts [5.1.1.1]. What is remarkable about such a "double life" is that the psychologist is now able to know exactly (depending on the individual's understanding of Buddhism and mastery of meditation) what one is experiencing. A true profession indeed!

There are however at least 2 caveats to note here:

(1) The first is that the psychologist's experiences will still be subjective (it is a *personal* experience). For any professional utility of their Buddhist experience, they will need to compare notes with other psychologists similarly engaged. This is clearly a natural and profitable next stage of **meditation studies**.

(2) The second caveat is actually a benefit: being a "non-religious" Buddhist, one is very much closer to what the historical Buddha has taught. Hence, the psychologist Buddhist or Buddhist psychologist is **a more *authentic* Buddhist** than most traditional Buddhists today, especially those following some form of ethnic Buddhism, such as "Vipassana" or "Kammatthana" practitioners (who are actually followers of the Vipassana or Kammatthana teacher).

We may call such a contemporary development "mindful Buddhism" or more simply "**mind Buddhism**." Or even simply, early Buddhism, when they accept the 3 jewels as their personal refuges. If we are to follow the suttas, this is said to be **a noble quest** (*ariya pariyesanā*), the quest for self-understanding and full spiritual health (that is, awakening).

5.4.8.2 The noble quest is well-defined in **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26). Therein, the Buddha speaks of the ignoble quest and the noble quest. The ignoble quest is the acquisition of a family, slaves, goat and sheep, fowl and pigs, elephants, cattle, horses and mares; gold and silver (money)—these are mundane pursuits, subject of defilement (they are impermanent, unsatisfactory and nonself). The noble quest is the quest for "the unborn, the undecaying, the disease-free, the undying, the sorrowless, the undefiled," that is, nirvana.[635]
On a first reading of the sutta definitions of the "ignoble quest," it seems to sound like the renunciation of the world. With some historical sense and a bit of imaginative stretch, we can see that the "ignoble quest" hints at what the life of an academic scholar is *not* or *should not* indulge in*.* The scholars of the earliest universities were those of the monasteries, both in Asia and in the West. Those students were not only "bachelors" (celibates) and "doctors" (studying doctrines), but were renunciants in a practical sense: they spent their lives in study and practising what they studied. The

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[634] The APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed (2015) defines a **psychologist** as an individual who is professionally trained in one or more branches or subfields of psychology. Training is obtained at a university or a school of professional psychology, leading to a doctoral degree in philosophy (PhD), psychology (PsyD), or education (EdD). Psychologists work in a variety of settings, including laboratories, schools (eg, high schools, colleges, universities), social agencies, hospitals, clinics, the military, industry and business, prisons, the government, and private practice. The professional activities of psychologists are also varied but can include psychological counseling, involvement in other mental health care services, educational testing and assessment, research, teaching, and business and organizational consulting. Formal certification or professional licensing is required to practice independently in many of these settings and activities.
[635] M 26,5-14/1:161-163 (SD 1.11).

noble quest thus refers to *the goal* of academic life: to seek and discover the highest truth and high-est good. Hence, the modern psychologists are doing nothing new in taking up early Buddhism.

5.4.8.3 Once the modern psychologist takes up the Buddhist life in earnest as their quest for wisdom into the mind, consciousness and mental health, they will or must at some point or other take up any of these **6 kinds of religious/spiritual struggle**, as defined by Pargament and Exline[636] thus:

(1) <u>Divine struggles</u> are manifested by feelings of anger or disappointment with God (for God-believ-ers), and feeling punished, abandoned, or unloved by God; or by feelings of fear or apprehension by the belief of interventions of gods or some higher power, or karmic misfortune.
(2) <u>Demonic struggles</u> take the form of worries that problems are caused by demons, evil spirits or bad luck, and feelings of being attacked or tormented by the malevolent spirits or jinxed by some ungratified ancestors (the dead).
(3) <u>Struggles with doubt</u> are experienced as feelings of confusion about religious/spiritual beliefs and being troubled by questions about religion/spirituality, such as not knowing the suttas, or not performing some rituals.
(4) <u>Moral struggles</u> are marked by tension and guilt about not living up to one's higher standards and wrestling with attempts to follow moral principles, especially when one has breached the precepts, or desecrated some holy object or sacred place.
(5) <u>Struggles of ultimate meaning</u> reflect questions about whether one's life has a deeper meaning and whether life really matters; or one simply sees no meaning in life or lacks any purpose in life.
(6) <u>Interpersonal spiritual struggles</u> involve conflicts with other people and institutions about sacred issues, such as anger at organized religion, and feeling hurt, mistreated, offended or violated by others in regarding religious or spiritual issues; or that one has offended some clergy, and so on.

These 6 kinds of struggles have been well documented and discussed, and are clear enough in them-selves.[637] Hence, we will go on to look at their Buddhist version, that is, <u>the 6 kinds of existential struggles</u>.

5.4.8.4 Early Buddhist cosmology divides the existential world (*loka*) into <u>the 5 courses or desti-nies</u> (of birth and rebirth) (*pañca,gati*)—the gods, humans, animals, pretas and hell-beings—in its oldest cosmology. In a later canonical development, there is a set of <u>6 realms</u> or courses, with the inclusion of the asuras, mythical beings who are in constant battle with the gods of the Earth-bound universe.[638]

[636] The wordings of these 6 kinds of struggles have been slightly expanded to accommodate Buddhists. K I Pargament & J J Exline, *The Psychology of Spiritual Struggle,* Conshohocken, PA: John Templeton Foundation, 2021:15-26.
[637] See eg Pargament & Exline, "Religious and spiritual struggles," *American Psychological Assoc,* 1 Nov 2020. J J Exline, "Religious and spiritual struggles," in (ed) K I Pargament, *APA Handbook of Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality,* Washington, DC: APA, 2013:459-476 (ch 25). J A Wilt, J B Grubbs, K I Pargament & J J Exline, "Reli-gious and spiritual struggles, past and present: Relations to the Big Five and well-being," *International J for the Psychology of Religion* 27,1 2017:51-64.
[638] On the asuras as the "old gods," previous residents of Tāvatiṁsa, being overthrown by the "new gods" led by Sakra: SD 15.5 (3.7.1); SD 39.2 (1.1). On the devas vs asuras (battles): **Dhaj'agga S** (S 11.3), SD 15.5 (3.7.1).

		descriptions	predominant characteristics
(1) the gods	*deva*	devas, brahmas	enduring bliss, radiance, delusion
[ ] asura demons	*asura*	the fallen gods	calculating, exploitative, narcissistic[639]
(2) human beings	*manussa*	the thinkers	mixed emotions, thinking and learning
(3) the animals	*tiracchāna*	ritualistic beings	ignorance, fear, routine
(4) the preta	*peta*	departed ghosts	greed, addiction, insatiety
(5) the hell-beings	*niraya*	suffering states	hatred, violence, crowd mentality

Table 5.4.8.4 The 5 realms (pañca,gati) and 6 mentalities[640]

Of the 5 realms, the last 3 are woeful subhuman states, and only (1) + (2) are "happy courses" (*sugati*). The human state is, of course, not always pleasant or happy, but it provides the best opportunity for spiritual cultivation and awakening. In a later canonical set of **the 6 realms**, the asura demons are included after the gods but they are a woeful course.[641]

5.4.8.5 We need not wait for death to be reborn into nonhuman states of being. Even as humans, we habitually (on account of our habits) waver and swing amongst the 4 subhuman states (the asura, the animal, the preta and the hell-being). Only rarely do we gain the divine state but just for moments; even our human state is but a moment's flicker, unless we have made good effort to be and remain human, by joyfully nurturing the values in which the 5 precepts root [5.1.2.5].

Hence, we do not only struggle as <u>humans</u>, but it is a struggle to *remain* human or perhaps enjoy moments of divine bliss, when doing some good, such as meditating. Often as humans, we struggle against being overpowered by <u>a subhuman mind</u>—that of the asura, the animal, the preta or the hell-being—then perhaps we free ourself out of such darkness.

Veritably, we are each Jekyll-and-Hyde: Jekyll may be human or divine, but Hyde may be any of the 4 subhuman states that lurks in our minds. Thus, according to Buddhism, there are **the 6 kinds of existential struggles**, which we will investigate in some useful way.

5.4.9 The 6 kinds of existential struggles

5.4.9.1 The human struggle

(1) The human struggle is put *first* because this is our most common and familiar situation. We are born only with a human <u>body</u>; our **humanness** (a good mind, a good heart) is mostly rooted in being warmly <u>humanized</u> by *the love, care and contact* of parents, care-givers and loved ones, especially during our formative first 7 years.

Even then, as adults, we easily forget or lose this *humanness* when we come into contact with others who have not been well humanized or who are simply inhuman, even subhuman—themselves going through the asura struggle, the animal struggle, the preta struggle and the hellish struggle. These latter are what we may call "**toxic beings**" when we are negatively affected or conditioned by them. We will be prudent to keep well away from such toxic beings and states.

(2) On the other hand, to mature as humans we need to use our mind and heart well—metaphors for thinking and feeling. The Indian commentator Dhammapāla gives the etymology of **man** (*manussa*) as follows: "On account of the preponderance [abundance] of mind, he is called 'man'" (*manassa ussannatāya manussā,* VvA 18). We (male and female) are "man" because we are able to

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[639] On the asuras as embodiments of violent narcissism, see SD 39.2 (1.3); SD 40a.1 (11.2.2); SD 59.9a (2.2.3.1).

[640] See **Pañca,gati S** (A 9.68), SD 2.20; **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,37-41), SD 49.1 = SD 2.24; SD 5.16 (14.3).

[641] Hence, in the scheme of the 6 realms, there are 4 suffering subhuman states, said to be "(a state of) deprivation, a suffering state, the downfall, hell" (*apāyaṁ duggatiṁ vinipātaṁ nirayaṁ*). SD 29.6a (4.1.2).

"mind": as a <u>verb</u> it encompasses both *thinking* and *feeling*. When thinking and feeling is guarded with proper attention, it is called **learning**, the most human of struggles. We will say more of this below. [Subsection (5)]

This ability and inclination to think and to feel is also what makes us <u>religious</u> (to find a connection (Latin, *ligare,* "to bind") with everyone and everything else, with something higher or <u>spiritual</u> (to seek or attain the deeper or universal meaning—the spirit—of things)). Hence, our most human act by and for ourself is to **meditate**, to mind the heart and feel the heart of the mind, to cultivate our humanness and humanity here and now; and, in time, to rise above the human itself, become divine and beyond. This is the <u>human struggle</u>.

(3) The English philosopher and statesman **Francis Bacon** (1561-1626), in his essay, "Of studies" (1597, 1625), wrote:[642] "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man."[643] The knowledge we acquire through good <u>reading</u> and wide learning empowers us to do our best. <u>Conference</u> or discussion enables us to have a keen mind. We can then deftly answer or discuss almost any question on a wide range of subjects. We will be good in debate and discussion, at least enjoy them.

In our times, <u>writing</u> is a very effective way of expressing ourselves over time. The writings of great minds—like the oral traditions of ancient times—have greater value than the spoken word. Though it may be easier to recognize someone's voice than their handwriting, it is a signature in the document that has great value. With these abilities we will make great teachers and leaders.

Although **right speech** traditionally refers to the oral tradition of the Buddha's time, it embodies the spirit of <u>wholesome communication</u>, which includes *writing*. One of the noblest of human struggles is to describe such a struggle from experience, in a manner that would benefit others, even posterity. Such writings would be described as being "timely, true, beneficial, words worth treasuring, timeless, well-reasoned, well-defined and connected with the goal (of the highest good), reflecting the Dharma-Vinaya (early Buddhism)."[644]

(4) **The moral struggle** of Pargament's theory of <u>the 6 religious/spiritual struggles</u> [5.4.8.3] may be included here. The human struggle is highlighted by tension and guilt about not living up to one's higher standards and wrestling with attempts to follow moral principles, especially when one has breached the precepts, or desecrated some holy object or sacred place. In other words, as <u>humans</u> (in body and mind), we are capable of knowing good and bad, and choosing the good. This is the basis of personal growth and social progress amongst humans.

Another moral struggle is that of keeping **good health**, meaning *a healthy body as a support for a better mind, and excellent speech to express both*. It is our moral duty to stay as healthy as we possibly can so that we do not spread sickness to others or be a burden to them. Not only should we keep <u>the body</u>[645] healthy through our actions but also through how to feed it—moderation in food[646]—and also through <u>right speech</u>,[647] inspired with truth, fellowship, beauty and goodness. This is our daily human struggle.

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[642] Bacon here is very close to the way that doctors learn (or certainly used to): "watch one, do one, teach one." (Matt Jenkins, 25 Sep 2023). [PositiveGroup]

[643] See also Samuel Johnson, "<u>On studies</u>," first appeared untitled in no 85 of *The Adventurer,* 28 Aug 1753.

[644] This is a modern adaptation of the sutta definition of right speech: D 11,13 (SD 1.7) = M 41,13 (SD 5.7) = A 10.206,9 (SD 3.9); SD 10.16 (3.4.4.2).

[645] On right action (the body), see SD 10.16 (4).

[646] On moderation in food, see **Kakacûpama S** (M 21,7.2), SD 38.1; **Bhaddāli S** (M 65,2), SD 56.2; **Mahā Assa,-pura S** (M 39,9), SD 10.13; **Kīṭa,giri S** (M 70,4), SD 11.1; **Āma,gandha S** (Sn 2.2), SD 4.24 (3.4.1); SD 32.2 (5.1); SD 37.13 (1.2).

[647] On right speech, see SD 10.16 (3).

(5) The most human of struggles is **the struggle to learn** [Subsection (2)]. This is being human at its best: it gives us the ability to learn. What entails learning? Basically, we are capable of thinking, feeling, reasoning and proper attention. I will define "**thinking**" here as simply knowing right from wrong. This is of course ethics, the nature of moral principles: how we can live together happily and freely knowing the truth and wisdom (these are, in fact, the 5 values of the precepts) [5.1.2.5].

"**Feeling**" refers to knowing what's good, what's bad, and choosing the good, which is felt as beautiful and lived as true. While *ethics* is the principle underlying all our actions and speech, *feeling* is embodied in our "morals," that is, acting rightly and speaking rightly. Together they form the twin characteristics of **aesthetics**: truth and beauty.

In order to truly appreciate ethics and morals, we need the wisdom of **reasoning**. This is the capacity to understand and accept such right conduct—ethic-based morals—for the good society to rise and grow. The purpose and benefit (both are *attha* in Pali) of such a society is to allow us to be able to see how reasoning works: through *causes and effects*, conditionality.

Conditionality has 2 important senses. The first is that nothing arises from a single cause. Whatever arises does so from a number of causes, and, in turn, joins with other effects to become new causes, and so on. In other words, what is of the nature to arise is also of the nature to cease. The second sense of conditionality is that by mindfully repeating a good habit or quality we can internalize it. We become good by doing, repeating, good.

With **proper attention**, we understand the essence or principle of what is being taught, or broadly what life is teaching us, in the sense that *everything is teaching us* when we are willing to learn. With learning, we are able to envision or imagine how this applies to other situations: this is called **wisdom**. This way, we can *create* good things and beautiful things, and *be* good and beautiful. Thus this diligence for learning and the capacity for growing are 2 vital aspects of the human struggle.

(6) Just as difficult a struggle as learning is that of **teaching**—not merely a routine or measured transfer of knowledge and fact—but by seeing anew that transforms us anew. This is how Dharma teaching and learning transforms us.[648] Our task as teachers is to reveal to the young and young at heart that they have better **toys** to play with; that is, the mental game that is the Buddha Dharma. Its rules are simple: don't kill, don't steal, don't violate others, don't lie, don't lose the mind. Next, we avoid any kind of toxic thoughts, cultivate healthy ones. The mind that is thus calm, clear and bright will more likely see things as they really are. This is the **wisdom** in which we grow, learn and become free.

5.4.9.2 The divine struggle

The divine struggle refers to these 4 kinds of human endeavours:

(1) to understand why only humans believe in some kind of God-idea or gods;
(2) to maintain one's goodness, well-being and happiness in this life itself;
(3) to be religiously devoted to a heavenly life in the hereafter; and
(4) to see the reality of freedom beyond heaven, beyond space-time.

We may be caught up in any of these struggles, maybe two or three of them; or even all of them.

(1) The 1st kind of divine struggle is usually manifested by feelings of anger or disappointment with God (for God-believers) or god/s, and feeling punished, abandoned, or unloved by them; or by feelings of fear or apprehension by the belief of interventions of gods or some higher power. We may thus include a fear of karmic misfortune. This kind of belief is unhealthy and unhelpful because there is a feeling of resignation, even fatalism, that there's nothing we can do about it.

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[648] On situations that can transform us, see **Vimutt'āyatana S** (A 5.26/3:21-24), SD 21.5.

The Buddha's advice against such sense of helplessness is a simple and practical one: we should courageously face the situation and deal with it. In **the (Pañcaka) Ṭhāna Sutta** (A 5.48), the Buddha tells us to act as follows:

> If he should know, "Not to be attained   is this goal by me nor through anyone else,"
> then, ungrieving, he would bear it thus: "What shall I do now with resolve?"[649]
>
> (A 5.48,72), SD 42.1

(2) The 2nd kind of person lives <u>a happy, wealthy, successful and almost[650] blamefree life</u>. Ideally, they are those who keep to the precepts, whose minds are calm and clear, and who are wisely learn- ed. As a rule, however, in most cases such a person must struggle to keep up appearances and defer to powerful and significant others, especially when the person bears some social status or heraldic title. Even when one may oneself be able to live an exemplary life, someone in one's family (a spouse or a child or a relative or a close associate) may fail one in some way or have some issues. This is the nature of even a "successful" life.

(3) This 3rd kind of person is usually **a God-believer**, conditioned by the tenets of a God-fearing believer who places God above everyone and everything else, even his own family. Since God is his only or highest meaning and purpose in life, he is likely to see everyone else as lesser beings (often as "sinners") either to be converted or to be rejected even when they are closely related.

Hence, they are either in constant denial, lacking unconditional love, or they keep reminding themselves they are true to their God. In this way, they are assured of a place in heaven after death. Hence, neither this world nor "others" (non-believers) are of any real significance to them. This "di- vine" struggle is only in name, since one is really either a grandiose narcissist (blessed by God) or a vulnerable narcissist (having to put up with all kinds of non-believers and their "sins"). [5.3.3.2]

(4) All religions end with stage 3, that is, some kind of heaven or Universal Soul or Idea; except for early Buddhism, which sees even the highest heavens as part of the cosmos, thus, impermanent, unsatisfactory and nonself. The Buddha is a unique being on account of his awakening, including the ability to see through all such ideas, no matter how sophisticated or holy, that these ideas are all conditioned by **human society and history**.

While society is the extended experience of our <u>senses</u> (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch), his- tory is really a creation of our own <u>mind</u>. Real peace exists when we are able to know what this means, and by that means transcend what limits us to our senses and history. This is our divine struggle at its highest.

5.4.9.3 The asura demon struggle

In Buddhist psychomythology—psychological ideas expressed through myths—we can speak of at least 4 kinds of <u>asura or demonic struggle</u>: (1) the power struggle over others, (2) the fear struggle of individuals, (3) the struggle with Māra, and (4) the supersweet mask.

(1) In early Buddhist mythology, **the asuras** were the "old gods" inhabiting Tāvatiṁsa, who spent their time drinking divine liquor, being drunk most of the time. The "new gods" led by Sakra (P *sakka*) and his 33 companions, disgusted at the conduct of the asuras, literally threw them out from that heaven so that the asuras fell into the great ocean of our world. Since then the asuras were

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[649] *Kammaṁ daḷhaṁ kin'ti karomi'danī ti,* lit, "What firm action do I take now?"

[650] This qualifier, "almost," applies even to one blame-free, since there will always be those who are not happy with others, and are by nature fault-finding: easily seen are others' faults (Dh 18), SD 48.1 (9.2.2.2); everyone is likely to be blamed by someone: "They blame those for sitting silent, they blame those for speaking too much. Those speaking little, too, they blame. There is none who is not blamed in the world" (Dh 227).

inhabitants of the ocean depths, and recalling their eviction, have been at war with Sakra and the devas since.[651]

Hence, the asuras *psychologically* are depicted as being <u>demons</u> who are fiercely calculating, acquisitive, exploitative and narcissistic. This is a classic modern image of the inhuman entrepreneur, business boss or any person who loves power (especially a politician), male and female, to whom people are merely numbers, statistics and means of profit, gain and growth of the business, corporation, or power group.

This is the first and worst kind of subhuman existing amongst humans, often controlling us or effecting us negatively. Although we speak of a "struggle" here, it is really a consistent exploitation of humans and Nature herself, both treated as mere resources. The asura demons have no values: <u>life</u> is when we are of service to them; <u>happiness</u> is when they seem to forget or forego us; <u>freedom</u> is when they fail or seem to fail, even by their absence; <u>truth</u> is what they see as beneficial to them, the asuras.

(2) On the individual level, <u>the asura struggle</u> refers to **demonic struggles** that often take the form of fears and worries that our problems are caused by demons, evil spirits or bad luck; or, feelings of being attacked or tormented by the malevolent spirits or jinxed by some ungratified ancestors (the dead). Such a struggle is common amongst <u>the superstitious</u>, whether they are religiously inclined or not. This group of asura strugglers include <u>ethnic Buddhists</u>, especially those who are conditioned to believe in local spirits and demons, in devas (often through Hindu influence and assimilation of Hinduism into ethnic Buddhism).

Amongst northern Buddhists, especially those who practise Vajrayāna Buddhism, the struggle with demons, spirits and non-humans are even more sophisticated and widespread. Such beliefs are, in fact, more common with the ethnic Buddhists of Tibet (and Tibetan Buddhism), Himalayan cultures, Mongolia, Siberia and northern Eurasia (especially the Finno-Ugric and Altaic peoples).[652]

(3) **The struggle with Māra.** The name Māra comes from the root √MṚ, "to die"; hence, Māra is the embodiment of death, in the sense that he evolved from Yama, the Vedic god of death and justice. However, in early Buddhism, Māra does not represent death, but rather in an almost cavalier rejection of death, not only to affirm life—Māra wants us to stay on forever in samsara—but to throw ourselves abandonedly into the pleasures of life. He is more like a very nasty male version of the Greek goddess Hedone (whose Roman counterpart is Voluptas).[653]

Unlike the Devil or Satan of the God-religions who lives in Hell, Māra is a sense-world celestial being dwelling in *the highest heaven* of the sense universe[654] (that is, just below the 1st dhyana brahma world).[655] Māra acts as the antagonist of the Buddha and his saint disciples, ever advocating enjoyment of sensual pleasures instead of renunciation and striving for awakening. Hence, a recurrent

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[651] On the asura myth, see SD 57.10 (3.2.6).

[652] See R M Torrance, *The Spiritual Quest: Transcendence in myth, religion and science*, Berkeley: Univ of Berkeley Press, 1994; O F Von Feigenblatt, *The Eurasian Shamanism: Num-Torum, Korean Buddhism and Shinto*, Chisinau (Moldova) & London: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2015.

[653] In classical mythology, Hedone (*Hēdonḗ*, lit, "Pleasure"), the personified spirit (*daimona*) of pleasure and enjoyment, is the daughter of Eros/Cupid (embodiment of sensual pleasure) and Psychē (the soul), and the grand-daughter of Aphrodite/Venus (the goddess of love) and Ares/Mars (the god of war). Plato, Philebus I12b (tr Fowler), 4th cent BCE; Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2,23 (tr Rackham), 1st cent BCE; Statius, *Silvae* 1.3.8 (tr Mozley), 1st cent CE), Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 6.24 ff (tr Walsh), 2nd cent CE. See: https://www.theoi.com/Daimon/Hedone.html.

[654] Māra is said to live in the realm of the gods who lord over others' creations (*nimmāna,ratī vasavattī*) with a lifespan of 16,000,000 cosmic years [SD 54.3a (2.2.1.1)]. He is sometimes called Vasavattī, hinting that he is the lord of that heaven! For a table of the early Buddhist cosmology, see SD 1.7 (App).

[655] **Brahma Nimantanika S** (M 49) relates Māra invading the 1st-dhyana brahmas (SD 11.7 (2.1.1)).

theme of the suttas is that of defeating Māra, "blinding" him and getting out of his reach by being mindful and getting into dhyana (*jhāna*).[656]

Māra often plays **the temptor**, trying to stop the adult Gotama[657] from renouncing the world,[658] discouraging the ascetic Gotama from going into self-mortification but to instead live well piling up merits.[659] Making merits (*puñña*) is good, but it keeps us in samsara, hence in Māra's power: it is the wholesome (*kusala*) practice of the 3 trainings [3.1.1.1] that frees us from samsara, that is, Māra's realm.[660]

As the Bodhisattva Gotama prepares himself to go into deep meditation on the night of the awakening, Māra appears in his most violent and massive form, with his huge horde of demons and weaponry, terrifying even the gods themselves. Māra and his horde attack the Bodhisattva who touches the earth, calling Mother Earth to witness the Bodhisattva's past moral perfections. Mother Earth rises from the ground in her massive form, wrings the waters from her long hair, raising a great deluge that washes Māra and his horde clean away. A beautiful allegory of good karma.[661]

As unawakened humans, Māra sees us all as easy meat with his huge sophisticated bevies of religious figures (including modern monks and nuns) to teach us to master specific and private dogmas of great sectarian and ethnic teachers, studying Buddhist texts for title, status and gains, making merits and "transferring" merits to the dead—so that we keep reprising the roles of the dead burying the dead.

Intoxicated with wealth and status, we declare: we *don't need* to keep the precepts. When we see ourselves as being poor, disadvantaged or downtrodden, we plead: we just *can't* keep the precepts! *The suttas are too difficult! Why meditate when we can be more productive? Let's look for famous Buddhist speakers who teach us to live life and engage with society! The Dharma needs to be modernized; the Vinaya is outdated; renunciation can wait: we have many lives for that! Let us revise the Buddha!* This is just a hint of our struggle with Māra.[662]

(4) One common manifestation of the asura struggle is that of keeping up a charmingly friendly face and demeanour called **the supersweet mask**. This is often a strategy to solicit a favourable response from others, even attract charisma to oneself, or simply to control others. The supersweet mask is usually worn by a person with a high status, in a position of power or a religious person so that they are able to exude an air of friendliness and generosity.

Hence, a supersweet person would never find fault with us or say anything disagreeable with us, and seemingly agree with whatever we say or request. It seems to work because we are convinced by this pretence. If anything should go wrong, the supersweet person would avoid discussing the matter or even acknowledge having agreed to anything. In this case, the supersweet would resort to the "silent treatment."

The supersweet individual is usually one who knows that they are highly respected or deeply feared. With just a hint, they know they are able to mobilize their followers or devotees to blame or discipline a wayward person, or someone who appears to be a threat to that supersweet person.[663] Supersweet behaviour, as an unconscious defence, may be a trait of a narcissist. As a deliberate "Sun Tzu" strategy, it may be the actual cunning of a Machiavellian individual. [5.4.1]

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[656] Māra is blinded by dhyana, **Nivapa S** (M 25,12-20/1:159 f), SD 71.2; **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,34-43/1:173-175), SD 1.11.4.

[657] Interestingly, Māra does not bother 7-year-old Gotama in the 1st dhyana under the jambul tree at Suddhodana's ploughing festival outside Kapilavatthu: **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31), SD 49.4; SD 52.1 (5.2).

[658] Māra tries to stop Gotama from renouncing, SD 52.1 (9.1.2) Māra's 1st appearance.

[659] Māra pleads the Bodhisattva to give up asceticism and make merits, **Padhāna S** (Sn 425-429), SD 51.11,

[660] See **Padhāna S** (Sn 430-449), SD 51.11; SD 52.1 (16.3).

[661] **Padhāna S** (Sn 442 f), SD 51.11; SD 52.1 (16.1.5.2).

[662] For a study of Māra, see SD 61.8.

[663] For such a case, see SD 60.1d (4.5.2.2).

(5) Then there is **the saccharin sweet mask**, a term[664] I use for those, especially those involved in emotional or affective labour. An example would be people in customer service. Their job is not only to deliver the service (answer the telephone query, serve the food), but to do this with a smile and give the impression that this is something they are happy and want to do. They have to suppress their feelings and respond with a smile even when the customer, living in the animal or hungry ghost realms, is shouting at them and treating them as if it were they, the person delivering the service, that was the subhuman.

While the supersweet tend to look for advantage or take advantage of others, the saccharine sweet wear a mask because others, who make more money than them and have the luxury of shouting at and abusing their subordinates, insist that they do. The supersweet on account of their wealth and power will *outsource* various tasks and responsibilities. The outsourced server becomes the face of the restaurant or the hotel chain, their face is the mask which hides what is going on behind the stage in the head office where the powerful people can take off their supersweet mask and indulge their desires cavalierly.

There is an interactive element to this. We, the customer, demand and expect the smile—the subordination of the server. We can give full reign to our hunger and our animality, but they cannot respond honestly. They must wear the mask, or we'll complain to their manager. There is a short-hand for this in Gen-Z and Millennial cultures—having a "customer soul." In this theistic sense, someone with a customer soul will never see heaven; in Buddhist terms, they are the subhumans.

As humans, we should thus try to be mindful of those in customer service, recognizing that they are offering a service and doing so not necessarily because they want to, but because they need to eat and have a house. Those who have worked in supermarkets or pubs, would know how dark is the "customer soul," and being soul-free can live in the hope of heaven, or better to work for the path.

5.4.9.4 The animal struggle

The animal struggle is characterized by *ignorance, fear and routine*. There are 2 types of animal struggles: (1) the chicken round and (2) the cattle round.

(1) **The chicken round**—which has been briefly described [5.4.5.4]—is not really a struggle: we simply get caught up in it as a conditioned reflex since we know no other lifestyle. There is also a fear of those who are different, so that we tend to stay with our own kind, that is, within the family, clan or tribe, birds of a feather, beasts of a fur. Our life is a humdrum routine in terms of time and place.

On account of such a routine life, almost every action or reaction is predictable. We simply repeat the same old ways and stay with them. The routine is that of gathering food for self and the family, of keeping a shelter, and of having some care and healing in case of sickness or loss in the family. There is almost no place for reading, much less writing. In fact, in such a fixed routine, there is no place for learning at all, not to speak of spiritual growth.

There are however some special occasions when we do take a break from the animal rounds, that is, when there is a mating ritual or the caring for family-members. Even then there is always the routine in the way things are done. The adults and those old enough to stand on their own feet would know what their personal routine would be. There is rarely any show of play or love: they are not part of the routine. To break the routine is to lose touch with others, which renders everything purposeless.

I'm only describing a real-life situation we often see in the poorer parts of society. In fact, in a capitalist society, we are very dependent on this "chicken-scratch" class to run our society smoothly. Ironically, most of these routineers are quite well off, but they have to work very hard. Some may resort to gambling or borrow money to get out of the routine life, but they may end up losing or owing money so that they have to close down their routine business altogether and go into hiding.

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[664] Other than this term, my profound thanks to Matt Jenkins for this subsection (29 Sep 2023).

(2) **The cattle round** is a routine life like that of the chicken rounders, but the cattle rounders are generally better off, even very much wealthier (cattle are bigger than chicken). Hence, their routine seems better off because they can afford it. A few, however, do try to imagine something better they can do with their wealth for the benefit of others. Despite their routine and predictability, they do go out of their rounds for the benefit of meeting those with power, class or religion, hoping that they are able to be uplifted by such an association. They avoid smaller creatures for the simple reason that they are smaller. However, caught in a routine life, they are not used to the idea of learning anything new, except just for the pleasure of the moment, like elephants rolling in the mud-pool or dusty dirt.

We see a lot of the cattle rounders in traditional and ethnic religions. Like cattle, they are used to taking the same regular path (*go,cara*) to their religious pasture and back again to their karmic pen like clockwork. Their religion is not about personal growth but simply of maintaining class and status quo. They see the religious teachers and priests as their proxies in faith and as spiritual butlers. The teachers and priests teach them, tell them what to do and not to do, pray for them, bless them, negotiate with the dead for them; butler to their religious needs. The closest they come to doing something for themselves is perhaps meditation. But even this is ritually guided by their leader. The cattle rounder only needs to piously pay for this routine butlering.

Often enough, the cattle rounders struggle with <u>doubt</u> and <u>guilt</u>, feeling confused about new or difficult teachings, or do not understand (much less practise) an ancient teaching, simply because they do not know what the sacred texts actually teach, or what the rituals are actually for or how they work, or even if they are necessary at all, or that they may be a hindrance to cultivation. They depend on their preachers and priests to console them and negotiate their wellbeing with the higher powers they believe in.

One can only feel, indeed must feel, compassion for the animal strugglers, caught in such a routine, struggling to make ends meet—like a snake biting its own tail, feeling the pain of it all, and wondering why and where the pain comes from. For the chicken rounder, *their end is their means*; for the cattle rounder, *their means is their end*. Clearly suffering arises from ignorance.

5.4.9.5 The preta struggle

Like the animal strugglers, **the preta strugglers**, too, keep to a routine. However, while the routine of the animals are longitudinal (keeping to the same routine endlessly), the preta strugglers tend to be spiralling out of control, that is, seeking ever more sources to assuage their addiction.

There are <u>2 kinds</u> of preta strugglers: the collector and the addict.

(1) **The collector** preta struggler, or simply "<u>preta collector</u>," is one who is always lusting after things, usually palpable things (which can be seen, heard, smelt, tasted or touched/felt). Palpable things of which **a preta collector** can never have enough include any kind of collectibles, like property, cars, art-works, books and other valuable objects.

However, not all collecting is unwholesome**.** Certain collecting habits may be because we, as collectors, can afford it, and do so for the benefit of learning and for the joy of others (like setting up a museum, a library, a sutta database), which properly done may be regarded as philanthropic.

Otherwise, the collecting is *unwholesome* or pathological: we collect only for ourself, but would go to any length to get what we desire, even break the law (such as by stealing or cheating). Or, our collecting promotes false information or teachings, data that do not really help others. Moreover, the collecting habit may be for personal enjoyment, projecting an exploitative agenda or elitist status or sense of power. Once the prey has been hunted and harvested, or the profit shot accumulated, the sense of craving and dissatisfaction turns to the "next" object or agenda for exploitation others.

Other objects of desire which the collector is driven to accumulate include <u>wealth</u> (money and property), <u>status</u>, <u>power</u>, even <u>sex</u>. The collector finds thrill in the hunting and collecting; once the object is gotten, the hunt must begin all over again. Thus, as collectors, we are doomed hunters,

doomed to hunt even when we have to kill, to steal, to rape, to lie and to cheat—to break any precept. This is **the preta collector syndrome**.

So long as we do not know we are struggling on account of this craving, we will be driven to collect things—because we are neither happy nor satisfied with what we *have*. We are always thinking of the past, of what we never *had* or what we *had* and was lost, and imagining the future, of what we *will have*. The present moment of *having* that desired object immediately makes it no more desirable as a trophy or collectible. We need to look for others. It is **a Sisyphian struggle** when we are drowned in it: we *seem* to enjoy it.[665] Like the Sisyphus myth,[666] this is a metaphor for our persistent struggle against the essential absurdity of life. We keep helplessly doing something because we are deluded that we actually enjoy it![667]

(2) **The addict** is a darker version of the collector: the preta addict can desire for the very same things as a preta collector. The only difference—this is a vital difference—is that the preta collector seems to enjoy *only the moment of capture*. This is like Sisyphus pushes the boulder up the steep hill and the boulder reaches the peak, only to at once inevitably roll downhill again; and he has to run after it. One must imagine that he is enjoying it (Camus, 1947). (The significance of such an "enjoyment" is worth discussing.)

Classic cases of the preta addict are the kleptomaniac and the rapist (or molester).

(2.1) **Kleptomania** is a type of impulse control disorder, affecting mostly women.[668] A kleptomaniac is one impulsively driven to steal, and to do so repeatedly, being unable to resist urges to steal items that generally they don't really need. Often the items stolen have little value and they could afford to buy them. Kleptomania is rare but can be a serious condition. It can cause much emotional pain to them and their loved ones—and even legal problems—if not treated.

The **diagnostic criteria** for kleptomania are as follows:[669]

• recurrent failure to resist impulses to steal objects that are not needed for personal use or for their monetary value;
• increasing sense of tension immediately before committing the theft;
• pleasure, gratification, or relief at the time of committing the theft;
• the stealing is not committed to express anger or vengeance and is not in response to a delusion or a hallucination;
• the stealing is not better accounted for by conduct disorder, a manic episode, or antisocial personality disorder.

Although there is no cure for kleptomania, treatment with medicine or skill-building therapy that focuses on dealing with urges may help to end the cycle of the compulsive urge to steal.

(2.2) For **the rapist**, sex is only a means to the end, that is, a sense of power. The rape itself is not really sex but simply violence: the power over another. The rapist has low self-esteem or an inferiority complex and uses this violent act to imagine himself to be not so. Since this negative self-image is inborn, it cannot be righted with an outward act of violence; it needs an inner self-healing.

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[665] On the absurdity of life, see **Camus**, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (**1942**): SD 23,3 (1.1). On most jobs "being bullshit," see David **Graeber**, *Bullshit Jobs: a theory,"* Simon & Schuster, **2018**. See also Harry G **Frankfurt**, *On Bullshit,* Princeton Univ Press, **2005**: orig an essay, *Raritan Review,* 1986.

[666] **Sisyphus**, in a Greek myth, is caught for literally cheating Death, and the gods condemned him for eternity to repeatedly roll a boulder up a hill only to have it roll down again once he got it to the top: SD 23.3 (1); SD 48.3 (1.2.2.2); SD 49.2 (4.3.2.1); SD 50.8 (1.2.1.7; 2.3.2.6).

[667] Further on the nature of sexuality, see SD 60.6 (2.1.1.2).

[668] DSM-5 2013:461-480.

[669] B **Saluja**, L G Chan & D Dhaval, "*Kleptomania a case series,*" *Singapore Medical J* 55,12 **2014**:e207-e209. [Download] 2 Aug 2023. Zi-Hao **Zhang** et al, "Kleptomania: recent advances in symptoms, etiology and treatment," *Current Medical* Sciences 38,5 **2018**:937-940.

Hence, the one who has raped must keep on reminding himself that he *will not* feel low or inferior, and that he needs not commit a violent act to "prove" himself.[670]

Molestation is the crime of engaging in sexual acts with minors, including touching of private parts, exposure of genitalia, generation of child abuse images,[671] rape, inducement of sexual acts with the molester or with other children, and variations of these acts, all for sexual gratification. The victims often suffer severe and lasting medical and psychological symptoms.[672] The psychology of this wrong act is similar to rape, that is, a desire for a sense of power and control over the victims, a demand to be loved. This crime is mostly committed by men.[673]

In the 20th and 21st centuries, there were many reports of cases of sexual abuse of children by priests, nuns, and other members of religious life in the Catholic Church.[674] Most of the abused were boys, some as young as three, with the majority between the ages of 11 and 14.[675]

The following factors were said to contribute to the Catholic Church persistent abuse of children:[676]

• moral relativism: prominent theologians proposed a relativistic perspective on morality where "there could no longer be anything that constituted an absolute good, any more than anything fundamentally evil; (there could be) only relative value judgments."[677]
• clergy themselves have suggested their seminary training offered little to prepare them for celibate sexuality.[678]
• psychologists of the previous decades thought that child-molesting priests could be cured and returned to their work.[679]
• shortage of priests in N America, Europe, Australia and NZ compelled the hierarchy to keep priests despite allegations that they were unfit for duty.[680]
• clerical celibacy was seen as "morally superior" (to other people) even for abusive priests.[681]

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[670] In British law, only men can commit the offence of rape. Rape is defined in terms of penetration by the penis. Women are restricted to "assault by penetration" or other forms of sexual assault: the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Singapore law, based on British law, is similar: [SingaporeStatutesOnline].

[671] Historically "child abuse images" have been referred to as "child pornography." This older label is incorrect, as "pornography" is sexual or sexualized imagery produced with the consent of its subject. Children are not able to consent to sexual activity, and so are not able to be involved in pornography. All images of children involved in sexual activity or produced for reasons of adult sexual gratification are child sexual abuse images, images of child sexual abuse. [Interpol] [ECPAT] [usDOJ]

[672] For refs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_sexual_abuse. 2 Aug 2023.

[673] For sexual abuse in religion, see SD 64.17 (10); also SD 10.16 (4.4.3.1).

[674] 'While most sex abuse victims were post-pubescent, victims also included mid-to-late adolescents. Sexual attraction to this age group is known as "ephebophilia" (in contrast to "paedophilia," which refers to attraction to pre-pubescent children, and "hebophilia," attraction to early pubescent children). See P **Cimbolic** & P Cartor, "Looking at ephebophilia through the lens of priest sexual abuse," *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity* 13,4 **2006**: 347-359. P **Cartor**, P Cimbolic & J Tallon, "Differentiating pedophilia from ephebophilia in cleric offenders," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, Volume 15,4 **2008**:311-319.

[675] For refs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_sexual_abuse_cases.

[676] For refs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debate_on_the_causes_of_clerical_child_abuse.

[677] Full text of Benedict XVI essay, "The Church and the scandal of sexual abuse," *Catholic News Agency,* 2010. 2 Aug 2023.

[678] C W Baars, "The role of the Church in the causation, treatment and prevention of the crisis in the priesthood," *The Linacre Quarterly* 1972 39,1 1972 ISSN 0024-3639 [Marquette] [Worldcat].

[679] P Steinfels, A People Adrift: the crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2003: 40-46.

[680] "Catholic priests in India 'outsourced' to meet clergy shortage in West." 2004-06-11 Archived 2011-01-14 [Wayback Machine] [VOA News] [VOA News]

[681] *Western People*, 2 Nov 2005. Archived 2009-02-09 Wayback Machine.

• child molesters fixated on children as sex objects joined the clergy to gain access to children.[682]
• the Vatican introduced rules for clergy who had fathered children,[683] protecting those who broke
   the celibacy rule (after all, surely, God's will is above human law).

Hundreds of child sex abuse cases have also been revealed amongst **Protestants Churches** from
around 1950-2020.[684]

   (3) There is the macro-samsara out there, and there is the micro-samsara that we are each as a
person. We have been keeping our samsaric routine since day one. We may not always show that
we are actually doing a routine but our mind does the routine anyway. Our thinking patterns are just
that: patterns of routine thoughts. We are conditioned karmically to act and react. With lust we pull
what we like towards us that we may *have* them; with hatred we push away what we do not like so
that we *deny* them any place in our life.
   Then with **delusion**, we struggle with the unfamiliar—this is the absence of liking and disliking
because we are not used to this. When we feel a sense of peace (eg, in meditation) and break our
routine even for a moment, we are often left with confusion and fear. We are just not used to our
routine pause: we seem to have lost our meaning and purpose of life. We struggle to get directions
in life again—this may be when we open up to the Dharma, we may then just catch a clear glimpse
of it, just enough to know what we need to do. That is, if the cogs and wheels of our routine life does
not kick in again so that we are back in our comfort zone, a routine in this cosmic computer, again.[685]

5.4.9.6 The hellish struggle

   (1) The hellish struggle is the worst of struggles, the most troubling, the most violent, and the
most destructive struggles of them all. This struggle's troubles, violence and destruction are within
us and all around us right here and now, like the very air we breathe, like the wind that touches us.
We just don't see them since we are so used to seeing the bright side of things, and we wish that
everything will be all right, we pretend that everything is "nice," just the way we like it—so that we
do what we like and enjoy what we have.
   Traditionally, we speak of the hells as the lowest suffering states, as the *place* of the greatest
and endless suffering where hell-beings treat each other violently, harming one another, devouring
the weak and careless. We often think of hell as a *place*, but it is impossible to really imagine a space
that is vast enough to hold together all the suffering, violent, destructive beings in the universe.
   The ancient Indians used to think that hell was under Rājagaha (the biggest city in India then).
Imagine hell being right under where we live; but we have tunnels and storage caverns there. In fact,
we naively thought that heaven was up and out there in space. Now we have numerous rockets go-
ing into space, and space travel has already begun. No one has seen any heaven out there either.
   Hell is really all around us like radio waves, cyberspace, phone transmissions and light itself. We
neither see nor feel the hell-states because our good karma has shielded us from that space-time
reality. They exist, for example, wherever there is war, social strife, religious violence and where the
climate is in havoc.
   Please don't get me wrong, hell is real enough: just like reading this (maybe not as enjoyable or
frustrating). When we suffer the fires, fury and agony of hell, we feel the pain, we will suffer all right.

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[682] "Psychiatrist thinks celibacy not major cause of abuse in Catholic institutions" [ABCNet]. "Catholic celibacy
does not drive child abuse, royal commission hears" [Guardian]. "Celibacy not driving clergy abuse: expert" [SBS
News]. 2 Aug 2023

[683] "Vatican reveals it has secret rules for priests who father children," [TheGuardian] 19 Feb 2019. "Vatican
confirms secret Catholic Church guidelines for priests who father children." [CBSNews] 2 Aug 23

[684] A Denney, "Child sex abusers in Protestant Christian Churches: an offender typology, *CrimRxiv* 2021:42-79
https://doi.org/10.21428/cb6ab371.e3e20c48. For cases of abuses by Buddhist clerics, see **Bad friendship** (SD
64.17).

[685] See "Time and time again," SD 18.13.

We usually imagine such sufferings: what we imagine is in fact more real than what is out there! That's how karma works.

(2) We often think of **greed, hatred and delusion** as bringing about hell by way of violence, destruction and suffering. Yet, our daily lives are filled with greed, hatred and delusion—we can see it the moment we turn on our computer and look at some social media, we see greed, hatred and delusion all around us everywhere we go in the world, especially in a crowd. Somehow we rarely see any violence. We are not really troubled by what we see all around: we may even enjoy them! In fact, greed, hatred and delusion are the engines of advertising and marketing!

(3) There are other kinds or levels of greed, hatred and delusion that are clearly painful, violent, destructive and suffering. These are *the greed, hatred and delusion* caused by religion and politics, spread by religion and politics. When it is about power, religion and politics often go together.

Notice that in all the Buddhist (Theravāda) countries of south and southeast Asia—Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand—there is very little real freedom for all. What do we call where no one is really free?

Sri Lanka, for example, has been having problems of ethnic intolerance and violence against non-Buddhists, often instigated by Buddhist monks! When Sinhala monks reject the Vinaya, how can they even protect the Dharma, much less spread it?

Myanmar has had a recurrence of military dictatorships whenever a powerful general felt like taking over the country. When absolute power is in the hands of a dictator, the citizens can do little except act to please or not displease the powerful or lie low and hope to be invisible. Since the 1990s, Muslim Rohingya refugees have been poorly treated; this is the failure of those ruling the country they left and those ruling the country they are forced to land in. Politics and religion on all sides have failed. In this situation, we must imagine there is no Buddhism, no religion—only us or them. This is the nature of hell.

Thailand has one of the oldest surviving monarchies, and there is the Bangkok-centred elite—like in the monarchies of Europe—who see themselves as the heart of the nation, and all else its periphery, hence marginal. Where does **Buddhist justice** (*dhamma*) fit into all this; is it the karma of poor and marginalized to suffer? Is this a socially constructed karmic system designed or decided in the political centre?

In short, the hellish struggle is often manifested as interpersonal religious conflicts with other people and institutions over issues such as anger at and rejection of one another; feeling hurt, mistreated, offended or violated by others. When religion is used by the powerful as a means of social control, religion only fires up the hell and hellish struggle.

5.4.10 Seeing whole, becoming whole

5.4.10.1 This typology of 6 kinds of "beings" represents our existential struggles. We can become any of these 6 states at any time by identifying with the things that define that struggle, for example, the gods (pleasure), asuras (power), humans (learning), animals (ignorance), pretas (greed) and hell-beings (violence). The beings in each of these states comprise these respective qualities. We *become* such a being by identifying with the qualities of that state: this is our "self."

Even then, it is only part of our self, or rather a manifestation of our "self," that part of us we *struggle* with. In our daily life, we tend to see only a part of ourself—we are not a *fully wholesome person—a part* defined by greed, hatred, delusion or fear: we are a partial person. Occasionally, we think we enjoy something, but this is just like a flash in a pan; perhaps, drops of water on a red-hot metal pan. This is the suffering of change (*vipariṇāma,dukkha*).

We then reify what we see in ourself—whether a fault or a virtue—*that's what I am!* These are self-created projections, self-views that are our suffering states (*saṅkhārā,dukkha*). Since we are like that, we feel that others are like that, too. So we reify others in the same way with perceived faults and virtues and are trailed and haunted by such phantoms.

The Buddha reminds us to cultivate **moral conduct**—wholesome actions and speech—guided by the precepts; this is the apophatic (not-doing) aspect of our wholesome conduct. Then there is the kataphatic, that is, affirming the values behind each precept—valuing *life, charity, freedom, truth and wisdom* in others. We are reminded to see all of everyone not merely as *partial persons* of greed, hatred, delusion or fear—but as whole persons capable of *charity, love, wisdom and courage.* Our task is to inspire them in these wholesome states; in that way, we affirm ourself, too.

The teaching on **nonself** (*anattā*), then, is for us to understand that this "struggle" that we are caught in is our own *being* identifying with things that we are not. Hence, we cry out: "This is not me! I'm beside myself!" We then see this and accept this truth, and so realize: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." We are closer to the reality of nonself.

5.4.10.2 The suttas record a number of cases of those who are able to free themselves from the samsaric stranglehold of these 6 existential states or self-struggles, to become **whole beings**. On various occasions, we see the Buddha instructing his listener on how to reach wholeness, that is, see themselves as they truly are and so awaken.

The Vinaya records the inspiring story of the youth **Yasa** experiencing an epiphany similar to that of Siddhattha's vision of dancing girls [4.5.2.2]. In both cases, this vision is actually a powerful trigger that compels them to flee from the comfort of their palatial home. Yasa laments, "Oh, what trouble indeed! Oh, what affliction indeed!"

In the dark of night, he goes into the park where the Buddha is sitting under a tree in meditation. Hearing him, the Buddha makes a succinct inspired utterance (*udāna*):

> "**This, Yasa, is *no* trouble, indeed; this is *no* affliction!**"
> Come, Yasa, sit down: I will show you the Dharma."

The Buddha first teaches Yasa some basic Dharma to calm, brighten and focus Yasa's mind, freeing his heart from heavy darkness he has just fled from. When Yasa's mind is "malleable, pliable, free from hindrances, uplifted, clear," the Buddha teaches him the 4 noble truths in all their aspects.

> Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye,
>   even so, just as he sat right there, the stainless, spotless **Dharma-eye** arose in him, thus:
>   "Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end."

Yasa gains the path as a streamwinner.[686]

5.4.10.3 Bāhiya ("the one from Bāhiya town") is shipwrecked off a town located on the coast outside modern Mumbai. Having lost his clothes in the sea, he dresses himself in bark. He comes to be known as Dāru,cīriya, "the bark-dressed," and is thought to be a holy man. Hearing about the Buddha—and being a sensible person who knows his human limits—he decides to meet the Buddha, who is at Sāvatthī, quite some distance away.

Upon arriving in Sāvatthī, he meets the Buddha on his morning almsround and asks the Buddha for teachings. The Buddha excuses himself saying that it is not the right time. Thrice Bāhiya insists that the Buddha teaches him: "Bhante, it is hard to know the dangers to the Blessed One's life or to my life!" Noticing that he is calm and ready, the Buddha teaches him the essence of the Dharma, thus:

> "In the seen (*diṭṭhe*),   there will only be the seen;
> in the heard (*sute*),   there will only be the heard;
> in the sensed (*mute*),   there will only be the sensed;[687] [5.3.6.3]
> in the known (*viññāte*)   there will only be the known." [6.1.4.3]

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[686] **Yasa Pabbajjā** (Mv 1.7.1-14 (SD 11.2(7)).
[687] *Muta*, ie, what is tasted, smelt and touched.

When one sees and understands in this way:

then you, Bāhiya, are	'not by that.'[688]	*tato tvaṁ bāhiya na tena*
When you, Bāhiya, are	'not by that,'	*yato tvaṁ bāhiya na tena*
then, you, Bāhiya, are	'not therein.'[689]	*tato tvaṁ bāhiya na tattha*
When you, Bāhiya, are	'not therein,'	*yato tvaṁ bāhiya na tattha,*
then you, Bāhiya, are	'neither here nor beyond nor in between the two.'[690]	*tato tvaṁ bāhiya n'ev'idha na huraṁ na ubhayam antarena*

—This is itself the ending of suffering."[691]

Bāhiya becomes an arhat.[692]

5.4.10.4 The story of Vakkali relates how the Buddha resolves the emotional state of a monk who is physically attracted to him (the Buddha) by judiciously staying within a safe distance of Vakkali to help him free himself from lust. Once free from lust, Vakkali is able to attain dhyana, emerge from it to reflect on the 3 characteristics and attain arhathood. The exact process is not mentioned, but we get the impression that Vakkali is able to do this very rapidly, but has been held back by his negative emotions.

The Commentarial account dramatizes Vakkali's awakening process. When the Buddha forbade Vakkali from following him for the rains retreat, Vakkali despaired at not being able to see the Buddha for 3 long months. He became suicidal and contemplated leaping to his death from the heights of Vulture Peak. Just as Vakkali was about to leap off the cliff, the Buddha appeared to him in a radiant vision.

The moment the monk saw the Teacher, the weight of sorrow that had oppressed him vanished.

Then the Teacher, as though filling the dry bed of a lake with a flood of water, caused great zest and joy to arise in the monk, and pronounced the following stanza:

Full of joy and faith in the Buddha's teaching, the monk
Will reach the place of peace, the happiness of the stilling of the formations. (Dh 381)

Having pronounced this stanza, the Teacher stretched forth his hand to the elder Vakkali and said:
"Come, Vakkali! Fear not, look at the Tathāgata!
I will lift you up like one lifting an elephant sunk in the mire.
Come, Vakkali! Fear not, look at the Tathāgata!
I will free you just as the (eclipsed) sun is free from Rāhu's maw.
Come, Vakkali! Fear not, look at the Tathāgata!
I will free you just as the (eclipsed) moon is freed from Rāhu's maw.

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[688] *Na tena,* ie, one would not be aroused "by that" lust, etc.

[689] *Na tattha,* ie, one would not be "therein", ie, in the seen, etc.

[690] "Be neither here … nor in between the two," *n'ev'idha na huraṁ na ubhayam antarena,* meaning that one would not be reborn anywhere. Comy rejects "in between the two" *(ubhayam antarena)* as implying an intermediate state (*antarā,bhāva*). However, a number of canonical texts apparently support this notion (see, eg, **Kutuhala,sāla S** (the Debating Hall Discourse), where the Buddha declares: "When, Vaccha, a being has laid down this body but has not yet been reborn in another body, I declare that it is fuelled by craving." (S 4:400; cf M 1:266, 2:157).

[691] On this koan-like teaching, see **The taming of the bull**, SD 8.2 (10).

[692] **(Arahatta) Bāhiya S** (U 1.10), SD 33.7, which is itself based on the 4 satipatthanas: **(Satipaṭṭhāna) Bāhiya S** (S 47.15), SD 47.10. The same awakening teaching is given to Māluṅkya,putta, based on the 6 sense-faculties): **(Arahatta) Māluṅkya,putta S** (S 35.95,12 f/4:73), SD 5.9.

The elder Vakkali thought:
  "I have seen the one with the 10 powers,[693] and he speaks to me, saying, "Come!"
He at once experienced profound joy. He thought, "How shall I go?"

And standing there on the cliff, on hearing the first line of the stanza, though he saw no path, he leaped into the air before the one with the 10 powers.
  As he hovered in the air, pondering on the stanzas uttered by the Teacher, he complete-ly suppressed his zest and attained arhathood together with the analytical knowledges (*paṭi-sambhidā*).[694]
  Then, praising the Tathagata, he descended to the ground and stood before the Teacher. On a subsequent occasion, the teacher placed him as the foremost amongst those inclined to faith (*saddhā'dhimutta*).   (From DhA 25.1)[695]

This is a rare and beautiful account of a monk's epiphany and awakening through a vision of the Buddha who seems to intercede on the monk's behalf. The language is mythical and contemplative, descriptive of the attaining of dhyana, psychic powers, and the monk emerging from it in rapid se-quence. Getting out of the profound samadhi of dhyana, the monk directs his super-focused mind to insight and gains arhathood.

5.4.10.5 One of the most remarkably dramatic epiphanies connected with the Buddha is how he converts the serial killer, the bandit **Aṅguli,māla** (né Ahiṁsaka, "nonviolent"). His nickname means "finger-garland," from the string of shrivelled fingers, one each severed from his victims, which he wears around his neck. His murderous career reaches a climax when he needs only the last, thou-sandth, finger. His killing instinct reaches such a feverish pitch that he is ready to kill his own mother who goes into the forest to warn him of the king and his soldiers who have come to hunt him down.
  At this crucial point—killing his own mother or seeing his own wholeness—that the Buddha in-tercedes. Seeing the Buddha, Aṅguli,māla runs up to him from behind. Yet, although the Buddha is walking in his characteristic mindful monkly gait, Aṅguli,māla, running full speed, is unable to catch up to the Buddha. The running exhausts Aṅgulimāla, and he stops, unable to go on.

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[693] "The one with the 10 powers," *dasa,bala* or more fully *dasa,bala,ñāṇa*. <u>The 10 powers</u> are: (1) knowledge of the possible and the impossible (*ṭhānâṭhāna,ñāṇa*), such as in the analysis of karma (M 57, 135, 136), and the possibility regarding the realm, circumstances, time and effort, all of which would impede or reinforce the result; and also the cause of karma, etc; (2) knowledge of the result of karma (*kamma,vipāka ñāṇa*); (3) knowledge of the way leading to all destinies and goals (*sabbattha,gāminī,paṭipadā*); (4) knowledge of the world with its various elements (*nānā,dhātu ñāṇa*) (M 115,4-9/3:62 f); (5) knowledge of the different dispositions of beings (*nānâdhimuttika ñāṇa*); (6) knowledge of the maturity level of beings in terms of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (*indriya,paropariyatta ñāṇa*) (Vbh §§814-827); (7) knowledge of the defilements, cleansing and emergence in the cases of the meditations, liberations, concentrations and attainments (*jhān'ādi,-saṅkiles'ādi ñāṇa*); (8) knowledge of the recollection of (his own) past lives (*pubbe,nivāsânussati ñāṇa*); (9) knowledge of the passing away and arising of beings (according to their karma) (*cutûpapāta,ñāṇa*); (10) know-ledge of the destruction of the mental defilements (*āsava-k,khaya ñāṇa*) (M 1:69; A 5:33; Vbh 336). See **Mahā Sīhanāda S** (M 12,9-20/1:69-71) for details.
  [694] There are <u>the 4 analytic knowledges</u> (or insights) (*paṭisambhidā*), those regarding: (1) meanings (and pur-pose) (*attha,paṭisambhidā*), (2) teachings or truths (*dhamma,paṭisambhidā*), (3) language (*nirutti,paṭisambhidā*) and (4) ready wit (*paṭibhāga,paṭisambhidā*): SD 28.4 (4); SD 41.6 (2.2); SD 58.1 (5.4.2.13).
  [695] **Vakkali Thera Vatthu** (DhA 25.1 @ Dh 381), SD 8.8(1). Cf **Vakkali S** (S 22.87/3:119-124), SD 8.8.

Aṅguli,māla then calls out to the Buddha to *stop* "running." The Buddha declares:

6.2 "I stand still,[696] Aṅgulimāla, all the time.   To all beings, I've laid down the rod;
but you're unrestrained towards living beings.   Therefore, *I stand still* but you stand *not* still."

(Aṅguli.māla:)
6.3 "Long have I revered the recluse, the mighty sage,
the truth speaker, who has entered the great forest;
therefore, having heard your Dharma-woven stanza,
I will live, having renounced evil, a thousand evils."

It should be noted that at this point, Aṅgulimāla attains <u>streamwinning</u>, represented by the word ***ṭhi-to,*** "standing" [§6.2] applied to Aṅgulimāla. This is further confirmed by the Buddha accepting him as a monk of the noble sangha.

While **Kisā Gotamī**, carrying her dead infant, <u>walking</u> from house to house in the village seeking a handful of mustard seeds to revive the child, sees true reality and her own <u>wholeness</u>, Aṅgulimāla gains his wholeness by *running.* The running marks the transforming process in Aṅguli,māla that is preceded by the Buddha's presence and interaction with Aṅguli,māla. The Buddha's presence and interaction with Aṅguli,mala is <u>compassion</u> while the Buddha's words represent <u>wisdom</u>, both working for Aṅguli,māla's benefit.[697]

5.4.10.6 The Buddha's **compassion** is still present with us in the meditation that he has taught us; his **wisdom** arises in us when we see our wholeness through our meditation. We begin this process of gaining wholeness by doing some suitable meditation or being constantly <u>mindful</u> of *what* we really are at the moment. This way, we are better prepared to manage ourself wholesomely. We are not only correcting or purifying the effects of unconscious conditionings, but also extending our wholesome mind and heart to others within reach. This is wholesome <u>social and ecological engagement</u>, seeing others and our environment as extensions of ourself. This is our compassion in action.

The 6 existential states [5.4.9] represents when and how we lack <u>wholeness</u> on account of being overtaken by an unwholesome consciousness, or even a wholesome consciousness (human or divine) that holds us back in samsara. Hence, with a familiarity with these 6 existential types, we can thus better identify the state that we have fallen into, and so minimize its harm, and free ourself from it at once or through some effective reflection; or better, prevent ourselves from falling into a subhuman state. We are also more wholesomely primed to extend our being (mind and heart) to others, even beyond time and space, even beyond Buddhism itself, to others who are seeking the spiritual life and awakening.

In fact, one vital way that Buddhism can bring some semblance of a heaven on Earth here and now is to engage with others in interreligious dialogue. This is an exciting area of study since it also has to do with the Buddhist concept of <u>the extended mind</u>. But before that, we must look at the theory of "<u>paradigm shift</u>" to understand the historical developments of the Western Christian religions leading up to our own time.

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[696] While Aṅguli,māla's question [prec verse] speaks on a worldly level, the Buddha's answer here brings him up to the Dharma level, where "still" (*ṭhito*, lit "standing") means his mind has been stilled and no more creates new karma. But since Aṅguli,māla has been killing, he is not still in the Dharma sense. For a study on religious language, see Intro (2.3) & **Dh 97: Religious language**, SD 10.6.
[697] **Aṅguli,māla S** (M 86,4-6/2:98-100), SD 5.11.

5.5 BUDDHISM AND EXTENDED FAITH

5.5.1 Religious dialogues: paradigm shifts

5.5.1.1 With the fall of the Roman empire, the West had no more central control; culture and science essentially stalled. The Dark Ages (5ᵗʰ-14ᵗʰ centuries) began for Europe; religion was then a mark of the higher classes—royalty and the clergy—only they were schooled and socially privileged; the merchants and peasants served these two higher classes.

With the end of the Dark Ages (and Middle Ages) in the 15ᵗʰ century, there followed a century of revival of culture and learning in Europe, ironically through a clash of Western and Near Eastern (Muslim) civilizations. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks marked the end of the Byzantine (or Eastern Roman) Empire. A flood of Greek scholars and texts (and their Arabic translations) flowed into Italy, resulting in the Renaissance.

During the Renaissance, the Spanish Pope Alexander VI Borgia (1431-1503)[698] and his family not only ruled the Catholic Church and the Papal States but encouraged Catholics to "discover" new lands for "Gold, God and Glory." The Pope authored the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494),[699] dividing the extra-European world between the Spaniards and the Portuguese, and the Treaty, along with other Church documents, launched **the colonial era**, lasting until 1999.[700]

The Catholic Church and the Spanish Conquistadores (colonizing conquerors) would be severely challenged by the Protestant powers who—through commerce—were able to outdo the Catholics and build empires "on which the Sun never sets."[701] Through their conquests and empire-building, the Catholic and Protestants were able to turn their Christianities into global religions. As history shows us, all great empires must fall in due course. After the fall, these religions had to find other strategies to continue exerting their influence on others. To understand this sea-change, we need to turn to the "paradigm shift" theory.

A **paradigm shift** or paradigm analysis, in the philosophy of science, is a fundamental change in the basic concepts and experimental practices of a scientific discipline. The theory was introduced and popularized by the American physicist and philosopher Thomas S Kuhn (1922-1996). Kuhn restricted the use of the term to the natural sciences, but the concept of a paradigm shift has been useful for understanding numerous non-scientific contexts to describe a profound change in a fundamental model or perception of events, including religious developments and changes.

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[698] Alexander VI was the most dissolute of the Popes, but he was not alone: A W R Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis: a secret world revisited,* Brunner-Routledge, 2003. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_sexually_active_popes.

[699] One of the powerful roots of western colonialism (1500s-mid-1900s) lies in the initiative of the Pope, Catholic monarchs and the Church in dividing the countries outside of Europe amongst themselves. To please the kings of Spain and of Portugal, Pope Alexander VI (the "Borgia Pope") issued a number of papal bulls, which led to the signing of a number of treaties, the main one being the **Treaty of Tordesillas** (now in Valladolid province, Spain), on 7 June 1494, and authenticated at Setubal, Portugal. It divided the newly discovered lands outside Europe between Portugal and Spain along a meridian 370 leagues [2,193 km = 1,362 statute mi = 1,184 naut mi] west of the Cape Verde islands (off the west coast of Africa). This line of demarcation was about halfway between the Cape Verde Islands (already Portuguese) and the islands discovered by Christopher Columbus on his first voyage (claimed for Spain), named in the treaty as Cipangu and Antilia (Cuba and Hispaniola). Not to be bested, the Protestants, too, later launched their own colonial efforts, at first by way of trade (mercantilist policies) to enrich and strengthen their own countries, but these soon became opportunities to conquer much of Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

[700] In 1415, Portuguese explorers conquered Ceuta, a coastal town in North Africa just south of Gibraltar, kicking off an empire that would last until 1999. The Empire may be over, but Ceuta is still part of Spain, and it still has other colonial holdings, the obvious one being Melilla (north Africa), and that various other countries retain colonial outposts: France has various islands, Britain went to war to defend the Falkland/Malvinas islands within living memory, the US has both formal holdings like Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands plus a series of enclaves around military bases.

[701] On how the colonial era started, see SD 17.6 (3.1.1).

5.5.1.2 Just about a decade after Kuhn published *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970),[702] Swiss Catholic theologian **Hans Küng** (1928-2021) adopted Kuhn's theory of paradigm shift for the study of religion in at least two of his works.[703] Küng expanded on this concept in his book *Global Responsibility* (1991),[704] where he also introduced the theme of a "global ethic" as one of the strategies for achieving inter-religious peace using paradigm analysis. According to Küng, a thorough understanding of religion is necessary for inter-religious peace, and paradigm analysis is an effective tool to understand human beliefs. In *Global Responsibility*, Küng writes: "Anyone who want to serve peace cannot avoid a paradigm analysis."[705]

Küng explained that the "**paradigm shift**" that occurred in Christianity began with the early Christian apocalyptic paradigm, which was characterized by figures such as Jesus and Paul and the writing of the Gospels in the 1st century. This evolved into the early Church's Hellenistic paradigm, which saw the integration of Christian teachings with Greek-Roman culture from the 1st century to the 7th century. This was followed by the mediaeval Catholic paradigm in the 11th century, marked by the rise of Scholasticism and the division of the Eastern and Western churches.

Then came the Protestant Reformation paradigm in the 16th century led by figures such as Luther and Calvin. The Enlightenment paradigm followed in the 17th and 18th centuries, marked by the emergence of modern philosophy, advancements in natural sciences, and the birth of nation-state theory, which led to the French Revolution. The most recent paradigm shift is the contemporary (post-modern) ecumenical paradigm that began in the 20th century. These 6 changes took place over a period of 2 centuries, from the early days of Jesus' mission until the 20th century.[706]

5.5.1.3 The evolution of Buddhism since its beginning can be studied as **a paradigm shift** occurring in 3 broad stages (in the same of time as well as space). In **time**, for example, Edward Conze, in *A Short History of Buddhism* (1980), writes that Buddhism developed in 4 periods or phases, summarized thus:[707]

the 1st period (500-0 BCE)	early Buddhism	ascetic and monastic with the arhat ideal
the 2nd period (0-500 CE)	Mahāyāna	popular Buddhism, political features
the 3rd period (500-1000)	Tantra and Chan	magical and philosophical trends
the 4th period (1000-date)	modern Buddhism	pragmatic and secular trends

Each "period" is characterized by a paradigm shift in the mainstream pattern of Buddhism. It is helpful to picture Buddhism as a huge continent with a rich diversity of geographical features (hills, valleys, lakes, rivers, etc) with stretches of glades surrounded by forests, then thicker forests, leading into hilly and thick forests, thick jungles and remote cloudy mountains. These geographical terrains share many similar features (trees, lakes, rivers, etc) but in physically different ways.

The 1st period—early Buddhism—is the most monolithic religiously: there is the Buddha or living memory of him, and the arhat ideal is well known and pursued. The other periods are progressively more complicated as a new paradigm shift sets in. The old order is there, but the new order dominates, and becomes more varied, even fragmented.

In the 2nd period, we see the new Bodhisattva ideal dominating with more lay people involved in Buddhist practice in their own innovative ways. As Buddhism spread beyond India and became more

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[702] T S Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Univ of Chicago Press, 1970:23, 43-50.

[703] H **Küng**, *Does God Exist?: The Problem of God in the Modern World,* tr Edward Quinn, London: SCM Press, 1978:107-116 passim; see esp *Theology for the Third Millennium*, tr Peter Heinegg, NY: Doubleday, 1987.

[704] Küng, *Global Responsibility: In search of a new world ethic*, tr John Bowden, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1991.

[705] Küng 1991:126.

[706] Küng, Global Responsibility, 1991:123; Islam: past, present and future, 2007:581.

[707] I have mainly followed Conze's general historical pattern, but presented the developments as I understand them.

popular, it was adopted by rulers. Often Buddhism became the state religion; thus becoming the tool of the powerful and began to be re-shaped by those powers.

In the 3rd period Buddhism began to assimilate local religion and culture (or vice versa) and became "magical" and mystical as in Tantric Buddhism. At the same time, especially amongst the cities, Buddhist learning was more organized and the first universities arose. In East Asia, Buddhism merged with or was deeply influenced by Daoism and Confucianism, and we have Chan, Zen and so on. In South and SE Asia, we see the compilations of Commentaries and local Buddhist literature, and the rise of Abhidhamma, which spilled into the first 500 years of the 4th period.

The last period, for example, is well over 1000 years, becomes, more complicated. During this millennium, we see the rise of Theravāda in SE Asia during the first 500 years, and local rulers taking over Buddhism, and it became more ethnicized and a tool of the powerful. During the second half of that millennium (that is, 1500 onwards), the colonial period brought new paradigm shifts to Buddhism in south and SE Asia.

After the colonial era, around 1950s onwards, we see Theravāda reacting to the colonial influences, including Christianity. Local Buddhism began to modernize itself. In Sri Lanka, the shift was to emulate Christianity as a strategy for neutralizing its influence. In Myanmar, elite teachers popularized Abhidhamma and meditation out of the fear of a Dhamma-ending age. In Thailand, Buddhism was used by the Bangkok elite in its effort to unify the country as a *mandala* (circle of power) with Bangkok at its centre.

During the same period (1950s onward), we see a different paradigm shift in the West. As psychology evolves from its European roots, it discovered Buddhist meditation. This set off a new paradigm shift which even now characterize our times. Buddhism is slowly but surely been psychologized, assimilated by modern psychology, while monastic Buddhism itself is quickly becoming secularized (this-worldly and materialistic). It will be interesting what the paradigm shift will bring this time: **a psychologized Buddhism** that can better explain the mind and meditation in modern terms, or **a Buddhistic psychology** that is human-centred and life-affirming that brings us closer to the spirit of early Buddhism.

5.5.2 The necessity of dialogue

5.5.2.1 Fortunately for mankind, for various reasons, the Western God-religions lost their colonial powers.[708] With the rise of modern education, secular government, and better global human communication, religion is today, so to say, forced to be civil and considerate as the world becomes more cosmopolitan and religiously diverse.

The dissolute lifestyle and high-handed actions of Alexander VI might be said to be a key factor leading to the rise of the European Reformation. As God's presence on Earth and the Church's leader, he was the public face of God and the Church. Not living up to these roles, but instead living licentiously clearly shocked and disappointed many, especially the informed and the learned. The rise of new learning and freedom of humanism the Renaissance brought, also marked the beginning of the fall of the Roman Church, and it continues to fall to this day while Christianity itself continues to disintegrate into denominations, sects, and even cults.

The Roman Church was able to grow not because it was religious but because it politicized whatever it sees that will bring it **power**. Hence, the Church introduced the sacraments (official religious rituals) to regulate and control the religious lives of the faithful. The faithful who lived, or better, died, for the Faith are martyrs. To define and control who can be **saints**, the Church introduced the canonization process. To bring the whole world to God (read the Roman Church), Pope Alexander VI encouraged **colonialism**. And to lie abroad for its own good and growth, the Church initiated **dialogues in faith and religion**.

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[708] Before proceeding, you may like to read on the rise of religion in Europe: **Who invented religion?** SD 60.1d (3.1.2).

5.5.2.2 <u>Religious wars</u> are patently destructive, with significant irredeemable losses; <u>religious dialogues</u> are a "win-win" enterprise: at its roots, dialogue allows each religion to live its own delusion of promoting itself, impressing others (at least with its history and wealth), showing how the profession of faith is the best of professions, and making friends along the way. Some of the most impressive religious rhetoric can be seen in relation to **religious dialogue**, of which, broadly, there are <u>3 kinds</u>, thus:[709]

(1) "In the dialogue of <u>the head</u>, we mentally reach out to the other to learn from those who think differently from us." (intellectual engagement)
(2) "In the dialogue of <u>the hands</u>, we all work together to make the world a better place in which we must all live together." (social engagement)
(3) "In the dialogue of <u>the heart</u>, we share the experience of the emotions of those different from us." (experiential engagement)

The dialogue of heads is mostly done by scholars or in an academic manner, where vital and interesting parallels, intersections and departures amongst religions are discussed. The advantages of such a dialogue are that the comparisons are done in an almost natural and scholarly way, and that it is likely to reach out beyond the religious fold to other heads.[710]

The dialogue of hands entails social engagement, actual meeting of the faithful of different faiths working together to smoothen out rough edges and build bridges of friendship. Ideally and truly spiritually, with an open display of honesty and magnanimity, such religious groups would allow open engagement between believers amongst themselves, encouraging interreligious marriages, even movements of converts amongst themselves. Like it or not, this is the direction we must take if religion is to promote peace and harmony in society.[711]

The dialogue of the heart is clearly the most enriching wherever there is open sharing of authentic personal spiritual experiences, especially amongst religious contemplatives. Such discussion, when conducted in-depth, in an exploratory and conciliatory spirit, will surely inspire others, even those outside the religion or without religion to take up meditation, mindfulness exercise or a spiritual practice for its human benefits.[712]

5.5.2.3 Religious dialogue as <u>damage control</u> started with the Catholic Church. Since the Church has lost its power to wage war, losing even its political power over Europe's kings and queens, who have themselves been democratized as constitutional monarchs or simply removed (as in the case of France in 1789), the Church prudently turned to <u>dialogue</u> as a strategy of winning friends and influencing people.

The Archdiocese of Chicago's Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs defined the following levels or dimensions of religious "relations," that is:[713]

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[709] Leonard Swidler, Khalid Duran, Reuven Firestone, *Trialogue: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue*, New London, CA: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007:2.

[710] An interesting and earnest example of such an effort is John Makransky, "How Buddhist and Christian liberation epistemologies should inform and correct each other," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 39, 2019:241-255.

[711] See L Swidler, "The cosmic dance of dialogue: dialogue of the head, hands, heart, the holy," in his *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding: strategies for the transformation of culture-shaping institutions,* NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014:15-18 (ch 3).

[712] See eg Martin McGee, *Dialogue of the Heart: Christian-Muslim stories of encounter,* Orbis Books, 2018. This is a touching account of how the Trappists monks of Tibhirine (near Médéa, Algeria), work to reach out to Muslims in modern-day North Africa.

[713] "Archdiocese of Chicago," orig archived on 5 Oct 2016: Wayback; https://web.archive.org/web/20161005044003/https://www.archchicago.org/departments/ecumenical/Relations.htm.

• "ecumenical" as "relations and prayer with other Christians,"
• "interfaith" as "relations with members of the 'Abrahamic faiths' (Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions)," and
• "interreligious" as "relations with other religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism."

Professor of Catholic thought Leonard Swidler (1929-) and his theologian wife Arlene Anderson (1929-2008), for example, started the quarterly *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (1964) to report on "inter-Christian" dialogue. This was the first peer-reviewed journal in the field of interreligious dialogue. Eventually, the Journal came to focus on Christian-Jewish dialogue, as well as faith communities in Asia and Africa.[714]

5.5.3 Why some don't have dialogue

5.5.3.1 Although Buddhists are known to participate in interreligious dialogues, that is, exchange views in fellowship with other religions, there is almost no development in **intra-Buddhist dialogue**, that is, interfaith discussions amongst Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrāyāna Buddhists, or between any two of them. The main reason for this is perhaps that Buddhists generally seem less interested in Buddhist doctrine (which can be philosophical and abstruse) than in the ritual practices, which also tend to be more socially engaging and profitable.

Another important reason for a lack of intra-Buddhist dialogue is perhaps that the leading Buddhists of these traditions are not keen on highlighting differences amongst their views. Rather, they would prefer the perception that Buddhism is a monolithic teaching, or that it is tolerant of differences, and that differences do not matter at all since they do not believe in them anyway. These are interesting thoughts for such an intra-Buddhist dialogue!

This means that we must seriously look around for open-minded, learned and insightful Buddhist practitioners from these traditions to discuss related Buddhist doctrines and practices for a better understanding of their differences. In other words, we simply need to take Buddhist teachings more seriously, at least, in the spirit of dialogue and commitment to what we believe. Hence, we should never entertain the notion that only certain individuals have the last say in our understanding of the sutta texts today. In other words, our common authority should be text-based and meditation-based; hence, we must fully respect the Dharma-Vinaya, and the consensus of the wise.

Understandably, the reluctance of Buddhists to have dialogue with other Buddhist traditions is perhaps because dialogue is seen as a slippery slope. Once we try to reach a high point of doctrine or textual interpretation, we are likely to slide down, in the absence of any foothold. We must at least start with what we agree on; if not, we must agree to listen, to learn, and to speak to inspire others. Thus, in the absence of intra-Buddhist dialogue, we are stuck at the bottom of the rut to be washed away by any floodwaters.

5.5.3.2 Religious dialogue also faces serious difficulties when the participating parties lack co-operation and mutual respect. Once again, we are reminded that the great religions are forced into dialogue because they have been defanged of their political power. In short, **honesty and courage** are vital for any beneficial religious dialogue. Here is a notorious case in point.

On 27 October 1986 Pope John Paul II had a day of prayer at Assisi and invited "about fifty Christians and fifty leaders of other faiths." In his book *One Christ—Many Religions*, S J Samartha says that the importance of that day of prayer for "interreligious relationships cannot be overestimated" and gives "several reasons" for its importance (for the Catholics at least):[715]

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[714] https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/the-church-and-beyond-hans-kung-and-interreligious-relations.

[715] S J Samartha, One Christ–Many Religions: Toward a Revised Christology, 1991:14 f. Repr Wipf & Stock, 2015.

"It conferred *legitimacy* to Christian initiatives in interreligious dialogues."
"It was seen as an event of *theological* significance."
"Assisi was recognized as *an act of dialogue* in the highest degree."
"It emphasized the *religious* nature of peace."

However, Samartha ominously added, two points caused "disquiet" to people of faiths other than Christianity (1991:15 f):

The Pope's insistence on Christ as the *only* source of peace: for the prayers, Christians were taken to one place and people of other faiths to another place. Besides the disquiet caused by the Pope's day of prayer, there is an ongoing "suspicion" by "neighbors of other faiths" that "dialogues may be used for purposes of Christian mission." (1991:19)

The most effective way to conduct an interreligious dialogue is by **way of the heart:** that we are confident with joyful peace in our own faith whether it is early Buddhism or a non-Buddhist faith. We meet as neighbours and friends: we live in different homes with different cultures, but we need not burn others' home down. It helps to practise our own teachings and love our neighbours to begin with.

5.5.3.3 Here I record a matter that has deeply pained me and my family on account of religious differences, and a matter of family love. My eldest uncle, TAN Gim Ann[716] (1903-65), while studying in the University of Hong Kong, converted to the Christian Brethren denomination, and married a wife from the same flock. When his father, TAN Thiam Hock (1855-1934) died, Gim Ann (and his wife) refused to perform the traditional Chinese last rites, which deeply upset his mother ONG Chow Neo (1878-1961).[717]

Gim Ann and his wife started the Melaka Gospel Chapel where my elder brother TAN Beng Tee (1935-2012) was sent to live due to his having difficulties with our youngest uncle. In due course, he was converted to Christianity, to the utter dismay of our parents, who then advised me to be a Buddhist. Even when I was a Theravāda monk, my brother Beng Tee was dearly close to me ("Let not a brother be a stumbling-block to a brother,"[718] he told me).[719]

However, after my dear brother Beng Tee died, his eldest son and his family, all Brethren Christians, simply lost touch with us. This social distancing was clearly because we were of different religions. After all, the Bible records Christ as saying:

… I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter-in-law against her mother;
and a man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more
than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy
of me.   (Matthew 10:35-37)

A grandiose narcissism—even a divine one—by any other name is still narcissism. This narcissism hurts families because of our belief, and so we allow this inhumanity to prevail.

5.5.3.4 Bible Christians are not the only ones who accept that God demands His believers to love only Him and no other, and that they should not have *more* love for their own parents or family, even for their own spouse *than* for God Himself. We see certain Buddhists, not just Vipassana Buddhists, but those who look up to particular teachers, who habitually distance themselves from other

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[716] It is customary among the Chinese in Asia to place their SURNAME first.
[717] See Rodney Tan (ed), *Jubilee of God's Faithfulness 1966-2016,* Malacca: Melaka Gospel Chapel, <u>1966</u>:12.
[718] Paraphrased from Romans 14.13: "Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother." (ESV)
[719] See "Farewell, brother," *Revisioning Buddhism* RB51, 2012. [<u>Link</u>]

Buddhists who are seen as believing those teachings that differ from theirs, or are not up to their measure, and thus to be avoided.

These are the kinds of situations that are likely to arouse or breed any of the blindness of **the Dark Triad**: psychopathology, Machiavellianism and narcissism. We have discussed these in some detail elsewhere [5.4.1].

We should be reminded by the Buddha's teaching in **the Bahu Vedaniya Sutta** (M 59), that the teachings are all "<u>relative</u>" (*pariyāyena*), that is, they should be understood in their proper contexts and proper paradigms, that is, in terms of body-mind, or hedonic tones, or faculties, or contacts, or examinations, or lifestyle (household and renunciant), or in terms of time (past, present or future).[720] What are written here are like doors that open into the suttas, recording vital truths for our benefits. We should take that courageous step to discover the liberating truth for ourself.

The Buddha reminds us that due to the teachings' <u>relativity</u>, "it may be expected that there are those who would *not* approve of, nor allow, nor rejoice in what is well said, well spoken, by others, such that they would become contentious, quarrelsome, disputatious, and dwell stabbing one another with sharp tongues [verbal daggers]." Yet, it "may be expected that there are those who *would* approve of, or allow, or rejoice in what is well said, well spoken, by others, such that they would dwell in concord, rejoicing in one another, without disputing, blending like milk and water, looking at one another with loving eyes."[721] In short, it is better to be civil.

5.5.3.5 A key reason why Buddhists do not dialogue with other Buddhists, differing in faith, is clearly the sweeping misunderstanding that "all Buddhist teachings are 'relative'." What is *relative* is not the teaching itself, but the <u>context</u> of the teaching. It is very easy to hide behind the claim that, ultimately, the differences in conception and practice between us don't matter—they're all "relative," just different ways to get to the same goal.

There is clearly a point where all that relativity ends. Are the Pure Lands literal or metaphorical, for example? Surely they cannot be both: there comes a point where they're one or the other. We can dust our hands off these by saying "They're just views, so we shouldn't worry and just let people get on with them," but at that point we're precluding the possibility of dialogue: we're having a set of monologues whose starting point is that they will not bring about changes in position.[722]

5.5.3.6 The Buddha then hints that this is the way of the 5 physical senses: it is a sense-based or body-based, a worldly approach. The Buddha goes on to speak of a meditative or contemplative experience of joy and light. "This happiness is more excellent and more sublime than other happinesses." Yet there is profound happiness in the "cessation of perception and feeling." The Lord "does *not* declare a state as being happiness only with regard to pleasant feeling. But rather, … wherever happiness is found, in whatever way, the Tathagata declares that as happiness."[723] The Commentaries explain that whether the happiness found is felt or unfelt, the Tathagata declares whatever is without suffering as happiness. (MA 3:115; SA 3:79).

The best way to conduct a religious dialogue, then, is to do so with the joy of spiritual experience; if not, it should at least be conducted "in concord, rejoicing in one another, without disputing, blending like milk and water, looking at one another with loving eyes."

5.5.4 The Buddha's dialogue with the wanderers

5.5.4.1 The Buddha is the first historical person to promote interreligious dialogue, and to lay out its basic principles recorded in **the Udumbarikā Sīhanāda Sutta** (D 25).[724] The Sutta account

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[720] Explained in **Aṭṭha,sata S** (S 36.22/4:231 f), SD 60.12; SD 17.3 (4.1).

[721] On "sharp tongues," see **Nānā Titthiya S 2** (U 6.4/66-69); cf **Kalaha Vivāda S** (Sn 4.11/862-877).

[722] Thanks Matt Jenkins for contributing to this section. 3 Oct 2023.

[723] M 59,4 f/1:397 f (SD 30.4).

[724] D 25/3:36-57 (SD 1.4).

opens with the layman disciple, Sandhāna, commenting on the large gathering of wanderers chattering together boisterously in "low talk," and that the Buddha, on the other hand, is one who loves the peace of solitude. Annoyed, Nigrodha, the leader of the wanderers, chides the Buddha for being a social misfit, and that he "will baffle him with a single question, we will knock him over like an empty pot!"[725]

The Buddha, it is said, knows Nigrodha's mind, and calmly approaches the wanderers. After the preliminary greetings, the Buddha sits with Nigrodha before the assembly. Nigrodha then asks the Buddha the "baffling question," that is, "How does the Buddha train his disciples so that they can confidently declare the foundations of the holy life?"[726]

The Buddha replies by saying that it would be difficult for Nigrodha, who has his own views, and without having taken up the training himself, to understand it. The Buddha then suggests that they discuss Nigrodha's own practice by questioning the Buddha about it:

"Come now, Nigrodha, **ask me about your own teachings**, about how you regard whether your own **ascetic abstinence** is fulfilled or not fulfilled."[727]

5.5.4.2 This at once created a stirring response amongst the assembly of wanderers that the Buddha holds back his own teachings and invites others to discuss theirs! Nigrodha at once calls the assembly to order, and asks the Buddha,

"We live by the doctrine of **ascetic abstinence** … how is it fulfilled or not fulfilled?"[728]

The Buddha then lists the self-mortifying practices of the naked ascetic, such as hand-licking, not responding to invitations, accepting nothing from certain places, but almsfood of only 1 morsel a house, 2 morsels from 2 houses, and soon up to 7 morsels from 7 houses a day; eating only once a day, once every 2 days, and so on up to once every 7 days, even at once up to a fortnight. He eats only greens, water-lettuce, rice-bran, rice-remnants, sesamum flour, grass or cow-dung. He lives off roots, fruits, windfall from the forest. He dresses himself in hemp, shroud, bark, antelope hide, and so on. He plucks his hair and beard; stands continuously, squats continuously. He sleeps on a plank, on hard rocky ground; he lies with one side covered only in dirt; he eats dirt. He does not drink cold water. He practises ritual bathing.

"But," reminds the Buddha, all these practices have their imperfections. On being asked, the Buddha explains the imperfections include delighting in the thought that we have attained our goal, and disparaging others; we show conceit, infatuation and heedlessness. We are selective in our meals, taking only "good" food, eating them with relish. We keep such practices for the sake of gains, honours and fame, disparaging others, showing envy and jealousy; showing off to families and to society; having bad desires and holding wrong views, and harbouring various moral imperfections.

5.5.4.3 Then the Buddha explains the 2nd stage: the ascetic then gives up all these immoral habits and practices, and easily lets go of self-view. "*Is the ascetic practice fulfilled or not?*" asks the Buddha.

The wanderer Nigrodha at once agrees:

"Certainly it is, bhante, it reaches its peak here, penetrating **the heartwood**!"

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[725] D 25,5/3:38 (SD 1.4).

[726] The full question is: "'Bhante, what is **the doctrine** in which the Blessed One trains [disciplines] his disciples, by which the Blessed One's disciples **gain the confidence to declare their principal support and the fundamentals of the holy life**?' (*Ko nāma so bhante bhagavato dhammo, yena bhagavā sāvake vineti, yena bhagavatā sāvakā vinītā assāsa-p,pattā paṭijānanti ajjhāsayaṁ ādi,brahma,cariyan'ti*) (D 25,6.3/3:39), SD 1.4.

[727] Fully: "Come now, Nigrodha, ask me about your own teachings, about what you regard as **abstinence** [about the highest abstinence], thus: 'And how, bhante, is the practice of **ascetic abstinence** fulfilled, and how is it not fulfilled?'" (*Iṅgha tvaṁ maṁ, nigrodha, sake ācariyake adhijegucche pañhaṁ puccha: Kathaṁ santā nu kho bhante tapo,jigucchā paripuṇṇā hoti, kathaṁ aparipuṇṇā ti.*)

[728] Hereon follows a summary of the dialogue between Nigrodha and the Buddha: D 25,8-19/3:40-52 (SD 1.4).

"**No**, Nigrodha, it does <u>not</u> reach its peak there, penetrating the heartwood. It has only reached **the loose outer bark**!"[729]

Nigrodha is now curious and asks about the ascetic abstinence that is fulfilled.
The ascetic then observes <u>the 4 restraints</u>, that is,

(1) he harms no living being,   nor causes any to be harmed,   nor approves of it;
(2) he takes not the not-given,   nor causes any to do so,   nor approves of it;
(3) he tells no lies,   nor causes anyone to lie,   nor approves of it;
(4) he desires no sense-pleasure, nor causes any to desire it,   nor approves of it.

Thus morally restrained, after his almsround, he dwells mindfully free *from covetousness, from ill will and greed, from restlessness and worry, and from doubt*, he abandons <u>the 5 hindrances</u>, applies insight to weaken the impurities of the mind, and cultivates boundless <u>lovingkindness</u> … and the same with <u>compassion</u>, and the same with <u>gladness</u> … and the same with <u>equanimity</u>.
"Is this then the fulfillment of ascetic abstinence?" asks the Buddha.

Nigrodha at once agrees that this is the heartwood.
"No," replies the Buddha, "this is only **the bark**!"[730]

5.5.4.4 The Buddha goes on to the 3rd stage. The ascetic, having kept himself moral virtuous and attaining dhyana of the 4 divine abodes, then gains **the 1st superknowledge**, that of his own past-life recollection, **the 2nd superknowledge**, that of the divine eye (recollection of others' past lives). Then, the Buddha stops here: this is still not yet the heartwood of the spiritual path, it is only **the sap-wood**.[731] However, in the wanderers' training, *this* is the highest they could ever go: this is **the heart-wood** for them.[732]
Nigrodha then asks about the training of the Buddha's disciples:
"*Bhante, what is the doctrine in which the Blessed One trains his disciples, by which they* **gain the confidence to declare their principal support and the fundamentals of the holy life**?" [5.5.4.1]
The Buddha replies:
"Nigrodha, I train my disciples in **something higher and finer**—<u>it is through this that they gain the confidence to declare their principal support and the fundamentals of the holy life</u>."[733]
When this was said, a great commotion arose amongst the wanderers:
"We and our teaching are ruined! We know of nothing higher or more far-reaching!"[734]

5.5.4.5 The Udumbarikā Sīhanāda Sutta (D 25) in presenting us the dialogue between the Buddha and the wanderer Nigrodha shows both the nature and the limits of interreligious dialogue. The Sutta opens with the Buddha showing how his understanding of the teachings of the wanderers becomes a bridge on which he meets the wanderer Nigrodha. The assembly of wanderers are very impressed with the Buddha, since he is speaking their religious language by discussing their teachings and practices.

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[729] The 1st tree cycle: the loose outer bark (D 25,13-15), SD 3.2
[730] The 2nd tree cycle: the tree-bark (D 25,16-18.1), SD 3.2.
[731] The 3rd tree cycle: the sapwood (D 25,1.82-18.6), SD 3.2.
[732] The 4th tree cycle: the heartwood (D 25,19.1-11), SD 3.2.
[733] Iti kho taṁ nigrodha ṭhānaṁ uttaritarañ ca paṇītatarañ ca yenâhaṁ mayā sāvakā vinemi, yena mayā sāvakā vinītā assāsa,pattā paṭijānanti ajjhāsayaṁ ādi,brahma,cariyan'ti. Nigrodha has openly declared that the previous stage is the highest, but the Buddha now says that there is "something higher and finer"! This "higher and subtler" training, of course, refers to the 3rd superknowledge, ie, the higher knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (āsava-k,khaya.ñāṇa) (that is, of sensual desire, of existence, of views and of ignorance)—that is, the attaining of arhathood.
[734] D 25,19.14 (SD 1.4).

The dialogue works very well here because both the wanderers and the Buddha come from the same Indian background of religious tradition.[735] In other words, the Buddha as a Bodhisattva seeker, has practised practically all these rules and methods before finding the meditation that actually brings him awakening.[736]

Hence, Nigrodha and the assembled wanderers know well enough (at least in theory) what the Buddha is speaking about. Then, the Buddha detailed the wanderers' practice as far as they can claim to attain, but no further. Implicitly, this is just to prove a point: their system is not working. In fact, the wanderers admit their failure:

" … a great commotion arose amongst the wanderers:
'We and our teaching are ruined! We know of nothing higher or more far-reaching!'"[737]

However, for some reason, they do not respond to the Buddha's invitation to go beyond their "principal support and the fundamental of the holy life" for "something higher and finer" (*taṁ … ṭhānaṁ uttaritarañ ca paṇītarañ ca*), that is, the 3 trainings leaning to awakening in some 7 years' time, or even in as short a time as 7 days.[738]

We are informed that Māra (*pāpimā,* the bad one, that is, their own defilements) prevents them from taking that step beyond their current state. Despite the Buddha's failure to "convert" the wanderers, we have here a very remarkable record of an early interreligious encounter between the Buddha and the wanderers. Secondly, this Sutta shows that the Buddha, on a few occasions, does *not* convert his audience, despite his teaching efforts.[739]

A likely explanation for the wanderers not taking up the Buddha's training is that they have a very charismatic leader in Nigrodha, who is reluctant to join the Buddha because he and his followers are quite satisfied with their current life of ease and respect. Nigrodha and his wanderers may be receiving queen Udumbarikā's support and favour.

Hence, on account of worldly gains and pleasures, or whatever reason, Nigrodha and his wanderers are not ready for renunciation. Despite their acceptance of the Buddha's teaching, they do not become followers of the Buddha—and despite the Buddha clearly stating the vital difference between conversion and **awakening**; the latter depends on our own moral and mental purification. The Sutta's highlight is the Buddha's declaration of what is called the 7 principles of **interreligious dialogue** [5.5.5]. For all these positive reasons, the Sutta is called a "**lion-roar**" (*sīha,nāda*), that is, a remarkable public declaration of true faith.

5.5.4.6 The main limitation of religious dialogue is the *raison d'etre* of the religion itself. The idea of an interreligious dialogue is that there are differing religions that can and must communicate with one another. Their dialogues are not so much about unity as they are about preserving the peace for themselves and for others. Neighbours need to be neighbourly: be friendly and kind with one another, to love another. They may break down fences and level the ground beautifully, but they still live separately each in their own house.

Dialogues can be self-searching and soul-searching challenges for participating religions and those informed about such dialogues. Although there are clear benefits for our scholars of dialogue in our faiths, it is just as urgent that we engage in dialogue with those of other religions and faiths as practitioners. Whether the dialogue is academic or spiritual in tone, we must communicate resonantly that we may have *wisdom*, but we desire peace. Dialogue or die! Whether we have dialogue or not, we die—why not have dialogue?

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[735] See eg **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,12-29/1:240-246), SD 49.4.
[736] See eg **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,30-47/1:246-250), SD 49.4.
[737] D 25,19.14 (SD 3.2).
[738] D 25,22 (SD 3.2).
[739] See SD 3.2 (2.4).

5.5.5 The Buddha's 7 challenges to interreligious dialogue

5.5.5.0 The Udumbarikā Siha,nāda Sutta contains one of the most important statements on **Buddhist missiology**, that is, the Buddha's 7 points of interreligious dialogue, listed near the end of the Sutta, as follows:[740]

(1) "Let whoever is your teacher (*ācariya*) remain as your teacher."
(2) "Let your training (*uddesa*) remain as your training."
(3) "Let your livelihood (*ājīva*) remain as your livelihood."
(4) "Let what you consider unwholesome (*akusala*) continue to be so considered."
(5) "Let what you consider wholesome (*kusala*) continue to be so considered."
(6) "There are unwholesome states" not yet abandoned, that conduce to **rebirth and suffering**.
(7) "By your own insight and realization, you will attain **the fullness of wisdom**."

(D 25,23), SD 1.4

The first 5 points are universal qualities that keep us civilized as social beings, that keep us **human**, and even rise into **divinity**; the last 2 are spiritual imperatives that compel us to rise above both our humanity and divinity, to awaken to true reality. As we have already discussed these 7 statements of the Buddha in some detail elsewhere, we will here only make a brief note of each, as follows:[741]

5.5.5.1 "**Let whoever is your teacher (*ācariya*) remain as your teacher**."
In practising Buddha Dharma, we enlarge our spiritual family and community in a wholesome way. We continue to befriend our old teachers, and continue to support them, if necessary. We gently show them we are happier now, partly because of them (they were like bridges who have brought us thus far).

5.5.5.2 "**Let your training [routine] (*uddesa*) remain as your training**."
Our old religions and cultures have certain wholesome ways that are worth keeping, so long as they do not negatively affect our present lives. Indeed, some of these old teachings were there because of past conditions; our present conditions are open with happiness and clear with wisdom.

5.5.5.3 "**Let your livelihood (*ājīva*) remain as your livelihood**."
Our lifestyle and occupation can remain as they are so long as we do not break any of the 5 precepts. When we do have difficulties with them, we will work in preparation for a more Dharma-spirited way of life, guided by respect for life, health and happiness, freedom, truthfulness and wisdom.

5.5.5.4 "**Let what you consider unwholesome (*akusala*) continue to be so considered**."
Even in Buddhism as a religion we will see aspects of it which were added later, reflecting culture, foreign influences and misunderstanding of the teachings. We should not follow wrong practices such as worshipping the dead or "transferring merits to them (but remember them with lovingkindness), relying on luck, such as gambling (but rely on good and honest work and savings).

5.5.5.5 "**Let what you consider wholesome (*kusala*) continue to be so considered**."
One of most wholesome qualities of religions is in its fellowship. We should continue to be close (or closer) to our family and relatives, and celebrate life with them. We should treat those we are familiar with (old friends and good neighbours) like relatives, and keep our home open to them, especially on special occasions.

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[740] For an interpretation in the context of *papañca,* see SD 19.1 (7.3 f).
[741] On interreligious dialogue, see **Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda S** (D 25,23) & SD 1.4 (1.2, 2).

5.5.5.*6* "**There are <u>unwholesome states</u> not yet abandoned, that conduce to *rebirth* and *suffering*.**"

Religion should not be merely about beliefs, conversion or numbers but about <u>right and good living</u>—about respecting life and giving it the best conditions to develop. If we feel that we are not ready to give up our old religion, we don't have to; we should keep to its wholesome aspects like showing kindness and generosity. The Dharma of true reality and true happiness will naturally find their right place in our open mind and warm heart.

5.5.5.*7* "**By your own <u>insight and realization</u>, you will attain *the fullness of wisdom*.**"

The key spirit in the Buddha's teaching is "<u>self-reliant learning</u>" (*atta,dīpa*), being an "island" unto ourselves in the world's floods. This is just the opposite of being insular, but we try to be always ready to reach out to others or receive them in times of need. This is easier said than done since the floods keep rising. This means that we just have to keep on learning to be safe from the floods.

As we learn to work with others, we will discover that, despite being islands, when the floods have receded we are all **mountains** each in our own way. We are all interconnected with one another by Mother Earth and Father Sun. Thus, we reflect why the Buddha is called the "kinsman of the Sun" (*ādicca,bandhu*).[742] The Earth supports us, the Sun energizes us, the Buddha awakens us. We begin by learning what we stand on, what is above us, what is beyond earth and sky. Everything is growing and turning; there is this true peace called nirvana.

5.5.5.8 When we participate in a living dialogue it means that we do care about our own religion or faith. Although we may speak *for* our community, it is *how* we speak as an individual that helps us project a good image of our community. Often, as speakers in an interreligious dialogue, we deeply wish that the situation in our own community would be better. Indeed, we can only speak as if our community is true to the faith and to one another.

But much of what we express may either falsely impress others with the prosperity of our community or inspire them with our honesty and courage—which we badly need today. In such a dialogue we are very likely to speak of ideal states rather than current realities. While we present the face of our faith before others, we hope that our words will also set things right in our own religious community.

The Sama,jīvi Sutta 1 (A 4.55) records the Buddha as instructing the loving couple Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā that following <u>4 qualities keeps us together here and in future lives</u>. These same 4 qualities, extended to our community as a whole, would surely keep us together happily here and hereafter, that is, **the 4 qualities of compatible community**:[743]

(1)	harmonious faith	*sama,saddhā*
(2)	harmonious virtue	*sama,sīlā*
(3)	harmonious charity	*sama,cāgā*
(4)	harmonious wisdom	*sama,paññā.*

One very effective way to promote these 4 qualities in our own Buddhist community is to have **intra-Buddhist dialogues**, where learned and experienced members of our own community sit in dialogue on these 4 qualities for the benefit of the assembled members of the community. Currently, Buddhism, despite being a global religion—perhaps *because* it is a globalized religion— that fiercely refuses to bow to any central authority, is fast becoming a DIY religion, heading towards either a Buddhist anarchy or anomie.

Within the last decade, with the rise of the Internet, we are beginning to see intrepid Buddhist zealots, priestly and lay, openly claiming to be *streamwinners, once-returners, non-returners*, even *arhats*. They are not the only ones doing so. In Myanmar, individual meditators in a Buddhist organ-

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[742] V 2:296,17; D 2:287,21*; Sn 54, 915; Tha 26.
[743] A 4.55/2:62 f (SD 5.1).

ization have been officially classified into the categories of path saints according to the religious benchmarks of the organization. This is what we will look at next.

To better understand the next section, you are advised to be familiar with the nature of **the Buddhist path** (*magga*) and the 10 fetters (*saṁyojana*) [5.1.1] first. We will next make analytical studies of journal papers by specialists and scholars in their attempt to make some kind of quantitative as well as qualitative studies of meditation efforts and individual meditators by selected Buddhist participants and informants.

6 The uses of awakening: Theravāda and the nation

6.1 THE FATE OF THERAVĀDA IN SE ASIA

We will here examine how the idea of **the Sotāpanna** or streamwinner and other saints is used to keep society in order in Myanmar [6.2]. We will then try to explain how the Burmese Buddhists allegedly "measure" Sainthood in modern terms [6.3]. Before we do so, we will summarize the Buddhist histories of other South and Southeast Asian Buddhist nations, for a comparative view of the diverse roles and fortunes of Theravāda in each case. An awareness of the different historical and social backgrounds of Theravāda will hopefully help us see how it was used to shape that society, or how that society shaped it.

6.1.1 Sri Lanka: modernizing Buddhism

Like Burma, **Sri Lanka** was part of the British colonial sphere, and both gained independence in 1948. Since Independence, Sri Lankan priests have been politically influential, even violent, ostensibly for preservation and primacy of "Buddhism," often laced with racism against the Hindus (the Tamils) and the Muslims. Sinhala clerics—those influenced by the modernist ideas of lay preacher Anagarika Dharmapala and of the secular priest W Rahula,[744] especially the latter, who had mostly rejected the Vinaya and meditation, and turned to academic learning and worldly pursuits[745]

For most of **the Sinhala clergy** today, Buddhism is a political and economic system. It is mostly a secularized Vinayaless system very much dependent on the foreign perception of its ancient Buddhist glory and clerical hierarchy. The wealthier elite clerics are likely to start Viharas (mission houses) in Europe and North America. The more ambitious younger clerics mostly gravitate to Malaysia and Singapore to look for wealthy sponsors for their academic pursuits or set up house locally for their missionizing.

6.1.2 Myanmar: ethnicizing Buddhism

While the Sri Lankan clergy tended to look outwardly in their modernizing efforts—effectively abandoning 2 millennia of Buddhist glory for political engagement at home and business evangelism overseas (centred on merit transfer)—the Burmese Buddhists (beginning with Ledi Sayadaw)[746] looked deep into their Dhamma history and recruited **Vipassanā** as their new model and voice in the modern world.[747]

Lay meditation grew only after the influence of Burmese Vipassanā after World War 2.[748] Burmese meditation in various forms of Vipassanā—especially those of Mahasi and of Goenka—continues to grow globally and attract ever more people—Buddhists and non-Buddhists—to sit in meditation and explore Buddhism for themselves. Scholars have started researching into the Burmese practice of meditation [6.2]; and the Burmese themselves have been applying Buddhism to their own society [6.5]

6.1.3 Thailand: Bangkok-centred state

In the post-colonial era (beginning after WW2, 1945), we see **the Buddhist nations** of SE Asia facing different sociopolitical changes. The most successful of these nations was **Thailand**, partly due to its location in between the British in Burma and India, and the French in Indochina (Khmer and Vi-

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[744] On Dharmapala and Rahula, see SD 60.1c (1.2.2, 8.4.7). On Dharmapala, see SD 60.1c (8.2), SD 60.1d (4.4). On W Rahula, see SD 60.1b (2.1.1.2), SD 60.1c (1.2).

[745] S J Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?* Univ of Chicago Press, 1992. H L Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings,* Univ of Chicago Press, 1999. E Braun 2009:939 f.

[746] On Ledi Sayadaw, see SD 60.1b (2.3 f).

[747] On Burmese Vipassanā, see SD 60.1b (2.4 f).

[748] G D Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka,* Univ of S Carolina Press, 1988: ch 4. R F Gombrich & G Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed,* NY: Routledge, 1988:236. E Braun 2009:942 + fn 3.

etnam), and its modernized kings, especially Mongkut and Chulalongkorn; it also managed to stay uncolonised and free. These Siamese kings worked to keep the centre of power in **Bangkok**, and the Bangkok elite, to domesticate the Siamese Sangha and unified them by successive Sangha Acts.

To modernize the Buddhist education of the Siamese Sangha and as a moralizing force for the Siamese laity, **the Sanam Luang**, more fully, the Sanam Luang Dhamma Studies Examination Curriculum (effectively a royal examination syndicate)[749] was formed. It standardized basic Buddhist studies curricula, one for monastics (Nak Tham, "Dhammika") and one for the laity (Thammaseuksa, Dharma studies).

While ecclesiastical law and Buddhist education are used to "centralize" Buddhism, politics hold the country together centred on the Bangkok elite (*sakdina*). Even today, Thailand remains Bangkok-centric with power in the hands of those supporting the King.[750] Thailand has the world's harshest lèse majesté law, often used to stifle free speech and dissent against those in power.[751]

6.1.4 Khmer/Cambodia: from empire to state

6.1.4.1 Buddhism in Khmer[752] and Laos did not fare so well. Ancient **Kambuja** reached its height as a Hindu-Buddhist empire centering in what is now northern Cambodia, extending over what is today Cambodia up to central and south Thailand. The empire comprised mostly of <u>hydraulic cities</u>, their power coming from regulation of water, floods and irrigation.[753]

In the 13th century, Sinhala missionaries brought Theravāda to Khmer, which took root and spread. Unlike the previous Hindu state, the Theravāda brought a non-violent social change at all levels of Khmer society, and was thus very popular with the masses. The massive projects of temple-building for god-kings (*deva,rāja*) suddenly stopped. This meant that the kings were no more seen as gods incarnate.[754] This sudden change, historians suspect, was one of the major causes of the decline of the Khmer god-kings in the 14th century.[755]

Moreover, the water management also degenerated, badly affecting rice harvests (their main economy) which were also affected by drought and floods which continued to weaken the kingdom. The Black Death also reached Khmer, along with smallpox and malaria.

6.1.4.2 During the 15th century, the kingdom of Ayutthaya attacked Khmer. In 1431, the Khmer court moved to Phnom Penh. In 1594, Ayutthaya invaded the Khmer kingdom. The Khmer empire was reduced to alternating vassal relationships with Siam and with Vietnam.[756] This was followed by a series of colonizations of Khmer by various nations.

In the 19th century, Siam and Vietnam continued to struggle for control of Khmer. As a result of this Siamese-Vietnamese War (1841-1845), Khmer became a protectorate of France under King Norodom. In 1953, Cambodia (as Khmer is known in modern times) gained independence.[757] The Cam-

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[749] On the Sanam Luang Dhamma Studies, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanam_Luang_Dhamma_Studies.

[750] On the works of Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, see SD 60.1b (4.5), SD 60.1c (9.1). See also D K Swearer, "Centre and periphery: Buddhism and politics in modern Thailand," in (ed) I Harris, *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia,* London & NY: Continuum,1999:194-228.

[751] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A8se-majest%C3%A9_in_Thailand.

[752] **Khmer** is the race, language and the country's old name; **Cambodia** is the modern westernized name used as early 1524. The Khmers call their own country **Kampuchea**. I use Khmer to refer to the religion and history, and Cambodia to the modern country.

[753] D G E **Hall**, *A History of South-East Asia,* 1955, 4th ed, Macmillan, 1981:105-143. C **Keyes**, *The Golden Peninsula,* 1977:65-78.

[754] Keyes 1977:78-82.

[755] See N Aeusrivongse, "The Devarāja cult and Khmer kingship at Angkor," in (edd) Hall & Whitmore, *Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History,* Univ of Michigan, 1976:52-67 (epub).

[756] Hall 1981:143-150.

[757] A R Hansen, How to Behave: Buddhism and modernity in colonial Cambodia, 1860-1930, Univ of Hawaii Press, 2007.

bodian communist movement Khmer Rouge emerged from the country's struggle against French colonization in the 1940s. The Khmer Rouge controlled Cambodia for just under 45 months (April 1975-January 1979) and left 1.6-3 million Cambodian civilians dead through starvation, torture, execution, medical experiments, untreated diseases, forced marches, forced labor, and other forms of violence.

6.1.4.3 In 1979, Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia, toppled the Khmer Rouge government, and set up a puppet government. The People's Republic of Kampuchea was established. After a period of civil wars in the 1980s, multi-party democracy was restored in 1993. In a 1997 coup and purge, Hun Sen (1952–   ; premier since 1985) ousted co-premier Norodom Ranariddhi, and took power until 2023, when he was succeeded by his son, Hun Manet (1977–   ), as premier.

Today, most Khmers are traditional Buddhists, of which 90% is Theravāda. It (Theravāda) is enshrined in the Cambodian constitution as the official religion of the country.[758] However, since the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, there was a growing demand for spirit rituals, which led to the revival of Brahmanism (*brahmaṇya sāsanā*), which easily adapts to the new capitalist market and politically troubled times.[759] Buddhism thus is struggling in modern Cambodia and has no significant political role, compared to Buddhism in most of the other SE Asian Buddhist states.[760]

6.1.5 Laos: Buddhist kingdom, Marxist state

6.1.5.1 Theravāda reached Laos in the 7th-8th centuries CE through the ancient Mon kingdom of Dvāra,vati, and Tantric Buddhism came to Laos from Nan-chao (a Tai kingdom centered in modern Yunnan. China). Mahāyāna arrived in the 11th-12th centuries, replacing Theravāda as the dominant ideology of the ruling class.[761] By the 15th century, Lao kings were referred to as *cakkavatti* (world monarch), suggesting their familiarity with early Buddhist ideas of kingship. Relations with Chiangmai and Burma/Myanmar[762] brought Theravāda (again) to Laos.

Laotian Buddhism was deeply rooted in animism, and continues to be important in Lao even today.[763] Theravāda, however, is a primary unifying force in Lao culture, seamlessly woven with monastic Vinaya and the country's laws in Buddhist statecraft in pre-modern and colonial Laos.[764]

6.1.5.2 In 1893, the French, after colonizing Vietnam, trying to make inroads into China, arrived in Lan Zang (premodern Laos). From early on, the French sponsored Buddhism in Laos, renovated monasteries and reformed Buddhist educational institutions—so that they could serve their colonial needs. Catholic missionaries from Italy also worked there.[765] The Lao Sangha was placed under

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[758] https://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Cambodia/sub5_2e/entry-2880.html. https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cambodia/.

[759] O Christensen, "We will never get rich if we follow Buddhism," GISCA Occasional Paper 24m 2019:4-19.

[760] I Harris, "Buddhism in extremis," in (ed) Harris 1999:54-78.

[761] A M Savada, *Laos: a country study,* Washington, DC: GPO for Library of Congress, 1994. [Download]

[762] **Burma** is the country's old name until 1989, after which it was officially known as **Myanmar**. When referring to its Buddhism, I usually use Burma, Burmese, etc; in worldly and modern matters, I usually use Myanmar both as a n and an adj.

[763] J Holt, Spirits of the Place: Buddhist and Lao religious culture, Univ of Hawaii Press, 2009.

[764] N R **Reat**, *Buddhism: a history,* Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1994 [Extract]. G **Kourilsky** & P Ladwig, "Governing the monastic order in Laos. Pre-modern Buddhist legal traditions and their transformation under French colonialism," *Buddhism, Law & Society* 3 2018:191-237.

[765] G **Kourilsky**, Recherches sur l'institute bouddhique au Laos (1930-1953). Les circonstances de sa création, son action, son échec (Masters), (ed) M O de Bernon, Paris: École Pratique des hautes études, 2006. J T **McDaniel**, *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words: histories of Buddhist monastic education in Laos and Thailand*, Univ Of Washington, 2008:28-52.

French authority in 1927.[766] The French saw Laos merely as a peripheral colony, and did little to improve the country except to promote French language and influence.

The Lao Sangha and royalty introduced various reforms. In 1914 the *Ecole de Pali* was founded by royal decree in Phnom Penh and renamed *Ecole Supérieure de Pali* in 1922. During the 1920s, the administration of Buddhism in Laos was reorganized by the Laotian prime minister, Prince Phetsarath (1890-1959),[767] and the French colonial regime.[768]

In order to subvert the dominance of Siamese monastic education in the region, and to use Lao and Khmer Buddhism for enhancing colonial influence, the French set up institutes for the training of Buddhist monks under the auspices of **the École française d'Extrême-Orient** (EFEO).[769] Lao branches were finally opened in 1931—reflecting the peripheral position of Laos in the colonial project. The French introduced new curricula based on the study of selected texts, awarded monks with certificates, and published Buddhist books.[770]

On the French colonial restructuring of Buddhist education in Khmer and Laos, Gregory Kourilsky and Søren Ivarsson[771] argue that their agendas were similar: in order to build a national Buddhism within the context of Indochina, Siamese influence had to be reduced, even neutralized. Against Bangkok, the Khmer and the Lao branches of EFEO were to become centres for the higher education for monks. The real motive behind colonial patronage of Buddhism was actually to prevent Buddhism's potential for any anti-colonial resistance. In the early years of French colonialism Buddhist millennial movements caused major disruptions for the French regime,[772] and sections of the Khmer Sangha also opposed French domination.[773]

The effects of these colonial reforms on Lao monastic education were however neutralized by the increasing political struggles in the 1950s, and finally by the socialist revolution of 1975. Also during the early years of Lao independence until 1975, there were signs of **secularization** in Lao monastic education. As the state school system spread, monastic education became an increasingly specialized and alienated pursuit.[774]

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[766] McDaniel 2008:46.

[767] S Ivarsson & C E Goscha, "Prince Phetsarath (1890-1959): nationalism and royalty in the making of modern Laos," *J of Southeast Asian Studies* 38,1 Feb 2 2007:55-81.

[768] Savada 1994.

[769] EFEO, the French School of Asian (Far Eastern) Studies was founded 1898 in Saigon as the Mission archéologique d'Indo-Chine. The EFEO mission is interdisciplinary research on the civilizations of Asia from India to Japan. Currently, its network of 18 research centres in 12 Asian countries allows its 42 research scholars (anthropologists, archaeologists, linguists, historians etc) to carry out fieldwork while maintaining a network of local researchers and Asianists from around the world. P **Ladwig**, "Contemporary Lao Buddhism: ruptured histories," in (ed) M Jerryson, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Contemporary Buddhism*, NY: OUP, 2017:274-296.

[770] Kourilsky 2006:30 f.

[771] **Kourilsky** 2006:93 f. **Ivarsson**, *Creating Laos: the making of a Lao space between Indochina and Siam*, *1860-1945*, Copenhagen: Nordic Inst of Asian Studies Press, 2008:93-144 (ch 3).

[772] P **Ladwig**, "Millennialism, charisma and utopia: revolutionary potentialities in pre-modern Lao and Thai Theravāda Buddhism," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 15,2 2014:308-329. I G **Baird**, "Millenarian movements in southern Laos and North Eastern Siam (Thailand) at the turn of the 20th century: reconsidering the involvement of the Champassak Royal House," *South East Asia Research* 21,2 2013:257-279. F **Moppert**, *Mouvement de résistance au pouvoir colonial français de la minorité proto indochinoise du plateau des Bolovens au Sud-Laos 1901-1931*, PhD, Univ de Paris VII, 1978.

[773] M Stuart-Fox, "The French in Laos, 1887-1945," *Modern Asian Studies* 29,1 1995:111-139. [JSTOR]

[774] C **Taillard**, "Essai sur la bi-polarisation autour du vat et de l'école des villages Lao de la plaine de Vientiane: Le bouddhisme populaire confronte au développement économique." *Asie du Sud-est et Monde Insulindien* 5,3 1974:91-104; P **Ladwig**, "The genesis and demarcation of the religious field: monasteries, state schools, and the secular sphere in Lao Buddhism (1893-1975)," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 26,2 2011:196-223.

6.1.5.3 Unlike communist regimes elsewhere, **Lao communists**—that is, the Pathet Lao[775]—treated religion in Laos differently. Instead of repressing or banning religion, the Communists in Laos used the Sangha as a vehicle to achieve its political aims during the Cold War. From the early 1950s, Buddhism and the Sangha were discreetly put under clandestine surveillance both by Royal Lao Government forces and by more left-leaning politicians.

Advocates of a middle way between socialism and capitalism such as Boun Souvannavong[776] at first gained support by prominent monks in Vientiane,[777] but were increasingly marginalized as political polarizations grew.[778] Even though the Pathet Lao saw Buddhism as an antithesis of Marxism, they were able to reconcile aspects of Buddhism with Marxism,[779] despite these conflicting principles between the two:

• Buddhism is a spiritual system; Marxism rejects all forms of religion, and has a materialistic vision;
• Buddhism sees materialism as the cause of suffering whereas a Marxist utopia is a material world;
• Buddhism strives for harmony whereas the Marxists see a constant class struggle; and
• Buddhism eschews violence while Marxism approves violence where necessary.[780]

The Pathet Lao re-interpreted Buddhism by affirming that there was no conflict between the Buddha's teaching and the communist revolutionary aims.[781] Focusing on the Buddha's life story, they pointed to the Buddha's rejection of royal status and becoming a mendicant: this is revolutionary as he rejects wealth and ruling class elitism. The Buddha rejects classing people based on caste or wealth but accept them so long as they keep to the Dharma.

The Pathet Lao claimed that Buddha envisions a classless society because of his rejection of class distinction. The Pathet Lao also pointed out that Buddhism has a strong dimension of social justice as the Buddha advocates the material welfare of people and helping the poor.[782] Poverty is seen as a root of evil and a cause of crime.[783]

A minimal level of material well-being is necessary before the Dharma can be practised. This is not too different from the Pathet Lao's aim of redistributing wealth. The Pathet Lao also pointed out that both Buddhism and Marxism are interested in the ultimate happiness of people; they both aim to help people escape from suffering; the only difference is in their method of achieving happiness.[784] Both Buddhism and Marxism reject the capitalist system.[785]

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[775] **Pathet Lao**, "the Lao nation," officially the Lao People's Liberation Army, was a communist political party movement in Laos, formed in 1950, led by Prince Souphanouvong, Kaysone Phromvihane and Nouhak Phoumsavanh. After the Laotian Civil War (1959-75), the movement took control of the whole country in 1975. From 1972 till today, it is called the Lao People's Revolutionary Party.

[776] Souvannavong was leader of the Lao Rouam Samphan (National Lao Union) party that won 3 seats in the National Assembly in 1951.

[777] Bong Souvannavong, Doctrine Lao ou Socialisme dhammique (Sangkhom Dhammadhipatai) pour l'instauration de la paix, Geneva: Atar, 1960.

[778] P Ladwig, "'Special operation pagoda.' Buddhism, covert operations and the politics of religious subversion in Cold War Laos," Singapore University Press, 2017.

[779] P-B **Lafont**, "Buddhism in Contemporary Laos," in (ed) M Stuart-Fox, *Contemporary Laos: Studies in the Politics and Society of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*, St Lucia: Univ of Queensland Press, 1982:150. M **Brown** & J J Zasloff, *Apprentice Revolutionaries: The Communist Movement in Laos, 1930-1985*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986:228-299.

[780] **Lafont** 1982:250. **Brown**, MacAlister; Zasloff, Joseph Jermiah (1986). *Apprentice Revolutionaries: The Communist Movement in Laos, 1930-1985*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986:230.

[781] L Morev, "Religion, state and society in contemporary Laos 1," *Religion, State and Society* 26,1 Mar 1988: 33 f.

[782] Brown & Zasloff 1986:228.

[783] See eg **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26,10.2) + SD 36.10 (1.2).

[784] **Lafont** 1982:150. **Brown & Zasloff** 1989:228. **Morev** 1998:34,

[785] V Pholsena, *Post-war Laos: the politics of culture, history and identity*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006:71.

According to the Pathet Lao, Buddhism and Marxism each advocate a different solution to socio-economic problems because they are each a product of a different era of evolving society. Buddhism is a historical product of <u>a pre-industrial age</u> while Marxism is the scientific ideology of <u>the industrial age</u>. Buddhism is acceptable and useful as a tool of the Marxist revolution if it is purged of superstitions and wrong practices.

The Pathet Lao, however, were not promoting Buddhism for itself, but saw it as a convenient and effective means of networking with the masses. To enhance their political agenda, even monks were secretly trained to preach communist ideas and promote the Pathet Lao. Anyway, the fact that the communist Pathet Lao were willing to work amicably with the Buddhists was itself quite remarkable.[786]

6.1.5.4 Lao Communism is best understood in its own context, different from Marx's original ideas. It was based on the Vietnamese version of Marxism-Leninism. For instance, the Lao communists borrowed concepts such as "collective mastery" and the "three revolutions"—in production, technology and consciousness—from the Vietnamese (who had attacked Laos in the early 1950s).[787] These theories, apparently, had greater significance for Lao communist ideology than the traditional Marxist principles of class struggle, historical materialism or Marxist dialectic.[788]

The Lao Sangha were historical allies of the Pathet Lao, and, as a rule, were on good terms with the state. The Pathet Lao found all this expedient for their actions and goals.[789] The king's right to rule was seen as "karmic will," the working of their merits (*boun;* P *puñña*). The king and the Sangha worked hand in glove: while the former held secular power, the latter gained charisma and benefits by appearing detached from mundane affair.[790] The king's observance of the Buddhist idea of kingship earned him support from the Sangha and the people.[791]

6.1.5.5 The success of the Pathet Lao in using the Sangha for their political goals spurred the Vientiane government and their American supporters to try to bring the Sangha under their control. The rightist government of Phoui Sananikone (1902-83), which took power after the failure of the First Coalition government, passed Royal Ordinance 160 (25 May 1959) to control the internal affairs of the Sangha, making it another branch of the executive.[792]

This tension between the Sangha and the government led to unrest in the Sangha itself.[793] The Americans trained some of the monks to speak out against the Communists. Lao-speaking Thammayut (royalist)[794] monks from Thailand were also sent to Laos to beef up the ideological battle against the Communists.[795]

This at once worsened the tension between the government and the Sangha.[796] The Pathet Lao quickly exploited the situation.[797] by secretly deploying their underground agents in the "Movement of Young Monks against Thai Thammayut monks" and the "Movement of Novices to Demand

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[786] **Lafont** 1982:150. **M Stuart-Fox**, "Laos: From Buddhist kingdom to Marxist state," in (ed) I Harris, *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia,* London & NY: Continuum, 1999:161-163.

[787] V Thompson & R Adloff, "Laos: background of invasion," *Far Eastern Survey* 22,6 May 1953:62-66.

[788] M Stuart-Fox 1999:161-163.

[789] Morev 1998:32.

[790] V Grabowsky, "Buddhism, power and political order in Laos," in (ed) I Harris, *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2007:133.

[791] M **Stuart-Fox,** *Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State,* Bangkok: White Lotus, 1996:68 f. **Grabowsky** 2007 id.

[792] **Stuart-Fox** 1996:89. G **Evans**, *The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance: Laos since 1975,* Univ of Hawaii Press, 1998:52 f.

[793] **Stuart-Fox** 1998:89. M **Brown** & J J Zasloff, *Apprentice Revolutionaries: the Communist movement in Laos, 1930-1985,* Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986:222 f.

[794] On the Thammayut (*dhammayuttika*) sect of Thailand, see SD 60.1b (4.5.3.2).

[795] **Stuart-Fox** 1996:89. **Brown** & Zasloff 1986:222 f.

[796] Brown & Zasloff 1986:222.

[797] Stuart-Fox 1996:89.

Rights."[798] At the same time, there were many Sangha members who were anti-government on account of the Communist propaganda that the Sangha was an "inverse class structure."[799]

Under the French administration, the Lao elite was educated in secular schools. The poor could only be educated in the ill-equipped monastery schools. Government jobs were given to the French-educated elite. Most of the monastery-schooled monks had little choice but to remain in robes disgruntled.[800] The rural monks were even worse off, less educated and less sophisticated. They had little Dharma knowledge and were easily persuaded by Marxist manipulations of Buddhism.[801]

In due course, even the Sangharaja or Supreme Patriarch of the Lao Sangha urged the monks to work with the revolutionaries. A booklet entitled *Action Plan for the Lao Sangha* stressed the importance of the Sangha as mediators in Lao society. This indicated how the Pathet Lao intended to use the charisma of the Sangha to settle disputes they might face in their transition to power. Monks were to serve as a channel of communication between the Party and the people.[802]

6.1.5.6 During the Communist rule of Lao (1975-79), the monastic hierarchy and the office of Sangharaja were abolished. The fortnightly Pātimokkha conclave was used for criticizing monks who strayed from party lines. The monks had to attend protracted re-education classes, where they were indoctrinated with the Pathet Lao interpretation of Buddhism[803] and with Marxism-Leninism.[804]

The Pathet Lao, in their efforts to co-opt the Sangha, pointed out how the Sangha, as a community, living and working together without individual ownership of property, was similar to a Marxist collective. Both Marxism and Buddhism at an abstract level, they claimed, aimed to liberate humankind from suffering and to attain happiness. The Pathet Lao tried to purge Buddhism of superstitions such as belief in demons, or rebirth in one of the heavens or the hells.

Merit-making was discouraged as false and a diversion of scarce resources; and karma was denounced as leading to fatalism and pacifism.[805] While proclaiming that Buddhism and Marxism were compatible, the Pathet Lao also sought actively to replace the Dharma with Marxism-Leninism.[806] Thus, to the Pathet Lao, religion still conflicted with the formation of an orthodox Marxist-Leninist state.[807]

6.1.6 Modern Laos

6.1.6.1 Ironically, the Pathet Lao's denunciation of the popular aspects of Lao Buddhist practices such as spirit worship and use of special amulets actually led to an increased orthodoxy in Lao Buddhism as it reverted closer to Buddha's original teachings.[808] In fact, Thai followers of the Thai monk philosopher, Buddhadāsa[809] (1906-93), thought that Lao Buddhism had thus freed itself from false beliefs and local accretions. They pointed out that since 1975 popular ethnic practices of spirit-worship and the blessing of amulets, which were alien to the Buddha's teachings, had been prohibited.[810]

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[798] Stuart-Fox 1996:90.

[799] Brown & Zasloff 1986:222 f.

[800] **Brown** & Zasloff id. **Stuart-Fox** id.

[801] **Brown** & Zasloff 1986:223. **Stuart-Fox** 1996:91. L **Morev,** "Religion in Laos today," *Religion, State and Society* 30,4 Dec 2002:396.

[802] **Brown** & Zasloff 1986:229. **Morev** 1998:33.

[803] Stuart-Fox 1996:95.

[804] Morev 1998:33.

[805] J Holt, The Spirit of the Place: Buddhism and Lao religious culture, Univ of Hawaii Press, 2009:146.

[806] **Brown** & Zasloff 1986:224. **Stuart-Fox** 1996:97.

[807] **Brown** & Zasloff 1986:229. **Lafont** 1982:159.

[808] **Brown** & Zasloff id.

[809] On Buddhadasa, see SD 60.1b (5.6).

[810] Lafont 1982:159.

The population of Laotian Sangha decreased dramatically, and faced the greatest difficulties be-tween 1976-1979, when the Pathet Lao was at the height of their power. Numerous monks left the Sangha, or fled to Thailand.[811] Although no monks were executed, by 1970 at least 1000 monks were confined in re-education camps; others were sent to labour camps. The monks who escaped to Thai-land often provided information to those working with anti-communist insurgents.

Young novices were persuaded by the Pathet Lao government to leave the Sangha with offers of secular training and education, and special vocational schools were set up for them.[812] The loss of prestige of the Lao Sangha also encouraged this exodus.[813] All these developments showed that the regime's attempt to co-opt the Sangha was not completely successful.[814]

6.1.6.2 Compared to the Communist situation in Khmer, the Lao Communists were more prag-matic towards their countrymen. After 1979, especially with economic liberalization in the late 1980s, the official attitude towards Buddhism improved.[815] The Sangha resumed many of their tradi-tional roles beyond just teaching Buddhism. Monks were more involved in educating the less privi-leged and also adults, especially teaching the Lao language. They played a prominent role especially in primary school education and where teachers were not available.[816]

The monks continued their role as traditional healers in a country where doctors were scarce. However, they were prohibited from providing cures of a magical or spiritualist nature. They were allowed to dispense traditional herbal cures and Western medicines.[817]

The Sangha thus successfully re-invented themselves through their utilitarian roles in Lao soci-ety.[818] They were also seen as the preserver of national culture, especially in the maintenance of monasteries (*vat*).[819] Buddhism thus survived in Laos because it upheld the cultural identity of Laos, and kept Buddhism inextricably interwoven with Lao culture.[820]

6.1.6.3 By the early 1990s, there was more public display of Buddhist activities. The *vat* remain-ed an important focus of social life. Every morning lines of monks could be seen collecting almsfood from the faithful, and Buddhist ceremonies were often better attended. At the annual Pha That Lu-ang Festival (in honour of the Buddha's sacred relics) most members of the Politburo could be seen making offerings to monks.[821] Now party officials also engaged more visibly at public occasions such as the worship of the "royal relics" (*that luang*), thereby reaffirming the cooperation between Bud-dhism and the state—a traditional feature of Buddhism.[822]

During this time, too, we see what Vatthana Pholsena (professor of SE Asian Studies, National University of Singapore) describes as "a secularized image of Buddhism in order to reconcile the offi-cial ideology and the religion."[823] The process of Buddhification was seen not only in the political

[811] **Stuart-Fox** 1996:99. I G **Baird, "**Lao Buddhist monks' involvement in political and military resistance to the Lao People's Democratic Republic government since 1975," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71,3 Aug 2012: 662.

[812] Stuart-Fox 1996:105.

[813] Stuart-Fox 1996:98.

[814] Baird 2012.

[815] Stuart-Foc 1996:107.

[816] Morev 1998:34.

[817] **Lafont** 1982:163. **Morev** 1998:35.

[818] **Lafont** 1982:153. P **Ladwig**, "Between cultural preservation and this-worldly commitment: modernization, social activism and the Lao Buddhist *sangha,*" in (edd) Y Goudineau & M Lorillard, *Nouvelles recherches sur le Laos*, Paris: EFEO, 2008.

[819] Morev 1998:35.

[820] Stuart-Fox 1996:108.

[821] **Struart-Fox** 1996:107. I-B **Trenkell**, "Royal relics: ritual & social memory in Louang Prabang," in (ed) G Evans, *Laos: Culture and Society,* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000:198.

[822] P Ladwig, "Worshipping relics and animating statues. transformations of Buddhist statecraft in contempo-rary Laos," in *Modern Asian Studies* 49,6 2015:1875-1902. [PDF]

[823] Pholsena 2006:70.

sphere, but also in daily culture, especially in areas with majority ethnic Lao.[824] The ethnic and religious conversion of animist ethnic minorities had gone on for a long time,[825] but was now accelerated by the state. In the southern region where ethnic Lao and Mon-Khmer minorities live in close proximity, there was a greater "Laoification" of the latter. As in Myanmar, where "to be Burmese is to be Buddhist,"[826] we see here "to be Buddhist is to be Lao." Buddhism offered, as it did in the past, social upward mobility to poorer segments of society and ethnic minorities.[827]

However, even as the Sangha resumed more of its traditional religious role (but still firmly integrated into the Party State), the population of monks had significantly dropped. Monastic discipline was bad, with very few monks able to explain even basic Buddhist teachings.[828] As Laos slowly modernized, the young were less seen in the monasteries but frequented entertainment spots. Buddhist belief was declining, not merely because of the Communist presence but also because of rapid modernization.

6.1.6.4 Beginning with the 2000s, there were more Buddhist efforts to revive Buddhism and rebuild the Sangha. At that time there were 2 monastics' institutes of higher learning in Laos: the Sangha College (*vithyalai songh,* founded by Prince Petsarath and Sangharaja Somdet Phra Loukeo Outhen Sakda in 1929)[829] and the Champasak Sangha College (founded by Ajahn Phra Maha Suvan Chantharath in 2005).[830] These offered degree courses in Buddhist Studies, in Lao and in English.[831] Monks had gone on television and on radio to give Buddhist talks. They were allowed to give talks in schools and had access to patients in hospitals.[832] Lao monks are slowly getting more socially engaged in the modern sense. They are now actively involved in HIV- and drug-prevention programmes, and in other areas involving social work, environmental protection and education.[833]

In 2003 and 2010 the Ministry of Information and Culture installed statues of King Fa Ngum (1316-93), founder of Lan Zang and introducer of Buddhism, and of King Anouvong (Xaiya Setthathirath V, 1767-1829), the last king of the Vientiane kingdom. The rituals surrounding the worship of relics and statues symbolically displayed the patronage (and power) of the Lao government, trying to connect itself to the glorious Buddhist past to consolidate its legitimacy in the present.[834]

However, many state rituals had been judiciously modified since 1975 not to go against Pathet Lao sentiments. The Sangha remains under Party control and monks have to study official government policy.[835] Theravāda Buddhism is today the predominant religion of **Laos** (66%, 2018)[836] but is no more its state religion as it was before the country became a republic. The UNESCO world heritage status of Luang Prabang has also led to more global engagements of its Buddhist institutions.

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[824] Evans 1998:67.

[825] Edmund Leach, Political Systems of Highland Burma—a study of Kachin social structure, London: LSE Monographs, 1954.

[826] SD 60.1b (2.3.2.2).

[827] P Ladwig, "Religious place making: civilized modernity and the spread of Buddhism among the Cheng, a Mon-Khmer minority in southern Laos," in (edd) M Dickhardt & A Lauser, *Religion, Place and Modernity*: *spatial articulations in Southeast Aisa and Esat Asia,* Leiden: Brill, 2016:95-124.

[828] Morev 2002:397.

[829] J T McDaniel, *Gathering Leaves & Lifting Words,* Univ of Washington Press, 2008:50, 63-68.

[830] On the 2 monastic institutions of higher learning see [ATBU].

[831] Morev 2002:398.

[832] Morev id.

[833] Ladwig 2008.

[834] Ladwig 2015 id.

[835] Pholsena 2006:89.

[836] "Religious composition by Country": [Pew Research].

6.1.7 Neighbouring countries

6.1.7.1 Laos, like Myanmar and Thailand, is bordered by China and surrounded by a number of other countries. As a small landlocked country, Laos was very much influenced by Siamese and Khmer cultures. In 1779, Siamese General Chao Phraya Chakri invaded Vientiane and took the Emerald Buddha to Siam. In the 18th century, the Burmese sacked and destroyed Ayutthaya (in northern Siam). Despite being Buddhist countries, their kings attacked one another, and brought destruction to the other country.

In the 19th century, the French had colonial control of Khmer, and during the first half of the 20th century, the French colonized Laos. In the mid-19th century, the British in neighbouring India overran Burma.[837] In either case, like the British in Burma, the French in Laos and in Khmer did not persecute Buddhism, but the French allowed Catholic missionaries into the country, and the British in Burma allowed Protestant missionaries into the country. Similarly the British brought mission schools to Malaysia and Singapore, which continue to this day to evangelize and convert our children.

In 1958-59, the North Vietnamese supported communist Pathet Lao to take over the kingdom of Laos and, despite not persecuting Buddhists or Buddhism, affected them negatively. On the other hand, from 1975-79, the Khmer Rouge massacred nearly 3 million of their own people, and exterminated Buddhism from Khmer. Buddhism is recovering in Khmer but has to struggle with modern challenges.

6.1.7.2 We thus see Buddhism going through different challenges in each of these SE Asian countries. Despite these often seemingly insurmountable challenges, Buddhism somehow survived, even prospered, unlike its fate in **East Asia**, where Mahāyāna Buddhism, the great religion of imperial China, Korea and Japan, fell with these empires. One likely explanation for this is that imperial Buddhism was mostly identified with the elites of the empire, even with the ruling house; thus Buddhism's fate followed that of the empire.[838]

In the countries of mainland SE Asia, although Buddhism was upheld, even patronized, by the rulers, it was also widely practised, often mixed with local beliefs and ways, and was an integral part of the local culture. We then begin to see Buddhism growing within these countries and becoming naturalized. Even today, we see their people actively teaching and practising Buddhism and meditation. While Thailand has been promoting Kammatthana meditations,[839] Myanmar has been promoting Vipassana[840] through its many capable teachers.[841]

The greatest of the modern Vipassanā teachers was Mahasi Sayadaw. We will next examine how Mahasi's followers went a step further: they introduced ways of measuring the effects of Vipassanā to determine how their practitioners attained the Path as they envisioned it.

6.2 MYANMAR: VIPASSANA, SAINTHOOD, SOCIETY

6.2.1 How Sotāpannas perceive

6.2.1.1 We will here examine two related reports [6.2 & 6.3] of qualitative studies that sought to analyse changes in perception through calmness (tranquility) and insight meditations by the use of semi-structured interviews with expert meditators from the Burmese tradition. The long journey that led to this in-depth study of meditation is well worth re-telling. The first report we will examine is

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[837] SD 60.1b [2.3.2.2].

[838] On the fate of Buddhism in the hands of the Siamese kings, see SD 60.1b (4.5).

[839] On Siamese Kammatthana meditation, see SD 60.1b (2).

[840] On Burmese Vipassana meditation, see SD 60.1b (3 f).

[841] Sri Lanka is also known as a Theravadā country; however, it is best known, not for meditation, but for clerical modernism or Buddhist Protestantism (as one scholar put it).

that by Full et all (2012), which seems to be based on or influenced by Pa Auk Sayadaw's method.[842] In section [6.3], we will examine a report on some Dutch expert meditators of Mahasi Vipassana.

As psychological and medical interests in meditation grew since the end of the 20th century, researchers saw its benefits and implications, especially those of mindfulness-based practices. Since the 1980s numerous scientific researchers have focused on clinical and non-clinical studies.

The growth of standardized clinical, secular **Mindfulness-based Interventions** (MBIs), such as Mindful-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT),[843] not only made mindfulness more accessible for the general public and profitable for psychologists, but also brought promising results—all this, of course, stimulated further research.[844] While researchers and writers mostly focused on clinical problems such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, chronic pain, and substance abuse, research on **changes in perception** is still rare.

One reason for the lack of research on perception changes is simply because of difficulties of finding subjects for study. These changes are very likely the result of highly advanced meditative practice,[845] and "thus are unlikely to occur in therapeutic settings or stress-preventing group sessions, and therefore cannot be researched in such applied settings where acquisition of more basic meditation skills are the goal of the interventions" (Full et al 2013:55).

Perception is an integral part of meditation; thus, to fully investigate the complexity of meditation effects, perception is a vital parameter. According to Ledi Sayadaw,[846] for example, ordinary perception is often distorted and leads to wrong views and suffering; thus, changes of perception would be a meaningful tool to correct these distortions and to reduce sickness and suffering, bodily and mental.

6.2.1.2 There is much to learn from past scientific researches and to build on them. Existing studies in the field of perception changes through mindfulness practice show its connection with greater visual sensitivity,[847] and greater perceptual discrimination ability,[848] and how it is necessary for better and sustained awareness.[849]

On a more general level, Shapiro and colleagues (2006) suggest that a core mechanism of mindfulness is **reperceiving** or a shift in perspective. They see reperceiving as a meta-mechanism that overarches additional mechanisms leading to an increase in self-regulation; value clarification; cognitive, emotional, and behavioural flexibility; and exposure especially to the ability to detach and disidentify oneself from a thought, and to increase objectivity.[850]

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[842] Gisela E **Full**, Harald Walach & Mathis Trautwein, "Meditation-induced changes in perception: an interview study with expert meditators (*Sotapannas*) in Burma," *Mindfulness* 4,1 2013:55-63. Published 29 Nov 2012. [Download] 13 June 2023.

[843] On these and other MBIs, see SD 60.1e (1.1.6 f).

[844] L O Fjorback, M Arendt, E Ørnbøl, P Fink, & H Walach, "Mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy—a systematic review of randomized controlled trials," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 124,2 2011:102-119. doi:10.1111/j.1600-0447.2011.01704.x.

[845] Ledi Sayadaw, The Manual of Light. The manual of the path to higher knowledge, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Soc, 2007.

[846] Ledi Sayadaw, *The manual of Dhamma*, Igatpuri: VRI, 1999.

[847] D Brown, M Forte, & M Dysart, "Visual sensitivity and mindfulness meditation," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 58 1984:775-784.

[848] K A MacLean, E Ferrer, S R Achele, D A Bridgewekk, A P Zanescor, T B Jacobs, & C D Saron, "Intensive meditation training improves perceptual discrimination and sustained attention," *Psychological Science* 21,6 2010:-829-839. doi:10.1177/0956797610371339.

[849] A P Jha, J Krompinger, & M Baime, "Mindfulness training modifies subsystems of attention," *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience* 7 2007:109-119.

[850] S L Shapiro, L E Carlson, J A Astin, & B Freedman, "Mechanisms of mindfulness," *J of Clinical Psychology* 62,3 2006:373-386.

According to Shapiro and colleagues, <u>reperceiving</u> can be related to the psychological concepts of **decentering**[851] and **deautomatization**.[852] Deikman sees <u>deautomatization</u> as "an undoing of the automatic processes that control perception and cognition" (1982:139) and accelerates a phenomenological attitude. The potential alterations in perception, however, do not exclusively refer to external objects, but involve <u>a disidentification</u> from self-perception, standing back from the "story" about who and what we are.[853]

There is evidence for the concept of <u>reperceiving</u> as a mechanism of mindfulness. For example, decentering as assessed with self-report scales[854] is associated to mindfulness meditation.[855] Thus, there is some evidence that mindfulness meditation induces changes in the quality of perception and one's perspective on it. However, these findings are only related to limited amounts of meditative practice and reflect only rudimentarily the radical changes in perception which are claimed in the meditation literature.[856]

6.2.2 Sotapanna and *sotāpanna*

6.2.2.1 With the background of all these researches and findings about meditation and perception, Full and colleagues (2013) designed a qualitative study of Myanmar-trained expert meditators, to specifically address changes in perception. Since research in this field is rare and potential aspects of perception changes are yet to be explored, the survey was based on semi-structured interviews where participants could freely narrate their experiences. They selected only expert meditation practitioners as, according to the Buddhist masters,[857] significant perception changes occur exclusively after a fundamental experience in meditation has been accomplished.

This fundamental experience is called the "**turning point**,"[858] changing the perspective and perception of the practitioner radically and irreversibly. According to the Buddhist doctrine, false views, arising from mental conditioning, are eliminated and give way to an unconditioned perception (Ledi 1999). In terms of the Theravāda tradition, when the practitioner reaches <u>the turning point</u>—technically, the breaking of <u>the 3 fetters</u>[859]—they attain the first stage on the path of awakening (***sotā-patti***) and become stream-winners (**sotāpanna**), denoting that they have entered the stream that progressively frees them from delusion.

Most informed Buddhists would be familiar with this language of awakening, at least in theory, and, as a rule, *only* in theory. The researchers, in their 2013 report, stated that they were interested to find out whether and how such alteration in perception was experienced and described after a Buddhist has reached this stage, that is became **a streamwinner**.

[851] J D Safran & Z V Segal, *Interpersonal Process in Cognitive Therapy*, NY: Basic Books. 1990.

[852] A J Deikman, *The observing self*, Boston: Beacon, 1982.

[853] Shapiro et al 2006:379.

[854] D M **Fresco**, N K Rytwinski, & L W Craighead, "Explanatory flexibility and negative life events interact to predict depression*," J of Social and Clinical Psychology* 26,5 2007:595-608. M A **Lau**, S R Bishop, Z V Segal, "The Toronto mindfulness scale: development and validation," *J of Clinical Psychology* 62,12 2006:1445.

[855] G **Feldman**, J Greeson, & J Senville, "Differential effects of mindful breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and lovingkindness meditation on decentering and negative reactions to repetitive thoughts," *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 48,10 2010a:1002-1011 [doi]. K M **Orzech**, S L Shapiro, K W Brown, & M McKay, "Intensive mindfulness training-related changes in cognitive and emotional experience," *J of Positive Psychology* 4,3 2009:212-222 [doi].

[856] Ledi 2007; D T Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism,* NY: Grove, 1964.

[857] **Ledi** cit 1999; **Thanissaro** Bhikkhu, *Into the Stream: A Study Guide on the First Stage of Awakening,* 2012 [AccessToInsight].

[858] Amaro Bhikkhu & Pasanno Bhikkhu, *The island. An anthology of the Buddha's teachings on Nibbāna*, Redwood Valley, CA: Abhayagiri Monastery, 2022 chs 16-19 [Archives].

[859] The 3 fetters (*saṁyojana*) are self-identity view, spiritual doubt, attachment to rituals and vows. See SD 3.3 (5); **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

6.2.2.2 At this stage of our discussion, it is vital that we establish some ground rules for terminology and discourse. This is a very exciting time when we are at the crossroads of early Buddhism and modern psychology: we have here, for example, psychologists who are researching **how perception changes in a meditating Sotapanna**, and this is only the start of their professional curiosity. In other words, there is much for us—as scientists and as Buddhists—to learn from such researches and discoveries.

Even at this stage, especially at this stage, we must understand and accept that although we are looking at the same thing (theoretically at least), we are actually speaking **different languages**: there is Psychologese (the technical language of psychology) and there is Buddhese (the technical language of early Buddhism). When we mention the key word **Sotapanna**, for example, the psychologists read "expert meditator," but the informed Buddhist reads "streamwinner or stream-enterer."

The psychologists learned of the Sotapanna from the Myanmar Buddhists, who are well known in their tradition of certifying and categorizing their followers on the Path as they view it. Notice the word Sotapanna, Sotapatti, etc, are spelt with an initial capital: this signifies a modern or contemporary convention of canonical terms, such as *the psychologist's definition* of the Sotapanna as an "expert meditator," one who has attained the first stage of the path. Informed Buddhists—those who go by the suttas—would generally agree that one need *not* be an expert meditator to attain streamwinning; or we can safely say that not all informed Buddhists (monastic and lay) would rule that streamwinning can *only* be attained through deep meditation (especially dhyana).[860]

Technically, the researchers are here trying to look for **the psychological correlates** for streamwinning (the first stage of awakening). How can we *measure* streamwinning, or awakening? This is like trying to measure the sky or the universe: the best of Buddhist experiences, such as lovingkindness and the liberated mind, are famously said to be boundless (*appamāṇa*). An informed Buddhist would smile at such a quixotic quest to measure love and freedom as looking for "a hare's horn" (*sasa,visāṇa*)[861] or "a barren woman's son."[862] This is as far as Buddhist doctrine goes. Clearly, the psychologists are undeterred by such literary limitation and spiritual imagination.

This is the era of dialogue between modern science and early Buddhism, a time when we must give some charity in how we define our terms, especially when we have yet to know, much less to find, what we are looking for. Psychologists are seeking to understand how the mind works; informed Buddhists wonder how to attain streamwinning. We can learn from each other as we wonder; but we must define our terms of reference (both as definitions and as scope), and use them with proper discipline and wisdom.

6.2.2.3 Let us then examine the definitions of **streamwinner**, both as *sotāpanna* (the early Buddhist teaching) and Sotapanna (the ethnic usage by Myanmar teachers and its modern usage by the psychologists). G E Full and colleagues (2013) have used the modern term **Sotapanna** to refer to "an expert meditator" as a status that has been certified as such by Myanmar Buddhist authorities. Doctrinally, Full and colleagues have with admirable savvy quoted the various doctrines and ideas of ethnic Burmese Abhidhamma (2013:56) that define a "true practitioner" by the orthodox Burmese Buddhist standards. Since we are here discussing practical experiences—the changes in the Sotapannas' perception—during their meditations; we are not discussing doctrines; so we shall not detain ourselves further with this interesting point.

However, since we are discussing a modern ethnic and academic usage of the term Sotapanna, we must at least be familiar with the canonical, that is, sutta definitions of *sotāpanna.*[863] **The (Tika) Sikkhā Sutta 1** (A 3.85), gives this well known description of a *sotāpanna*:

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[860] On that dhyana is unnecessary for streamwinning, see SD 3.3 (0.3); SD 55.15 (1.3.1.2).
[861] DA 2:507; J 3:477; DhsA 341.
[862] SD 40a.10 (2.2.2).
[863] On streamwinning, see **Entering the stream** SD 3.3.

For, here, one is consistently *virtuous*, established in moral virtue and undertakes to train in the training-rules that are fundamental to the holy life[864] and that befit the holy life.[865]

   With the total destruction of the 3 lower fetters,[866]

   he is a **streamwinner**, no longer bound for the lower world,[867] sure of crossing over to self-awakening.   (A 3.85,2/1:231), SD 3.3(2)

Firstly, the streamwinner (*sotāpanna*) is a morally virtuous person, one who keeps to **the 5 precepts** (*sīla*) at least: he abstains from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants.[868] As a monastic, they would keep to the Vinaya. In either case, whether lay or monastic, they would keep to right livelihood.[869]

Secondly, they have overcome **the 3 fetters** (*saṁyojana*), those of self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*) and attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata parāmāsa*). Very simply, he is not a narcissist, nor uncertain of the true teachings, nor superstitious (relying on any external agency except self-effort as bringing present happiness and ultimate freedom).

Thirdly, on account of the streamwinner's spiritual state, they will never be reborn in any suffering state, human or non-human, but in an environment where he is able to continue and perfect his practice. Finally, they will surely attain awakening, that is, arhathood, within 7 lives at the most. This number seems to simply mean "auspicious," since a streamwinner may gain awakening the very next life, or take a fabulously long time to do so, after numerous lengthy happy lives in the heavens.

6.2.2.4 As a rule, all the Myanmar teachers agree with the sutta definition of "streamwinner" (as laid out above), and even mention them in their writings and talks, showing that they accept the sutta definition. This acceptance, however, seems to be merely on a theoretical level, since we do not actually see any mention of these definitive teachings in connection with the "attainment" connected with the special teachings of the individual Myanmar masters. Each of them will usually prescribe the mastery of those special methods as the benchmark of "attainment." We may thus assume that such attainers would also inherently have the streamwinning qualities as stated in the suttas, but those specially *prescribed* attainments actually define the actual attainment of streamwinning in that particular master's teaching.

We can call these teacher-based standards **the conventional correlates of streamwinning**. Essentially, these are the standards that the psychologists use for their own researches, such as those of the "Sotapanna" of G E Full and colleagues (2013). There is not value judgement here: in terms of what each party is doing, these are their "terms of reference" or paradigms. They are working with a

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[864] "That are fundamental to the holy life," *ādi,brahma,cariyika.* BDict: *ādi,brahma,cariyaka sīla* = "morality of genuine pure conduct." This comprises right speech, right action, right livelihood (the 3rd 4th and 5th factors of the noble eightfold path. See SD 10.16 (1.6.3).

[865] "That befit the holy life (pl)," *brahma.cariya,sāruppa,* ie, it conduces to the moral virtue connected with the 4 paths. (AA 2:349)

[866] On the (first) 3 fetters [6.1.3.1], see also **Emotional independence,** SD 40a.8. The fetters are broken by the practice of the perception of impermanence, see **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) + SD 16.7 (5) & **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62,23), SD 3.11.

[867] *Avinīpāta,* alt tr "not fated for birth in a suffering state"; opp *vinīpāta,* "the world of suffering," another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 woeful courses (*pañca,gati*) (D 33,2.1(4)/3:234; A 11.68) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal birth (*tirachāna,-yoni*), the preta realm (*pitti,visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura,kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are "happy courses" (*sugati*). For a discussion, see Nyanaponika & Bodhi (tr), *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 1999:14-19. See **Pañca,gati S** (A 9.68/4:459), SD 2.29.

[868] See **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,13), SD 5.10; **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7), SD 1.5 (2); *Sīlânussati*, SD 15.11 (2.2); SD 21.6 (1.2); SD 37.8 (2.2).

[869] See SD 10.16 (5).

theory or theories, and in so doing, we must see such terms and paradigms as simply tools for disco-vering deeper and truer nature of things. In due course, we will be able to learn more useful things about the nature of the mind and Buddhist practice.

6.2.3 Significance of perception

6.2.3.1 Another useful point to note is that both the psychologists and Theravāda Buddhists agree that **mindfulness** (*sati*) is an essential mental faculty for proper and effective meditation. It is characterized by the quality of *focused* or *open* awareness that "sees" or apprehends the mind-object in a *detached* manner, that is, neither adding to nor subtracting from it any of its qualities.[870] In this way, the practitioner is able to investigate the mind-object, leading to seeing it "just as it is" (*yathā,-bhūta*).[871] Mindfulness is therefore regarded as a precondition of insight into true reality.[872]

Even in our daily life, we are reminded to maintain mindfulness to avoid any negative conditions arising from the unwholesome roots—greed, hatred or delusion—and to cultivate their wholesome opposites of contentment, lovingkindness and wisdom. In the practice of calmness meditation, mind-fulness functions to collect together the scattered mind into an integrated state of concentration by bringing the attention back to the meditation object and keeping it there.[873]

In insight meditation, mindfulness is an essential mental condition pervading the meditator's mind, so that it is fixed or focused on the mind-object, watching it as it rises and falls away. In doing so long enough in a proper way, insight into true reality arises. This is the kind of mind that becomes stilled and joyful in the total absence of the 3 unwholesome roots.[874]

Hence, calmness and insight are complementary *aspects* of meditation—they are not separate kinds of "meditations" that assist one another "like the wings of a bird"—where both "calmness" (*jhana,* its old usage meaning "meditation") and "insight" (*paññā,* or wisdom) must work in harmony (Dh 372). There are those who are better with *calmness*; others are good at starting with *insight*. They use what they are better at to cultivate what they need for a harmonious practice and result.[875]

6.2.3.2 The dynamics underlying this mental process [6.2.3.1] is in how **perception** (*saññā*) arises, works and is itself transformed by mindfulness (*sati*) or concentration (*samādhi*). In this con-text, perception refers to the faculty of discernment based on recognizing distinct characteristics of sense-objects and their respective sense-contacts or images arising in the mind. Ideally, we mindfully resolve our perception of a mind-object simply as the process of "rising and falling" (impermanence).

Often, mainly due to the instinctive power of our unconscious tendencies (*anusaya*) or our daily habits, such perceptions take on more than they should: we project the past or the future onto the passing moments of the present. We "value-add" the present mind-object to fabricate a desirable "formation" cannibalized from pleasant past memories. Or, we may form a repulsive chimaera of the present object with unpleasant past memories. Or, we simply ignore an object that we neither like or dislike: ignorance arises as a result. All this is termed "**mental formations**" (*saṅkhārā*).

6.2.3.3 In **mindfulness training**, we are constantly reminded by meditation teachers that as Bud-dhist practitioners we should simply watch the present moment of all our sense-experiences and our thoughts. So long as we can *mindfully* be "present" to the action, we see:

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[870] On an early Buddhist description of mindfulness, see SD 60.1e (2).

[871] Anālayo, "Mindfulness," in (edd) L Oviedo & A Runehov, *The Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, Heidelberg: Springer, 2012.

[872] Nyantiloka (ed), Visuddhi Magga, Der Weg zur Reinheit. Die größte und älteste systematische Darstellung des Buddhismus, St Ottilien: Jhāna, 1997.

[873] Pandita Sayadaw, In this very life. Liberation teachings of the Buddha, Boston: Wisdom, 1992.

[874] Mahasi Sayadaw, *A Discourse on Ariyavasa Sutta*, Yangon: Buddha Sasana Nuggaha, 1994.

[875] See SD 41.1 (1.4).

- only the rising and ceasing of   <u>forms</u>,
- only the rising and ceasing of   <u>sounds</u>,
- only the rising and ceasing of   <u>smells</u>,
- only the rising and ceasing of   <u>tastes</u>,
- only the rising and ceasing of   <u>touches</u>,
- only the rising and ceasing of   <u>thoughts</u>.

This is, in fact, the way an arhat's mind operates: he is in full control of it [5.4.10.3]. Thus, "<u>He will think only the thought that he wants to think</u>; he does *not* think the thought that he does *not* want to think." He is known as a "master-minder," an arhat.[876]

As non-arhats, we are constantly bombarded with enticing bits of sense-experiences and thoughts toward which we tend to gravitate (like falling to earth without a parachute), and with repulsive bits of sense-experiences and thoughts that we reject (like hot potatoes in our hands). Even at this stage of the arising lust and of repulsion, we can still mindfully see them for what they really are, as *lust* and as *repulsion*. That way, they both lose their sting and slip away like drops of water on a lotus-leaf. Hence, as the mindful practitioners are constantly reminded: "Let it come, let it go."

Table 6.2.4 Characteristics of participants[877]

subject	age	sex	country	practice years	tradition	social status
1. AD	70	M	Sri Lanka	64	Theravāda	monk
4. S	84	M	Myanmar	61	Theravāda	monk
6. DHT	72	F	Myanmar	56	Theravāda	lay
10. TP	66	F	UK	48	Mahayana, Theravāda	nun
13. UJ	63	M	Myanmar	43	Theravāda	monk
16. USi	55	M	Myanmar	42	Theravāda	monk
17. PD	78	M	Myanmar	42	Theravāda	monk
18. UW	60	M	Myanmar	41	Theravāda	monk
9. PAS	76	M	Myanmar	40+	Theravāda	monk
12. UJA	60	M	Canada	40	Theravāda	monk
14. UKZ	57	M	Malaysia	40	Theravāda	lay
11. TS	47	M	Myanmar	34	Theravāda	monk
15. USo	56	M	Myanmar	30	Theravāda	monk
8. PA	55	M	Myanmar	26	Theravāda	monk
5. DD	62	M	Czech Republic	25-30	Zen, Mahāyāna, Theravāda	monk
3. BUR	38	M	Myanmar	10	Theravāda	monk
7. DP	45	M	Myanmar	10	Theravāda	monk
2. BUK	35	M	Malaysia	? in:	Mahayana;	
				3 in:	Theravāda	monk

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[876] **Vitakka Saṇṭhāna S** (M 29,8.2/1:122), SD 1.6.

[877] This is **Table 1** (Full et al 2013:58). The entries have been rearranged according to years of practice for a better visual on their meditation experience.

6.2.4 Interviewing the Sotāpannas of Myanmar

6.2.4.1 Beginning in 2009, German psychologists Gisela E Full, Harald Walach and Mathis Traut-wein[878] selected a group of 18 mindfulness-based Theravāda[879] meditation teachers[880] trained in the Myanmar tradition who were described to have the above qualities [6.2.3.3]. In 2013 they concluded their study of the 18 meditation teachers practising Samatha and Vipassana selected from monasteries and meditation centres in Myanmar, renowned for its Samatha-Vipassana practice. Of these participants, 15 were monks (11 from Myanmar; one each from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Czech Republic and Canada), a nun from the UK, and 2 laymen from Myanmar.

6.2.4.2 This qualitative study of these expert meditators (Sotapannas) aimed at analyzing **changes in perception** through their practice of calm and insight meditation. The survey was designed as a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews. **Semi-structured interviews** were considered an appropriate approach in this situation, where a set of relevant questions was addressed, yet allowing participants to narrate freely and to provide further information, deepening and expanding the field of exploration.[881] Since data are especially rare in this field of research, this study served as a first attempt to acquire knowledge that provides the foundation for future research.[882]

6.2.4.3 While the focus of inquiry of the interviews were on the experience of perceptual changes due to mindfulness-based meditation practices, additional information on preconditions was collected from the interviewees for a fuller picture of variables involved, that is, duration of practice, motivation, and experienced benefit. Interviewees were thus given these **6 questions** for that purpose:

(1) How long have you been meditating?
(2) What was your original aim or motivation when you first started to meditate?
(3) If so, how would you say has **your perception changed** after having gained some depth in meditation?
(4) How does one know that the change in perception is not a new concept?
(5) What would you say is there to be realized?
(6) What would you say is the benefit of meditation?

This article focuses exclusively on **question 3**: changes in perception.

In the course of interviews, however, a serious difficulty arose concerning question 3: The Vinaya or monastic rules require monks and nuns, particularly those with the authority to teach, not to publicly refer to their personal attainments and experiences. This was expressed in statements like "One thing is, as a Bhikkhu (monk) it is a little bit difficult to openly say what we have experienced, since we have to follow Bhikkhus rules" (BUR, 2009 1:37/38). To correct this and not to violate monastic rule, the question was modified, thus:

"If so, how would you say, one's perception changes after having gained some depth in meditation?"

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[878] Full et al, "Meditation induced changes in perception: an interview study with expert meditators (*sotapannas*) in Burma," *Mindfulness* 4,1 2013:55-63.

[879] The teachers were selected from the Theravāda because it belongs to the oldest line of the Buddhist traditions, and whose practice and teaching is known to be "highly systematic, nonesoteric and demanding." (Full et al 2013:56)

[880] At the start 21 potential candidates were interviewed and briefed in their residences. However, 2 monks and a nun declined to participate, leaving 18 participants. Three interviews were conducted in Germany where 3 monks (Canada, Czech Republic and UK) had a stopover en route to the USA. (Full et al 2013:57)

[881] T Lindlof & B C Taylor, *Qualitative communication research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002.

[882] Full et al, 2013:57. U Flick, *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung*, Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 2006.

This allowed participants to freely narrate meditation experiences while adhering to the Vinaya. As a consequence, interviewees often used terms such as "one, a meditator, all meditators, they, we, our, you, your, etc," when referring to perception changes.

Despite thus not replying in an explicitly personal way, it can still be expected that participants were referring to their personal experiences since truthfulness is also a monastic virtue. Truthfulness implies neither speculating nor giving philosophical conclusions, but stating their own experience. Furthermore, authenticity and authority as a teacher are based on personal experience.

Related follow-up questions were then asked to clarify and elaborate aspects of the narrative focusing the conversation on areas of particular relevance to the study. The focus of the study was kept on the question whether participants had experienced changes in perception and if so in what way.

6.2.5 Perception changes in the Sotapanna meditators

6.2.5.1 These **4 categories of perceptional changes** were identified, that is, changes concerning:

(1) increase in the quality of perception;
(2) comprehension of interdependences in perception and mental condition;
(3) cessation of subject/object-based perception; and
(4) non-conceptual perception.

The findings suggest significant changes in perception induced by mindfulness practices of calm and insight meditation. However, report the researchers, "it cannot be concluded whether these alterations are genuine experiences and to what extent they are culturally determined" (Full et al 2013:55).

6.2.5.2 Listed below are key points and abridgements of comments by the participants. These are the highlight of the whole research. They have been reproduced verbatim since they are first-person reports with summaries by the researchers. (Moreover, this paper may not be available to the reader). I'm also curious as to the overall implications of these reports in terms of early Buddhism.

(*1*) Category 1
Increase in the quality of perception

These were changes in the quality of perception mentioned by the participants. These changes were most often expressed as an increase in mental clarity, meaning a clear awareness of perception, that is, thoughts, feelings, sense-perceptions, their related causes, and not identifying with them.

TP: " … things become much more—almost like transparent and very vivid and very clear."

UJA: "… the mind gets clearer and will get calmer, more peaceful and then the clarity of mind brings clarity of perception … . The clarity of perception means that we are aware of our conditioning … by culture, by our family, by our education, by so many things. The more we look at those patterns, and do not grasp them, the mind gets to a state where it sees: this is conditioning. And it realizes, I do not need that, I don't need to identify with it, and I don't need to follow it. … ."

US: "The common ordinary mind is not clear. It is full of delusion, illusion and therefore cannot be clear. … its way of thinking is also not very clear. It is comparable to a dirty cloth. This is the nature of the deluded mind. The greatest obstacle or hindrance for a clear mind is sensuality.

… Why did the mind become unclear? Because of the objects of color, sound, smell, nutrition, odor and sensations. Because we do not know how to respond to these objects properly … .

The mind … craves for sensual pleasure. … Something beautiful in color, a nice smell, a nice sound, a nice feeling— … the mind becomes polluted, unclear. …

… beings think that if they get the best of these sensual pleasures, they will be happy. But if we realize the Dhamma (universal truth), which is superior to all these sensual pleasures, we can relinquish them."

It is important to note that the sense-stimuli themselves are not responsible for the mental "pollution" but the improper response, that is, the craving, clinging, or aversion towards them. Clarity was also noted in respect to the greater ability to distinguish different experiences and to see things in more detail.

BUK: "We can see every *rūpa kalapa* (smallest unit of physical matter according to Abhidhamma)[883] in detail."

UJA: "All the colours that are projected by emotions are seen. So the less and less we are involved in that kind of conditioning, the more and more the perspective changes."

Other aspects of qualitative changes included greater objectivity, unbiased perception, and an increase in sharpness and in levels of penetration.

UJ: "… seeing things without bias."

CS: " … the mind becomes more and more penetrating, sharper and sharper. Then you are experiencing the arising and passing of physical and mental phenomena. … we see nothing is permanent. Nothing is everlasting. Everything is subject to change."

(*2*) Category 2
Comprehension of interdependence of perception and mental condition

According to participants' experience, perception is less determined through the actual object but dependent on the present mental condition of the observer.

DD: "What you experience is not so much decided by the outer object but by your own mind. (…) The deluded mind believes in outer objects to be real, therefore it is deluded. But the outer objects are neither real nor unreal. They are just dependent. That's all."

UJ: "The world you see depends much on your mood, your personality, and your outlook. The world you see doesn't stay the same. … . When your mind is calm and peaceful your world is not threatening. When you are fearful it becomes an unforgiving world."

TP: "We live in our world inside our own mind, don't we? (…) How is it that we are creating moment to moment the seeming reality in which we live? That is actually so distorted … because we are filtering everything through our habitual reactions, judgments and prejudices. … it is as if you are having a television on inside you the whole time and you are part of the soap opera. At least you can be the watcher!"

(*3*) Category 3
Cessation of subject/object-based perception

Perception based on a subject/object distinction is transformed into a holistic one, that is, as a unification of phenomena or "oneness" as opposed to diversity, an interdependent, connected observation of phenomena.

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[883] The observation of *kalāpas* is a key teaching of Pa Auk Sayadaw: SD 60.1b (11-12).

TP: "One of the problems with our dualistic, egoistic mind is that it makes everything very separate, whereas our pure awareness is being non-dualistic. It sees the interconnectedness with all phenomena, which we normally block out."

As described by participants, this dualistic perception is rooted primarily in the erroneous, delusive notion of self or ego, creating the sense of separateness and independence.

UJ: "When your mind goes beyond ego, you become one with the world. (…) You feel the relatedness of everything."

When, as will be described in the following category, objects are perceptually dissolved into their constituents, the meditator, according to participants, gains the insight that "From the ultimate point of view all things are the same." (BUR)

Thus, according to these interviewees, a dualistic observation of subject and object perceived as separate, independent entities is illusory.

(4) Category 4
<u>Non-conceptual perception</u>

Probably the most fundamental changes interviewees described revolved around a category that can be characterized as *non-conceptual perception* ... defined as a perception free of conceptualized notions, such as objects or self. … the perception of compactness, solidity concerning themselves and external objects, dissolves and materiality is perceived in as comprising components. These components are perceived in permanent flux.

Conceptual perceptions of objects such as mountains, trees, men, or women dissolve and are perceived as accumulated material units, called *kalāpa* in Theravāda Abhidhamma. With further investigation, participants claimed, these units dissolve likewise and are then perceived as a conjunction of elements with the characteristic of *extension, cohesion, heat, motion, space*, and, at times, *consciousness*.[884]

According to **PAS**, for most meditators, this nonconceptual perception is not always available, but more likely to be available only to those well developed in their practice.

PAS: "When you practise systematically one day you see kalāpas. … (then) you can analyze them … you see ultimate materiality … as soon as it arises, it perishes away. He (the meditator) then understands its impermanent nature. If he can discern both, internally and externally, he sees clearly.

However, when he comes out of meditation, he sees things solid again … a man, … a woman etc. But if he practices again … [there are] just materiality, kalāpas, both internally and externally. Just aggregates. … ."

BUR: "Now you see your body as your body. Now you see me as a bhikkhu (monk), … this book … . But when you develop concentration and when you continue to practise 4-element meditation[885] … then by discerning these 4 characteristics, your body emanates light. … At that time, you don't see your body; … just … a block of light. … If you continue to discern the 4 elements in this block of light, you will break down the perception into small particles. … At that time you see your body just as small particles and you need to analyze (their) content(s). These particles are not ultimate reality. It is still a concept, the smallest concept.

Only when you analyse the content of these small particles will you know ultimate materiality. … If you have concentration, you can penetrate that. After discerning and analysing your own particles

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[884] These are the 6 elements (*dhātu*), traditionally listed as "earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness": **Titth'āyatana S** (A 3:61,6), SD 6.8. As a person's make-up: **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,7+14-19), SD 4.17. See also Ledi cit 1999.

[885] The 4-element meditation is discussed in SD 60.1b (8.7, 11.4).

you (turn your attention) to the external world. … All the things that you penetrate with your insight —you will just see as small particles. … According to my teaching experience of 8 years: Those who have very good *pāramī* (perfection due to past good karma) whatever kind of meditation they prac-tise, they can see small particles.”

TS : “Whenever you scan your body from the fontanel[886] (down) to your toes, all the 32 parts of the body,[887] you will see light. … This will lead to dhyana. Whenever you get concentration on the 32 parts of the body, you will experience very small particles, smaller than atoms. … Whenever your mindfulness is on a very high level … in dhyana, then you will know.”

As mentioned earlier, this non-conceptual perception comprises not only external objects but also the notion of I, me, or mine, dissolving into mere processes of physical and mental components interacting with each other.

DHT: “When we meditate we know, this is not our mind and not our body. This is just *nāma* and *rūpa* (mind and matter) phenomena, or the 5 aggregates. They do not belong to a self. No I, no mine. If you don’t meditate you don’t see this. You see my body, my hand, my this, my that. I am this. But this is only conventional truth.”

USO: “After practising meditation, my mind became mature. We just see *nāma* and *rūpa* (mind and matter).[888] Therefore, the attachment goes away. You see everything is impermanent, non-self … “

UJ: “I cannot put a label on me. To make the point clear, I cannot say I am a Buddhist. … I can only say, I am an intelligence that is living.”

This experience was most poignantly formulated by a monk stating:

“There is no one who investigates, and there is nothing to be investigated which stays. It is all in a process and this process has not any essence of its own.”[889] (DD)

6.2.6 Study findings; strengths and weaknesses

6.2.6.1 THE RESEARCHERS’ MAIN FINDINGS

In this qualitative study, the findings suggested that the practice of calmness and insight medita-tion leads to significant changes in perception. The changes noticed point to the quality of percep-tion, especially in aspects of *clarity*; *comprehension of interdependences in perception processing*, that is, mental condition and perception; *successive cessation of a subject/object-based perception*; and finally, *a non-conceptual perception* including the deconstruction of the notion of I, self, or me.

These results, however, are at best pointers towards perceptual changes induced through mind-fulness practice, and a finer analysis is needed to capture the respective areas in future research. While some attempts have been made towards mindfulness and perceptional sensitivity,[890] percep-tion processing, cessation of subject/object perception, and non-conceptual perception and their correlation have yet to be addressed and studied. In this context, research on expert meditators ap-pears to be essential.

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[886] The fontanel or fontanelle is actually membranous gaps in an infant’s skull that allows for growth of the surrounding bone. After infancy, the anterior fontanelle is known as the bragma (which correctly should be the term here).

[887] On the 32 body-parts, see SD 60.1b (8.5.1).

[888] Mentality (*nāma*) and materiality (*rūpa*) are discussed in some detail in SD 60.1b respectively (11 f) and (13).

[889] On this allusion to nonself, see Vism 16.90/513: SD 10.16 (1.7.1.2).

[890] **Brown** et al 1984; **Maclean** et al 2010.

6.2.6.2 Strengths and weaknesses

The 2013 study provided rich data in the field of perceptual changes, giving an understanding of the potential outcomes of intensive mindfulness practice. This was possible simply because of the expert meditators. Their expertise determines the actual strength of the study, since so far no studies have ever been done with expert meditators or Sotapannas who, according to the Burmese (Myanmar) Theravāda, have accomplished at least the first stage of awakening (Sotapatti).[891]

The Pali Canon as the authoritative scriptures of Theravāda Buddhism comprises 3 "baskets" (*piṭaka*), that is the Vinaya Piṭaka (monastic discipline), Sutta Piṭaka (discourses) and Abhidhamma (scholastic philosophy). However, actual descriptions of meditation experiences are not found in the Canon, and perception changes as narrated by the 18 participants are not found therein. The philosophical aspects of non-self, the key characteristics of true reality, are outlined. The actual experiences of non-self, however, are not described.

This study by Full and colleagues, therefore, provides rare vivid data on how the practitioners perceive when profound meditation stages have been accomplished, showing remarkable coherence in their feedbacks. The question remaining, however, is how far can these information regarding the reported perceptions and experiences be authenticated by the Pali Canon.

Viewed from a contextualist perspective, experiences cannot be extracted from the context in which they are perceived.[892] Perennialists, on the other hand, take the opposite position proposing identical "core experiences" irrespective of cultural priming.[893] Participants themselves were also aware of these difficulties, yet they reported:

> **UJA**: "The environment is always influencing us. So that's why we have to come back more and more to ourselves and in addition develop the capacity of discrimination and the capacity to analyse and see where this conditioning is coming from. The clearer the mind is, the more it will see, where there is conditioning."
>
> **DD**: "When you practise Vipassanā you have to investigate your mind, which is also conditioned. There is nothing in the world which is not conditioned. Therefore, when you see this very clearly you cannot be deluded."

To date, no definitive conclusion can be reached regarding these findings. The data collected came solely from monks, one nun, and lay practitioners of the Theravāda. No such data have so far been collected on similarly advanced meditation practitioners of other Buddhist or non-Buddhist traditions. Such data could provide crucial means of comparing perceptual changes within different traditions resulting from profound meditation practice. However, with data coming only from the Theravāda, it remains uncertain whether participants' experiences were authentic or "corrupted," or whether they were determined by their ethnic Buddhist training and cultural conditioning. [6.1]

6.2.6.3 Out of deference to **the Vinaya**, most monastics used the impersonal pronouns "our, we, one" instead of "I, me, or mine" when narrating meditation experiences. Even though Theravāda teachers are not allowed to express their meditation attainments, they may allude to them indirectly. Thus, it can be assumed that the reports given are personal experiences, although there was no way to confirm this.

Conducting studies with participants who have had similar experiences but who are not bound to a monastic discipline could, therefore, have meaningful benefits. However, much research and

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[891] On the significance of the initial capital [6.1.3.2].

[892] R **Sharf**, "Buddhist modernism and the rhetoric of meditative experience," *Numen* 42,3 1995:228-283. R **Sharf**, "The rhetoric of experience and the study of religion," Cognitive Models and Spiritual Maps (special issue) *J of Consciousness Studies* 7,11/12 2000:267-287. S T **Katz**, "The 'conservative' character of mystical experience," in (ed) S T Katz, *Mysticism and religion*, NY: Oxford Univ Press, 1983. S T **Katz**, "Mystical speech and mystical meaning," in (ed) S T Kat, *Mysticism and language*, NY: Oxford Univ Press, 1992.

[893] W **James**, *The Varieties of Religious Experiences: a study in human nature*, NY: Collier, 1961. R K C **Forman**, "Mystical knowledge: knowledge by identity," *J of the American Academy of Religion* 61,4 1993.

investigation on the methodology of first-person reports is still needed to evaluate the data. At present, attempts are being made to combine such first-person narrates with third-person data to broaden the perspective that such data provide.[894]

6.2.7 Context, implications and conclusions

6.2.7.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

Research in the field of perceptual changes induced by mindfulness practice is rare. Existing studies, however, suggest greater visual sensitivity,[895] an increase in perceptual discrimination,[896] and an improvement of psychological self-knowledge.[897] Although data collections in previous studies differed remarkably by means of aims, methods, and participants, all findings taken together point to perceptual changes induced by meditative practice.

The level of participants' meditation experience seems to be of great importance. A study conducted by Pagis (2010)[898] found that Buddhist tenets like non-self were *not* experienced or described by Vipassanā meditators participating in 10-, 20-, or 30-day retreats. Only in one of 60 cases, over a study period of 2 years conducted in Israel and the USA, did one participant (a senior meditation teacher) refer to such an experience.

The point here is that it helps that some time should be spent with the participants to familiarize themselves with the early Buddhist canon. Furthermore, reports on practitioners' experiences featuring fundamental or significant changes resulting from deep states of meditation are accomplished only with serious, committed practice and after a considerable length of time.[899]

6.2.7.3 IMPLICATIONS

 In the course of the researchers' inquiry on the effects and implications of mindfulness-based meditation practices, meditators' **perception** appears to be profoundly affected. Peak experiences in meditative practice tend to make participants change their viewpoint radically and irreversibly.[900] These perceptual changes, however, are not regarded as an end in themselves but rather gain their value through their implications in changing mental and behavioural patterns that enhance happiness, well-being, and quality of life.

The popularity of mindfulness-based techniques in the West might be sought in a deficit of these qualities, and mindfulness is seen as a viable way towards the reduction and elimination of mental distress. Mental peace and personal satisfaction are, according to Buddhism, an inherent property and potential of the human mind. Cultivation of this property, however, is necessary in order to unfold its potential. In Buddhist teachings, mindfulness is the key to this quality, and every individual is regarded as being capable of cultivating it.[901]

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[894] E A Stanley, J M Schaldach, A Kiyonaga, & A Jha, 'Mindfulness based mind fitness training: a case study of high stress predeployment military cohort," *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice* 18 2011:566-576.

[895] D Brown et al 1984.

[896] K A MacLean 2010.

[897] S F Santorelli, A qualitative case analysis of mindfulness meditation training in an outpatient stress reduction clinic and its implications for the development of self-knowledge. Retrieved from Electronic Doctoral Dissertations for UMass Amherst. Paper AAI9233158. 1992. [umass] 15 Aug 2923..

[898] M Pagis, "From abstract concepts to experimental knowledge: embodying enlightenment in a meditation centre," *Qualitative Sociology* 33,4 2010:469-489. doi:10.107/s11133-010-9169-6.

[899] Amaro & Pasanno 2009.

[900] Mahasi 1994.

[901] H Gunaratana, The path of serenity and insight. An explanation of the Buddhist Jhānas. Delhi, 1996.

6.2.7.4 CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Mindfulness is described as a universal technique free of religious dogma and zeal.[902] Buddhist scriptures emphasize that such experiences are not dependent on Buddhist dogma or belief, but arise from empirical knowledge.[903] From a scientific viewpoint, however, it is difficult to differentiate between genuine or sutta-based experiences and cultural or religious conditioning.[904]

It would therefore be highly relevant and beneficial for future research to study individuals *not trained in Buddhism, yet reporting similar experiences*. In this respect, a qualitative study should be designed for participants of Western descent, not involved in Buddhist doctrines and practices, who, according to their reports, experience perception changes that are identical to those described by the Buddhists, that is, <u>non-conceptual perception of nonself</u>. Interviews and qualitative analysis may be used to shed light on the preconditions of such experiences, such as religious training and cultural conditioning.

6.2.8 Towards quantum dhamma

6.2.8.1 According to the research by Full and colleagues (2013), practitioners of calmness and insight meditation who are **Sotapannas** (those who have attained the first stage of awakening according to ethnic Theravāda) claimed significant <u>changes in perception</u>. To date, there are no scientific explanations for these claims, and there is no established methodology to verify them. Further studies are needed to determine the role of first-person reports, and to vet whether such reports and claims are free from cultural conditioning or religious training.

Future researches, I suggest, should be cross-disciplinary, involving, for example, psychologists and sociologists. While the psychologists could study the *psychological* significance of the meditators' states and responses, the sociologists could assess to what extent the meditators are religiously or culturally conditioned.

As mentioned earlier [6.2.2.2], the notion of "Sotapanna" as expert meditators is clearly <u>a social construct</u> of ethnic Myanmar Buddhism, an idea unlikely to be accepted by other Theravāda Buddhists—most **Sri Lankan** monks neither keep the Vinaya nor meditate, most **Thai** monks are already familiar with their own Kammatthana traditions, and Western Buddhists have a good working idea of basic science. This, however, is merely a technical or taxonomical problem. The research may be carried out in the same manner *without* mentioning any Sotapanna, but simply that the subjects are "expert meditators."

One surprising common feature of the responses of all the expert meditators was that none of them actually gave any new insight into meditation or Buddhist doctrine, which should inspire or surprise us. In fact, we see them as echoing familiar teachings of the Burmese masters (like Pa Auk Sayadaw in his well publicized books). Especially absent from these experts' feedback is any discussion on **non-self**, a key teaching in Abhidhamma.

We must thus assume just that as sitting *motionless* Zazen style is a Japanese cultural conditioning [4.6.3.4], the expert meditators' responses are from their Burmese cultural conditioning. Let me qualify this remark as referring only to what is seen or said of these subjects. There is no real way to measure what really goes on in the minds and hearts of these practitioners in their actual meditations, which doubtlessly gave them somatic composure and inner peace.

6.2.8.2 A more serious problem is the claim by meditators of "seeing" kalāpas. A *kalāpa* (a subatomic particle) is reportedly the tiniest "group" or component of material reality. This idea is un-

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[902] P Grossman, L Nieman, S Schmidt, & H Walach, "Mindfulness-based stress-reduction and health benefits. A meta-analysis," *Psychosomatic Research* 57 2004:35-43. doi:10.1016/S0022-3999(03)00573-7.

[903] **Amaro** & Pasanno 2009; **Mahasi** 1994.

[904] R Sharf 1995 & 2000.

attested in the Pali canon (not even the Abhidhamma Piṭaka). Its earliest mention is probably in **the Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha**, "Compendium on the Meaning of the Abhidhamma."[905]

As a modern Burmese concept, it began with the Burmese Minister of the Interior and polymath, Hpo Hlaing's works on human anatomy and Abhidhamma, which had a deep influence on Ledi Saya-daw.[906] As an idea used with Vipassana in modern times, it started with U Ba Khin,[907] which was taught to S N Goenka (who however did not highlight it in his Vipassana).[908] It was Pa Auk Sayadaw who used this idea in his Vipassana practice as a perception of impermanence and non-self.[909] In 1982, Mahasi Sayadaw expressed his belief that kalapas played a role in aging, death and rebirth.[910]

6.2.8.3 The Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha describes a kalāpa as being composed of 8 inseparable elements of material essence in varying amounts which are: earth, water, fire, wind, colour, smell, taste and nutritive essence (*oja*). The first 4 are the primary elements (present in all matter), and predominate the kalāpas. The other 4 are secondary properties that derive from the primaries.[911] Certain kalapas pervade the sense-faculties, the sense-objects, the sexual faculties and the heart-base (the material base of the mind).[912]

Apparently, the Abhidhamma texts describe kalāpas as being "about 1/46,656th the size of a par-ticle of dust from a wheel of chariot in summer." I have not found any reference for this in the Pali Canon, Abhidhamma works or Commentaries, but only in a talk by U Ba Khin.[913] Since neither is Bud-dhism science nor was U Ba Khin a scientist, I'm not sure how we can take such an exact number as a scientific fact. Of course, once we make such a "scientific" statement, we must be ready for scientific scrutiny.

Just for the sake of discussion (to get you researching), let us imagine the size of kalāpas.[914] They are comparable to "particles," whose sizes are measured in microns (μ). A micron is 1/1000 mm or 1/25,400 in. A millimicron (mμ) is 1/1000 of a micron, or 1/1,000,000 mm. **Particle size** is a notion introduced for comparing dimensions of solid particles (flecks), liquid particles (droplets), or gaseous particles (bubbles). Usually particle size is designated as the average diameter in microns, although some literature designates particle radius.

Let us suppose that the smallest size of a particle of dust is around 1 micrometre.[915] A kalāpa would then be around 0.02 nm (nanometre).[916] Now an atom is approximately 1 to 5 nm. Subatomic particles however measure only the 100,000[th] of a part of an atom, so they are very much smaller than the kalapas. In other words, kalapas are not the tiniest unit of matter. How useful all this is in sutta-based meditation or study is clearly questionable.

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[905] Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha (Abhs) start of 11th cent: SD 60.1e (2.1.3). See *Kalāpa,yojana,* Abhs 6.16-22 (Abhs:BRS 252-254).

[906] SD 60.1b (2.3.3.5).

[907] **U Ba Khin**, *The Essentials of Buddha Dhamma,* Kandy, 1995. **Pa Auk** 2000:125. **Shankman** 2008: 177.

[908] Goenka, *The Discourse Summaries,* Vipassana Research Publications, 2000:131.

[909] S **Snyder** & T Rasmussen, Practicing the Jhānas: traditional concentration as presented by Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw, Shambhala, 2009:127.

[910] Mahasi Sayadaw, *Paṭiccasamuppāda,* Yangon: Buddhasasana Nuggaha Organization, 1982. [Archive] 15 Aug 2023.

[911] U Ba Khin, *The Essentials of Buddha Dhamma,* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Soc, 1995, 2011.

[912] N K G **Mendis**, *The Abhidhamma in Practice,* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Soc, 2006, 2011. **Pa Auk Sayadaw**, *Knowing and Seeing,* 2000:267, 5th rev ed 2010:108-110.

[913] U Ba Khin, "What Buddhism is," in (comp) U Chit Thin, *Dhamma Texts,* Heddington: International Medita-tion Centre, 1991:13. https://www.ubakhin.ch/publications/DhammaTexts.pdf.

[914] Kalapa (atomism) - Wikipedia.

[915] On the size of a micrometre (μm): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micrometre.

[916] On the size of a nanometre (nm): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanometre.

There is another problem. Kalapas (like particles) are said to be normally invisible but they can be "seen" by a meditator in deep samadhi or dhyana.[917] Any meditation teacher (and informed student) will know that we do not literally *see* these particles, but "envision" them, that is, we perceive them with the meditating mind. What does this mean?

6.2.8.4 We know from Buddhist teachings that we can be conditioned to perceive things. The question now is whether only those very capable in "perceiving," such as holding a kasina image, will be able to "see" kalāpas. The truth is that it is very rare indeed that we have meditators (or anyone) who actually have claimed that they have "seen" kalāpas.[918] Assuming that such visions are *not* epiphenomenal (in the sense that it is the conditioned project of the meditator who already know about the kalāpas) but actually a **phenomenal event** (in the sense that the meditator is "seeing" it), we can safely say that the meditator is looking at the kalāpas in a *conditioned* ethnic Buddhist way, from what he has been taught in that tradition.

Now consider this: what if the meditator were (ideally) a scientist, say a physicist, or a psychologist, or scientifically trained and qualified in physics? Then, they are likely to have a "stereoscopic" perspective—a Buddhist and a scientific *experience* of the kalāpas. Then we should be able to repeat this experience with some common parameters and same or similar responses to come to some empirical conclusions. This is best done on a 1st-person basis—that the meditator is a Buddhist meditator—and that scientific truths and Buddhist teachings are treated with the same openness and falsifiability.

Such a process is already remarkable since the subjects are able to observe kalāpas as subatomic particles without an electron microscope. Both modern science and traditional Buddhism can then beneficially learn from each other for the benefit of the understanding of the human mind. Perhaps we may even see the rise of a new modern Buddhism: **quantum dhamma**.[919]

6.3 EXPERT DUTCH VIPASSANA MEDITATORS

6.3.1 The terms of modern meditation

6.3.1.1 We will here examine a 2018 report on attempts by researchers Ekici, Garip and Van Gordon of the Human Sciences Research Centre of the University of Derby, England,[920] to make a qualitative study into the contexts, processes and effects of mindfulness training. This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of a novel group of experienced mindfulness meditators who practised Mahasi Vipassana meditation, abbreviated as **Vipassana**[M].[921]

The study aimed to understand how experienced Vipassana[M] practitioners make sense of the effects of practice and what processes they ascribe to it. Participants attended semi-structured inter-

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[917] R Shankman, The Experience of Samadhi: an in-depth exploration of Buddhist meditation, Shambhala, 2008: 178 f.

[918] Even in the Pa Auk community, I am told by a follower, "hardly a handful" of meditators have been known to have actually seen the kalāpas.

[919] On "analysing the material clusters," see SD 60.1b (12.2).

[920] Çimen Ekici (Leiden Univ), Gulcan Garip & William Van Gordon, "The lived experiences of experienced Vipassana Mahasi meditators: an interpretative phenomenological analysis," *Mindfulness* 11 **2020**:140-152. [doi] [Derby] [ResearchGate]

[921] The researchers themselves used the term "Vipassana Mahasi" (VM) to distinguish it from "Vipassana Goenka" (VG) or Vipassana[G]. VG is characterized by the use of focused attention directed towards the breath at the nostrils, as well as bodily sensations by means of a systematic body scanning technique (W Hart, *The Art of Living: Vipassana meditation: as taught by S N Goenka,* San Francisco: Harper, **1987**). VM involves a more open and flexible awareness: following an initial observation of the physical sensations related to breathing at the abdomen area, the meditator notes all mental and physical phenomena appearing in their stream of consciousness (Mahasi, *Manual of Insight,* Somerville, MA: Wisdom, **2016**).

views, and their responses were analysed using <u>interpretative phenomenological analysis</u> (IPA) [6.3.2.2]. Results yielded overarching themes including:

(a) improvements in hedonic and eudaimonic well-being;[922]
(b) insights into self, others and perception of reality;
(c) attaining equanimity; and
(d) physical and interpersonal difficulties.

Participants perceived Vipassana[M] as a "cleansing" process whereby maladaptive responses were eliminated through mindfulness, other supportive mental qualities, decentering [6.2.1.2] and non-attachment.

6.3.1.2 According to the researchers, the findings revealed a complex and dynamic set of inter-dependent outcomes and processes, which were reinforced by early Buddhist teachings and ethical practices. This study highlighted the need for additional interdisciplinary research into topics such as insight generation and supportive mental qualities during Vipassana[M], novel states of well-being informed by Buddhist constructs and interpersonal difficulties related to long-term practice. Findings also suggested that incorporating Buddhist teachings and ethics into mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) might enhance the practitioner's understanding and implementation of meditation techniques.[923]

6.3.1.3 As evidence of the benefits of mindfulness training continued to accumulate over the past decade, a parallel line of enquiry began to characterize the underlying mechanisms of mindfulness training.[924] These early theoretical models identified psychological processes based on mindfulness, such as improved attention regulation and enhanced emotion processing via mechanisms such as <u>decentering</u> (the ability to detach from thoughts and emotions and not perceiving them as accurate representations of self or reality) and <u>non-attachment</u> (neither clinging to nor rejecting certain aspects of consciousness).[925]

While these early models of mindfulness highlighted important mechanisms, recent theoretical work provides more elaborate models. Drawing on a wide range of neurobiological, behavioural and clinical research based on meditation-naïve and meditation-experienced practitioner samples from different contemplative traditions, two recent theories stand out in terms of process-based explanatory frameworks: Self-Awareness, self-Regulation and self-Transcendence (S-ART) [6.3.1.4] and mindfulness-to-meaning theory (MMT) [6.3.1.5].

6.3.1.4 Vago and Silbersweig's (2012) S-ART model builds on and extends on a previous neurobiological framework.[926] Drawing on both Western psychology and Buddhist theory, the S-ART model

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[922] The 2 terms here come from *hedonia* and *eudaimonia*, whose roots go back to Aristotle. Hedonia relates to immediate sensory pleasure, happiness, and enjoyment, while eudaimonia relates to the consequences of self-growth and self-actualization. See C D **Ryff**, "Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being," *J of Personality and Social Psychology* 57 1989:1069-1081. E L **Deci** & R M Ryan, "Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: an introduction," *J Happiness Stud* 9 2008:1-11. A S **Waterman**, "Eudaimonia: contrasting two conceptions of happiness: hedonia and eudaimonia," in (edd) J J Froh & A C Parks, *Activities for teaching positive psychology: a guide for instructors,* American Psychological Assoc, 2013:29-34.

[923] Ekici et al 2020:140.

[924] K W **Brown**, R M Ryan, & J D Creswell, "Mindfulness: theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects," *Psychological Inquiry* 18,4 2007:211-237. S L **Shapiro**, L E Carlson, J A Astin, & B Freedman, "Mechanisms of mindfulness," *J of Clinical Psychology* 62,3 2006:373-386.

[925] **Brown** id. **Shapiro** et al id.

[926] B K Hölzel, S W Lazar, T Gard, Z Schuman-Olivier, D R Vago, & U Ott, "How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective," *Perspectives in Psychological Science* 6,6 2011:537-559.

posits that the underlying cause of psychopathology stems from biases related to self-perception and proposed that mindfulness training operates by eliminating these biases.[927]

Mindfulness is not conceptualized as a unidimensional mental state but is perceived as a skill, working in harmony with other supporting cognitive skills, such as diligence and perceptual clarity.[928] The theory explains how different types of mindfulness meditation may attenuate biases related to meta-awareness of self (self-awareness), altering one's automatic response patterns (self-regulation), and enhancing prosocial behaviour (self-transcendence).[929]

According to the S-ART model, mindfulness meditation is purported to operate via the activation of 6 key sub-mechanisms (Vago & Silbersweig 2012):

(1) intention and motivation which help maintain meditation awareness;
(2) regulation of attentional networks for improved processing of self-related information;
(3) regulation of experiential, expressive and evaluative processing of emotion;
(4) exposure leading to extinction of conditioned maladaptive habits, as well as the cultivation of more adaptive response patterns via memory reconsolidation;
(5) prosocial behaviour via increased empathy and perspective-taking; and
(6) decentering and nonattachment.

The S-ART model is primarily concerned with how mindfulness training promotes hedonic well-being,[930] that is, increasing positive affect by reducing psychopathology.

6.3.1.5 An alternative theory, known as **mindfulness-to-meaning theory** (MMT),[931] posits a process whereby mindfulness increases not only hedonic but also eudaimonic well-being [6.3.1.1], which is the capacity to derive more meaning from life.[932] According to MMT, when individuals are faced with aversive or stressful events, mindfulness enables them to decenter from negative emotions and broadens awareness so that additional, non-negative aspects of their situation can be processed.

This broadening of attention facilitates positive reappraisal such that negative experiences are reconstrued as more neutral or benign. Positive reappraisal, in turn, increases positive emotions, and over time this more positive outlook enables us to savour positive experiences and engage more meaningfully and purposefully with our lives (that is, leading to eudaimonic well-being). [933]

6.3.2 Studying experienced Western meditators of Vipassana[934]

6.3.2.1 It is not always easy to define or establish proficiency in meditation[935]—especially when the researchers themselves were neither Buddhists nor experienced meditators themselves. Pre-

[927] D Tirch, L R Silberstein, & R L Kolts, *Buddhist psychology and cognitive-behavioral therapy: a clinician's guide*, NY: Guilford Press, 2016. ePub ed.

[928] D R Vago & D A Silbersweig, "Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence (S-ART): a framework for understanding the neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 6 art 296 25 Oct 2012. [Frontiers]

[929] Vago & Silbersweig 2012 id.

[930] V Huta & A S Waterman, "Eudaimonia and its distinction from hedonia: developing a classification and terminology for understanding conceptual and operational definitions," *J of Happiness Studies* 15,6 2014: 1425-1456.

[931] E L Garland, N A Farb, P R Goldin, & B L Fredrickson, "The mindfulness-to-meaning theory: extensions, applications, and challenges at the attention-appraisal-emotion interface," *Psychological Inquiry* 26,4 2015: 377-387.

[932] Huta & Waterman 2014.

[933] Garland et al 2015.

[934] Based on Ekici et al, 2020:140-144.

[935] W Van Gordon, E Shonin, T J Dunn, D Sheffield, J Garcia-Campayo, & M D Griffiths, "Meditation-induced near-death experiences: a three-year prospective study," *Mindfulness* 12 Mar 2018.

vious studies have provided data for "meditation fluency" in terms of age over 18 years, fluency in English and experience in Vipassana[M].[936]

In the present study, following consultation with a senior Vipasana[M] meditation teacher (who did not participate in the study), an experienced Vipassana[M] meditator was taken to be an individual with:

(a) at least 5 years of daily Vipassana[M] practice (whether in formal meditation or while engaged in work or other activities);
(b) a maximum of 20 years of Vipassana[M] experience (for the purposes of sample homogeneity);
(c) attendance at a minimum of two 10-day-long Vipassana[M] retreats;
(d) formal meditation practice at least 3 times per week; and
(e) integration of Vipassana[M] into family, work and daily activities.

Due to difficulties in finding eligible participants, criteria (a) and (b) were subsequently revised to minimum 5 years of experience. After the screening process, participants were sent an online survey link to obtain informed consent and to collect brief demographic information. Although Vipassana[M] meditation was the participants' keystone practice, all participants also reported practising loving-kindness (*mettā*) meditation which involves cultivating kindness and compassion towards self and others.[937] One participant also occasionally practised insight dialogue—an interpersonal form of Vipassana meditation.[938]

Participants had accumulated 2,221–2,418 hours of Vipassana[M] experience, spanning 5–40 years. In line with Lutz et al (2004),[939] estimates of meditation experience were based on self-reported personal and retreat experience. All 4 participants (2 males, 2 females; median age = 63) were Dutch, white, had completed higher education equivalent to bachelor's or master's level, and worked part-time. One individual indicated Christianity as their religion, and the other participants identified themselves as Buddhist. Owing to the close-knit nature of the Vipassana[M] community in the Netherlands, detailed characteristics of each participant are not presented (due to the risk of disclosing information that could identify participants). Participants are here known only by first-names: Sophie (a Christian), Anna, Tim, and Peter—the name is given in **bold** in each context.

6.3.2.2 Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) [6.3.1.1] was used to explore the participants' subjective experiences. Theoretically, IPA is based on phenomenology, that is, the scientific study of subjective experience, an approach to psychological subject matter that attempts to explain experiences from the viewpoint of the subject via the analysis of their written or spoken word.[940] Although IPA prioritizes the participants' accounts, the sense-making of individuals is elaborated through the interpretations of the researcher to create new understandings of a phenomenon.[941]

IPA is idiographic[942] in focus where the researcher adopts a case study approach by immersing

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[936] R J Davidson & A W Kaszniak, "Conceptual and methodological issues in research on mindfulness and meditation," *American Psychologist* 70,7 2015:581-592.

[937] Khema, Ayya. Know where you're going: a complete Buddhist guide to mediation, faith, and everyday transcendence, Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 1990.

[938] G Kramer, F Meleo-Meyer, & M L Turner, "Cultivating mindfulness in relationship: insight dialogue and the interpersonal mindfulness program," in (edd) S F Hick & Z V Segal, *Mindfulness and the Therapeutic Relationship*, NY: Guilford, 2008:195-214.

[939] A Lutz, L L Greischar, N B Rawlings, M Ricard, & R J Davidson, "Long-term meditators self-induce high-amplitude gamma synchrony during mental practice," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*,101,46 2004:16369-16373.

[940] J A Smith, P Flowers, & M Larkin, "Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method, and research," London: SAGE, 2009.

[941] Smith et al 2009.

[942] "Idiographic" means relating to the study or discovery of particular scientific facts and processes, as distinct from general laws.

themselves in the lifeworld of each participant before moving to the next case.[943] In line with this theoretical framework, data were collected through one-to-one, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. This method allows for flexible data collection whereby the same topics can be covered in a way that is guided by participants' own experiences and preferences.[944]

The interview topics were shared with participants ahead of time to help them prepare for the interview. Interviews were conducted in English by the first author (Ekici) who is also a Vipassana[M] practitioner and took place at the participants' home or in private meeting rooms. The mean time of the interviews was 105 min

The interesting technical details in the original research on how the interviews were conducted, recorded and analyzed following IPA, and the subsequent revisions of the analyses have been omitted.[945] Although the analysis followed an inductive approach, the emergent themes are presented in 2 sections, in line with the a priori aims of the study. The section "**Perceived outcomes**" [6.3.3] discusses themes related to the perceived effects of Vipassana[M] meditation on the participants' lives. The section "**Perceived Processes**" [6.3.4] delineates the key mechanisms participants ascribed to this practice based on their interviews. Highlights of key themes are illustrated by the participants' quotes as presented below.

6.3.3 Perceived outcomes[946]

6.3.3.*1* FROM IMBALANCE TO HEDONIC AND EUDAIMONIC WELL-BEING

(1a) **From distress to meaning and purpose in life**

Prior to starting Vipassana[M] meditation, all participants reported experiences which could be characterized as a state of "disbalance" (Peter) due to various life crises. **Anna** felt spiritually unfulfilled and was looking for "guidance." **Peter** recounted undergoing "terrible burnout" which led him to give up his career. Similarly, Sophie had been feeling "exhausted and stressed" and grappling with "many questions":

> questions like "Why am I always tired and other people not?" I even tried to copy other people just to hope that I would feel the same way.

Sophie's apparent wish to replicate others' behaviour suggests a sense of not fitting in with the world and underscoring a need to understand the roots of her impaired functioning. This desire to find answers seems to have had a more pressing relevancy for Peter and Tim who were questioning their very existence. **Peter** spoke of feeling "life has no use for me anymore."

Likewise, **Tim** reported experiencing low mood and anxiety and searching for a way to give his life meaning and purpose:

> I could not see anything for me here [the Netherlands] … I have to find something to make this life worthwhile. Because I was really thinking this life is not for me.

This quest for "something" eventually led participants to Vipassana[M] meditation where they all reported feeling an intuitive connection to the practice.

Peter spoke about a eureka moment where he instinctively thought "Yes this is it" upon first trying out Vipassana[M] meditation. This initial positive experience led him to make a cascade of life changes in work, personal and spiritual domains, eventually resulting in an increased sense of "rest" and "peacefulness."

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[943] Smith et al 2009.

[944] J A Smith & M Osborn, "Pain as an assault on the self: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the psychological impact of chronic benign low back pain," *Psychology & Health* 22,5 2007:517-534.

[945] Ekici et al 2020:143 f.

[946] Based on Ekici et al 2020:144-147.

Similarly, trying Vipassana[M] meditation had a life-changing impact for **Tim**:

> that was my first retreat. And I felt like coming home … I knew, directly, I knew with all my, with all I am, that this was it.

The phrase "coming home" evokes both positive feelings such as warmth and security, as well as attaining a sense of belonging. The retreat experience seems to have signalled an end to Tim's search for meaning, enabling him to attain a sense of well-being and re-engage with a life which he had left behind: "I'm happy, it's ok, I can go back."

These feedbacks indicate that Vipassana[M] meditation served as a gateway through which participants are able to achieve both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being [6.3.1.1]. The benefits of mindfulness meditation have been linked most consistently to improved hedonic well-being in both quantitative[947] and qualitative[948] studies. The link between mindfulness meditation and eudaimonic well-being has received less empirical attention.[949] Nevertheless, the present findings are in line with a qualitative study reporting that long-term mindfulness meditators feel fully engaged with their lives.[950]

(1b) Importance of Buddhist ethical practices

Unlike in a study by Machado & Costa (2015), participants of the present study did not just attribute these positive outcomes to meditation:

> **Peter**: It's not only practicing Vipassana but try to [sic], to follow the noble eightfold path, the Buddhist road.
> **Anna**: The mindfulness, the wisdom. Not alone, not alone, it's a combination. Also, the ethics, because you cannot be mindful and you will not get a mind who is quiet.

Here, both Peter and Anna are referring to the supporting role of the Buddhist eightfold path—a system of attitudes and behaviours which must be adopted to eliminate habitual response patterns deemed "unwholesome" or maladaptive according to Buddhist metaphysics and morality.[951]

Interestingly, this supportive role of ethics was also acknowledged by **Sophie** who did not identify herself as a Buddhist:

> I'm trying … to keep this *sīla* [moral conduct], the 5 precepts, I try to keep them as much as possible …

Sophie perceived these precepts or moral conduct as a means to "protect" herself from engaging in behaviours which could have harmful consequences for her and others. It seems that through Vipassana[M] meditation, participants cultivated a new value system which may have also contributed to the reported improvements in eudaimonic well-being.

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[947] J Eberth & P Sedlmeier, "The effects of mindfulness meditation: a meta-analysis," *Mindfulness* 3,3 2012: 174-189.

[948] B K **Hölzel** U Ott, H Hempel, K Reibold, & R Stark, "Wie wirkt Achtsamkeit? Eine Interviewstudie mit erfahrenen Meditierenden" (How does mindfulness work? An interview study with experienced meditators)," in 24th Symposium of the Section for Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy of the German Society for Psychology, Würzburg, Germany, 2006. S M **Machado** & M E Costa, "Mindfulness practice outcomes explained through the discourse of experienced practitioners," *Mindfulness* 6,6 2015:1437-1447.

[949] Garland et al, 2015.

[950] Machado & Costa 2015.

[951] M Huxter, "Mindfulness and the Buddha's noble eightfold path," in (edd) E Shonin, W Van Gordon, & N N Singh, *Buddhist foundations of mindfulness*, NY: Springer, 2015:29-54.

Indeed, having and wanting to serve a higher purpose in life and living a life in accordance with deeply held values constitute key aspects of eudaimonia.[952] This theme supports the main theoretical thrust of both the S-ART model (focusing on hedonia)[953] and MMT (focusing on eudaemonia).[954] However, it goes further by demonstrating that the broader philosophical, spiritual and moral context of mindfulness meditation also makes an important contribution to well-being.

6.3.3.2 "SEE THINGS CLEARLY": INSIGHTS INTO SELF AND BEYOND

This theme describes the different types of insights participants reported gaining through Vipassana[M] meditation.

(2a) Insight into mind-body interaction

It appears that the initial effects of Vipassana[M] meditation involved a greater understanding of habitual, and often negative, cognitions and corresponding physical sensations:

> **Peter**: … the body is also—during meditation—a very good instrument to be aware of stress. Because … when there is stress in your mind, [there is] also a reaction in your body … when I feel some stress in my forehead, at first, I saw that as "Ah, that's thinking." Because often when there is analyzing and clinging, keeping control of things, the tension in my forehead arises.

Peter's extract suggests that the body functions like an early warning system for signalling oncoming emotions. Similarly, **Tim** referred to being able to gauge the state of his mind by observing his breath during meditation:

> in rising falling [of the abdomen] you can read your situation. … the subtlety of your perception … the friction or the absence of friction.

(2b) Insight into mind-states of others

Meditation also offered participants a perceived glimpse into the minds and emotional states of significant others:

> **Peter**: … during those retreats, when I was being aware of what happened in my body and in my mind, I saw that there was a lot of fear in my father's mind. He was three years in, then, [place name] as a soldier, then, and he never talked about it when he came back. And … then I saw "Ah … that's why he didn't talk, that is why he told me 'You have to be hard' … 'you don't let [others see] your feelings' … I felt how he must have [suffered].

Peter's increased empathy for his father subsequently led to compassionate feelings including "softness and warmth around my heart," giving Peter "another view" of his estranged father. **Sophie** also recounted experiencing a similar feeling:

> when I started meditating … it's incredible because that second time and the third course, I saw the things clearly, like, it's not the fault of my father…we all have done things and, by seeing it so clearly, there was also immediately this forgiveness.

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[952] V Huta, "The complementary roles of eudaimonia and hedonia and how they can be pursued in practice," in (ed) J Smith, *Positive psychology in practice: promoting human flourishing in work, health, education, and everyday life*, 2nd ed Hoboken: Wiley, 2015:216-246.

[953] Vago & Silbersweig 2012.

[954] Garland et al, 2015.

Although these subordinate themes are in line with previous qualitative findings,[955] the extracts here make a clearer link to insights arising during the physical act of meditation.

Furthermore, Peter's repetitive use of "Ah" in both extracts to preface his insights suggests that these insights were experienced spontaneously, an interpretation made more plausible by Sophie's remark: "suddenly the answer is there or you see things clearly."

(2c) **Insight into the nature of reality**

The more advanced practitioners, in particular, talked about experiencing insights relating to the true nature of reality according to Buddhism, that is, the realization that all things are unsatisfactory, impermanent and devoid of intrinsic existence:[956]

> **Anna**: I would have never had this experience of 'no self' and understanding, I think, as I have without Vipassana.

Tim's extract provides a more experiential account of what impermanence and non-self felt like:

> And, when you're really there, then you reach a point where all the conceptual, eh, their meaning, disappears. So, then you can sit but you don't know who you are, you don't know that you're sitting, you don't know that you have a body here, or what your body looks like, or, what an arm is, or, the difference between an arm and a foot. You just feel sensations that are changing all the time.

This sense of a diminished self has been found in other studies with advanced mindfulness practitioners.[957] One explanation for this shift in self-perspective is provided by the S-ART model[958] that claims mindfulness meditation promotes a shift from a more autobiographical and evaluative self-referential state to one that is more experiential and present focused.[959]

It is important to note that the experience of non-self might be construed as pathological by Western psychological standards.[960] However, the fact that such a characterization did not come across in participants' accounts may be because they made sense of these experiences in light of Buddhist teachings, which consider such transcendental insights to be a sign of spiritual progress.[961]

6.3.3.3 From Imbalance to Balance: Attaining Equanimity

Previous studies have shown that Vipassana[M] meditation and related practices brought greater hedonic as well as eudaimonic well-being. However, participants' accounts revealed another type of well-being which seems to transcend these categories. They characterized it as a sense of "inner peace" (**Anna**) and "a sense of well-being you've never experienced" (**Tim**) stemming from an even-minded mental state, an equanimity that embraces all experiences equally, peacefully, and wisely:

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[955] **Hölzel** et al, 2006. **Machado** & Costa 2015.

[956] P Harvey, "Mindfulness in Theravāda Samatha and Vipassanā meditations, and in secular mindfulness," in (edd) E Shonin, W Van Gordon, & N N Singh, "Buddhist foundations of mindfulness," NY: Springer, 2015: 115-137.

[957] Eg Y Dor-Ziderman et al, op cit, 2013.

[958] Vago & Silbersweig 2012.

[959] J A **Brewer**, P D Worhunsky, J R Gray, Y Y Tang, J Weber, & H Kober, "Meditation experience is associated with differences in default mode network activity and connectivity," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108,50 2011:20254-20259. N A **Farb**, Z V Segal, H Mayberg, J Bean, D McKeon, Z Fatima, & A K Anderson, "Attending to the present: mindfulness meditation reveals distinct neural modes of self-reference," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 2,4 2007:313-322.

[960] **Dor-Ziderman** et al, 2013; P R **Fulton** & R D Siegel, "Buddhist and Western psychology: seeking common ground," in (edd) C K Germer, R D Siegel, & P R Fulton, *Mindfulness and psychotherapy*, NY: Guilford, 2005:28-54.

[961] Mahasi 2016.

Sophie: So, equanimity for me is that you stay more neutral, you can go back easier, you just acknowledge "Ok, if it's, whatever is there, the anger, the fear, the joy," but so there is less, less and less reaction.

Although Sophie understood the meaning of equanimity conceptually, she added: "I'm far from it," suggesting that this quality needed to grow over time to be experienced more fully and continuously. This evolving nature of equanimity was also be seen in **Anna**'s account who had greater meditation experience:

you can work on "I accept what is coming." Better or not, healthier or not, life or death. I accept. Or acceptance is too active, maybe, but I let it be as it comes. That's a step further and [there] is … more wisdom in it.

Anna's characterization of acceptance as "too active" suggests that equanimity initially has an active aspect to it, which over time transforms into a more passive "let it be" mode. This dual characterization of equanimity as both a volitional state or attitude and a more enduring, trait-like quality is in line with elucidations by Desbordes et al (2015).[962]
Another noteworthy aspect of Anna's feedback is the association of equanimity with wisdom. The following excerpt from **Tim** sheds light on this connection:

Equanimity … can easily be misunderstood, huh? … That it's just some mind state … that you like, and you're staying there … but … this changes, also. But if you [stay] in this … mind state of contentment even when everything is changing … the whole world can fall apart and then you're still sitting there.

This feedback conjures up a powerful image of stability and continuity amidst chaos, suggesting that equanimity is not always simply a transient pleasant emotional state, but could be a more enduring quality of mind which emerges with more advanced practice, yet enabling the practitioner to discern behind it all, impermanence—a characteristic of "ultimate reality" and therefore, wisdom. It is this wisdom that allows us to see a sense of pervasiveness of the wholesome that keeps us steady-minded.[963]
Although previous qualitative studies report that mindfulness helped participants experience greater equanimity in everyday life,[964] the present findings offer a more dynamic, nuanced and experiential characterization of this state as well as its relationship to Buddhist wisdom. Furthermore, participants' experiences of equanimity also appeared to reflect undertones of joy or happiness (*sukha*), a Buddhist notion referring to a long-lasting "state of flourishing that arises from mental balance and insight into the nature of reality."[965]

6.3.3.4 PHYSICAL AND INTERPERSONAL CHALLENGES

Besides the more positive consequences of Vipassana[M] meditation outlined so far, participants recalled facing difficulties. One such difficulty was especially related to the *physical* pain experienced during extended periods of formal meditation:

Peter: … all this physical pain; as I did sitting meditation and … walking meditation. So, in the moment I thought, "I, I can't handle this … I should go home. This is too much."

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[962] G Desbordes, T Gard, F A Hoge, B K Hölzel, C Kerr, S W Lazar, "Moving beyond mindfulness: defining equanimity as an outcome measure in meditation and contemplative research," *Mindfulness* 6,2 2015:356–372.
[963] Mahasi 2016.
[964] Machado & Costa 2015.
[965] P Ekman, R J Davidson, M Ricard, & A B Wallace, "Buddhist and psychological perspectives on emotions and well-being," in *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 14,2 2005:60.

Nevertheless, participants reported being able to gradually overcome these physical difficulties by remaining aware of and accepting the *pain* (that is, by way of decentering and nonattachment) [6.3.1.3]. However, Vipassana[M] meditation also resulted in more persistent, *interpersonal* difficulties. The source of this interpersonal conflict appeared to stem from what could be characterized as "clashing worldviews":

> **Peter**: That's one of the things that [hurt me] the most. I felt people don't see me any-more, they don't accept me anymore. But in the meantime, I didn't accept … the way they lived … that wasn't the way I [wanted] to live anymore.

> **Sophie:** But is also sometimes difficult because if I then talk to my boyfriend or to other people, and I see that they don't see it clear and I tell them (…) I say, "But it is the truth, I know it, I have seen it in my meditation." But they just don't understand …

Participants reported learning ways to navigate these conflicts. For instance, **Tim** reported that he had to be "a little bit cautious" of what he said around people. However, for **Sophie**, sometimes still struggled with "how to approach other people."

Negative experiences related to meditation practice is an under-researched topic, with studies thus far tending to focus on *adverse effects* such as psychosis[966] as well as impaired memory functioning, narcissism and reality testing.[967] Studies on the interpersonal effects of mindfulness meditation are also scarce,[968] with most studies reporting positive associations.[969]

This previously observed positive association is consistent with the finding in this study that participants experienced improved paternal relationships as a result of Vipassana[M] practice. However, similar interpersonal conflicts to those identified in this study have also been reported in a previous study with long-term Vipassana meditators,[970] suggesting that the link between mindfulness meditation and interpersonal outcomes is more complex than what current theoretical models and studies indicate.

6.3.4 Perceived processes[971]

This section presents themes related to how participants made sense of the mechanisms of Vipassana[M] meditation.

"CLEANSING" THE MIND

6.3.4.1 (1a) **Mindfulness and Supporting Mental Qualities**

When asked about their thoughts of how Vipassana[M] meditation produces salutary effects, participants used words and phrases such as "cleansing" (**Sophie**), "cleaning" (**Peter**) or "you can un-learn it [habitual emotional reactivity]" (**Tim**). **Peter** likened the process to that of peeling an onion:

> Vipassana works [by] just trying to be aware of [the "body, feelings, mind and dhammas"]

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[966] A W Hanley, N Abell, D S Osborn, A D Roehrig, & A I Canto, "Mind the gaps: are conclusions about mindfulness entirely conclusive?" *J of Counseling & Development 94,1 2016:103–113.*

[967] W Van Gordon, E Shonin, & M D Griffiths, "Are there adverse effects associated with mindfulness? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 51 2017a:977–979.

[968] J D Creswell, "Mindfulness interventions," *Annual Review of Psychology* 68 2017:491–516.

[969] Eg, Hölzel et al, 2006; Machado & Costa 2015.

[970] D H Shapiro, 1992:62–67.

[971] Based on Ekici et al 2020:144–147.

… it's like <u>an onion</u>, someone told me, and then there goes one part of the onion, and then
another, and [then] you come to the middle … Every time a little bit more of [the] defile-
ments [are taken] away.

For Peter, the process of purification appears to have started with awareness. This was corrobo-
rated by other participants' accounts: "that is the first step" (**Sophie**); "It is … because of the mind-
fulness, I think" (**Anna**). <u>The onion analogy</u> further suggests that this is an ongoing process whereby
unhelpful mental habits are progressively peeled away.

Peter's mention of 'body, feelings, mind, and the dhammas [specific contemplative frameworks
based on the teachings of the Buddha]"[972] refers to the 4 main categories of objects which Vipassana
meditators must contemplate according to **the Satipatthana Sutta** (M 10)—a key early Buddhist text
on how to establish mindfulness.[973] This indicates that Peter's understanding of the mechanisms of
Vipassana[M] meditation was influenced by these Buddhist teachings.

The Satipatthana Sutta (M 10) further describes how mindfulness does not operate in isolation
but is supported by several other mental qualities, such as effort and diligence as well as clear aware-
ness, freedom from sense-desire and so on (SD 13.1). This multicomponent characterization of mind-
fulness is also expressed by **Tim** who explained that "what normally is thought to be mindfulness is
actually a cooperation between a lot of other qualities, … [including] the right energy [and] the right
concentration."

6.3.4.2 <u>Right effort</u> is needed so that the meditator does not experience mental restlessness, or
at the opposite spectrum, sloth and torpor, being "fall asleep" (**Tim**), whereas concentration enables
"a mind who is quiet," so that "wisdom" can arise (**Anna**). A further quality that participants linked
to mindfulness is being "clearly aware" (*sampajano*),[974] the adjective form of *sampajañña*, "clear
awareness[975] or full comprehension:[976]

Anna: … mindfulness … in the Vipassana tradition goes always together with sampajāno …
that is wisdom.

According to **Tim**, "this knowing, this understanding' initially" consists of discerning clearly what
is happening at any one moment, such as noticing the tactile sensations during breathing (eg, "this is
the breath going in and pushing the belly out"). However, as the practice develops further, the medi-
tator's perception of reality changes:

And then, there's still knowing, but there are no more concepts … [and you become aware
of] the natural existence of feelings that are not yours or they are not your invention, but
they are there just there and that's when you come in touch with the tension, and, relax-
ation and hardness, and softness—these are the building blocks of every sensation. And
then there's one step [beyond] that and that you start to see … all these different sensations
that you feel … they are changing, changing, changing … [the] only binding characteristic is
change.

According to **Tim**, the nature of *sampajañña* changes over time, allowing the practitioner to dis-
cern the flow of experience in a more differentiated way, which subsequently leads to the direct ex-
perience of impermanence, or as Anna expressed it "wisdom." The experiences of Tim and Anna,
who relatively have more experience than the other participants, appear to be in line with Buddhist

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[972] Analayo Bhikkhu, *Satipatthana: the direct path to realization*, Birmingham: Windhorse, 2003.
[973] M 10/1:55–63 (SD 13.3); Analayo 2003.
[974] *Sampajano,* "clearly aware," is masc sg adj; *sampajañña,* "clear awareness," is the n stem. SD 13.1 (3.6).
[975] Analayo 2003.
[976] P Harvey, 2015.

teachings that recognize the dynamic and evolving nature of *sampajañña* along with its role in facili-tating wisdom.[977]

However, *sampajañña* and other supporting mental qualities have not been subject to in-depth empirically analysis meaning that when they are included in theoretical models such as the S-ART Model [6.3.1.4], their role in facilitating deeper insights or wisdom remains unclear.

6.3.4.3 (1b) Decentering and non-attachment

This theme related to how Vipassana[M] meditation helped participants to change their usual re-sponses to mental and emotional events. Peter expressed this process as not clinging to emotions: 'let them go, not keeping them', whereas Anna expressed it as to learning 'to surrender' to pain. So-phie talked about not getting caught up in her thoughts:

> Vipassana is like a tool for me to observe the mind, not to go in my thoughts anymore ... I think I had a really sticky mind [such] that whatever would pass, I would see it as truth ... [but] ... now I can recognize it 'Oh, there is this, again, hello!' and I just go back [to] doing the dishes or whatever I'm doing.

It appears that through Vipassana[M] meditation, Sophie was able to reduce her ruminative tendencies, leading her to respond more adaptively. For Tim, the process involved recognizing and unlearning' the tendency to crave positive and reject negative experiences:

> Yeah, it has to do with this wanting and not wanting. And, so this is something that creates your pain. But it is something that you have acquired. It's something you have learned. And so, you can unlearn it. And, this is what you do by standing still, being with whatever hap-pens and then, you don't react ... you disarm it. You make it functionless and that means that you gradually ... abandon this wanting and not wanting.

6.3.4.4 These participant feedbacks appear to illustrate several closely related processes—such as decentering and non-attachment [6.3.1.3]—that are outlined in extant theoretical models. For example, Tim's reference to how non-attachment gradually leads to the unlearning of maladaptive habits is similar to the process of exposure and extinction that is explicated in the S-ART model [6.3.1.4]. However, for **Tim**, the process extends well beyond behaviour change:

> And this wanting and not wanting creates, [sic] unrest, creates anxiety ... And all this anxiety and unrest, that slowly diminishes. And then in this calm ... you go even deeper, you find more of this friction, you find more unrest. You also bring that to calm and then go on and on and on and on and on. And then, this equanimity becomes very strong. And, you can go even deeper by going into this ever-changing nature of everything that happens.

Tim's feedback suggests that decentering and non-attachment do not end with mental calm and the alleviation of negative affect, but trigger multiple iterations of identifying and uprooting maladaptive habits, which eventually lead to increased equanimity and wisdom. Tim's feedback diverges from the pathway proposed in MMT [6.3.1.5], whereby decentering is posited to facilitate positive reappraisal and positive affect, rather than non-attachment and equanimity.

This discrepancy might be due to the different emotion regulation strategies used by novice and experienced meditators. For example, recent reviews of neurobiological studies have indicated that inexperienced meditators are more likely to use effortful emotion regulation strategies, such as re-

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[977] Analayo 2003; Bh Bodhi, *In the Buddha's Words,* Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2005.

appraisal, whereas experienced meditators rely more on implicit or spontaneous emotion regula-tion.[978]

This type of effortless bottom-up processing[979] accords with how the current sample of partici-pants, particularly Anna and Tim, who are more experienced, characterized and described equanimi-ty. Consequently, these findings suggest that theories such as MMT [6.3.1.5] also need to incorpo-rate a bottom-up emotion regulation pathway to reflect more advanced stages of mindfulness prac-tice.

6.3.5 Significance of the Study[980]

6.3.5.1 This qualitative IPA [6.3.2.2] study by Ekici, Garip and Van Gordon (2018) explored how experienced Vipassana[M] practitioners make sense of the effects of meditation on their lives and what processes they attribute to producing these outcomes. The in-depth and rich accounts of parti-cipants yielded **4 overarching themes** related to perceived effects of meditation [6.3.1.1].

Regarding the perceived mechanisms of meditation, participants regarded Vipassana[M] medita-tion as a "cleansing process" whereby unwholesome mental habits were gradually reduced by means of (a) mindfulness and supporting mental qualities [6.3.1.4] and (b) decentering and nonattachment [6.3.1.3].

Participants initially started Vipassana[M] meditation to manage psychological distress related to a lack of meaning and purpose in their lives. However, through cultivating mindfulness and non-attach-ment, participants reported gaining a greater awareness and understanding of their own and others' mental states, which led to reduced distress, increased positive affect, increased equanimity and im-proved psychological functioning.

Starting Vipassana[M] meditation also led participants to integrate early Buddhist teachings and practices into their lives. This appeared to enable them to engage more meaningfully with life and deepen their meditation practice, which resulted in shifts in perspective as to how they viewed real-ity. Through continued practice, this shift in perspective and increase in meditative wisdom enabled participants to experience life events with more equanimity. Greater equanimity, in turn, was per-ceived as inducing deeper states of calm and leading to further spirals of wisdom, equanimity and well-being.

6.3.5.2 A number of these outcomes and processes have been identified in previous research and theoretical models. The present findings (Ekici et al, 2018) informed in particular by feedbacks from more advanced practitioners, reveal more complex and dynamic patterns of interrelated pro-cesses, shaped by the broader Buddhist context for meditative and spiritual development.

Indeed, unlike other studies, the present findings suggest that the states of well-being experi-enced by advanced Vipassana[M] practitioners transcend hedonia and eudaimonia. Furthermore, par-ticipants' narratives provide a more nuanced understanding of long-term Vipassana[M] meditation, indicating that this is a physically and emotionally challenging practice that can produce both posi-tive and negative interpersonal outcomes.

Findings from this study point to several novel areas that require further investigation and which may inform future theoretical work. In particular, it is currently unclear how Vipassana[M] meditation gives rise to insights into the nature of self and reality. It has been suggested that there may be an

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[978] A **Chiesa**, A Serretti, & J C Jakobsen, "Mindfulness: top-down or bottom-up emotion regulation strategy?" *Clinical Psychology Review* 33,1 2013:82–96. S **Guendelman**, S Medeiros, & H Rampes, "Mindfulness and emo-tion regulation: insights from neurobiological, psychological, and clinical studies," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8 art 220 2017:1–23.

[979] Chiesa et al, 2013.

[980] Based on Ekici et al 2018:149 f.

association between the insights elicited by some forms of mindfulness meditation and the "aha" or Eureka moment that characterizes insight problem-solving.[981]

6.3.5.3 Similarly, IPA studies [6.3.2.2] of an intervention known as **Meditation Awareness Training** (MAT) suggest that insight arises as participants use mindful awareness to try to locate the "self-ness" of either themselves or of phenomena more generally.[982] Since this "selfness" cannot be found during meditative investigation, the practitioner gradually realizes they are empty of inherent existence.

However, more work is needed to elucidate how insights arise during embodied Vipassana[M] practice and what role knowledge of the Buddhist teachings plays in this process. Findings from this study also highlight a number of Buddhist constructs which may benefit from novel conceptualizations and/or recontextualization (ie, modern Western scientific modes of thinking need to adjust to make themselves compatible with the constructs) so that the mechanisms of mindfulness can be understood more fully. These constructs include mental qualities such as "clear awareness" (*sampajañña*), which are deemed to complement mindfulness, and enduring states of well-being such as equanimity and joy (*sukha*). Capturing the complexity and dynamism of these constructs is likely to be challenging, due to their subjective and opaque nature.[983]

Nevertheless, some preliminary efforts have begun, as exemplified by a recent study that has attempted to operationalize and measure equanimity in novice meditators.[984] Given that **Buddhist teachings and ethical practices** are deeply significant to how participants perceived the outcomes and processes of meditation, it may be worthwhile to investigate how provision of such teachings may help participants of MBI programs better understand these meditation techniques as well as integrate them more fully into their lives. This additional context may be more appropriate for participants who are experiencing existential distress and are more receptive to spiritual development.

6.3.5.4 It is encouraging to see that researchers and clinicians have already begun to incorporate Buddhist teachings and practices into existing interventions and therapies in a manner that is accessible to a secular, lay audience.[985] These approaches correspond to what have been termed the "**second-generation of mindfulness-based interventions**" (SG-MBIs)[986] and new SG-MBIs such as Meditation Awareness Training (MAT),[987] which have recently been tested in clinical trials, with

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[981] C J **Dahl**, A Lutz & R J Davidson, "Reconstructing and deconstructing the self: cognitive mechanisms in meditation practice," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 19,9 2015:515–523. I **Lebuda**, D L Zabelina, & M Karwowski, "Mind full of ideas: a meta-analysis of the mindfulness-creativity link," *Personality and Individual Differences* 93 2016:22–26.

[982] E **Shonin** & W Van Gordon "Managers' experiences of meditation awareness training," *Mindfulness* 6,4, 2015:899–909. W **Van Gordon**, E Shonin, & M D Griffiths, "Meditation Awareness Training for individuals with fibromyalgia syndrome: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of participants' experiences," *Mindfulness* 7,2 2016:409–419.

[983] Eberth & Sedlmeier 2012.

[984] Y Hadash, N Segev, G Tanay, P Goldstein, & A Bernstein, "The decoupling model of equanimity: theory, measurement, and test in a mindfulness intervention," *Mindfulness* 7,5 2016:1214–1226.

[985] L M **Monteiro**, Dharma and distress: Buddhist teachings that support the psychological principles in a mindfulness program. In E. Shonin, W. Van Gordon, & N. N. Singh (Eds.), Buddhist foundations of mindfulness,. NY: Springer, 2015:81–216. **Tirch** et al, 2016.

[986] W Van Gordon, E Shonin, & M D Griffiths, "Towards a second-generation of mindfulness-based interventions," *Australia and New Zealand J of Psychiatry* 49,7 2015: 591–592.

[987] W Van Gordon, E Shonin, T J Dunn, J Garcia-Campayo, & M D Griffiths, "Meditation Awareness Training for the treatment of fibromyalgia syndrome: a randomized controlled trial," *British J of Health Psychology* 22,1 2017b:186–206.

promising results.[988] However, more work is required to understand in what context and for whom SG-MBIs may yield the best outcomes.

A key finding from the Ekici-Garip-Van Gordon 2018 study was that extended Vipassana[M] meditation can lead to challenges in the interpersonal domain. It is reasonable to assume that challenges are associated with <u>the diligent practice of any form of Buddhist meditation</u> and are not necessarily detrimental in terms of the practitioner's long-term meditative development. However, more research is required to understand the scope of such experiences and under what circumstances they arise.

6.3.6 Limitations and new horizons[989]

6.3.6.1 In line with IPA's idiographic focus, the findings from the Ekici-Garip-Van Gordon 2018 study are limited to the experienced Vipassana[M] meditators practising within a Western (Dutch) context and may not generalize to other Vipassana[M] practitioners or experienced meditators following other Buddhist traditions, such as the equally rich **Kammatthana (or Samatha) traditions** of Thailand.[990] Experienced meditators in this vibrant tradition can be found in, for example, the Samatha Trust of the UK, and of course in Thailand (especially amongst the forest monks of Ajahn Chah), too.[991]

However, results learned from future IPA studies [6.3.2.2] on <u>experienced mindfulness meditators</u> may eventually allow researchers to claim more universal outcomes and mechanisms of action.[992] Although Vipassana[M] meditation was the participants' primary form of meditation practice, it is clear that the perceived effects and outcomes were also influenced by Buddhist teachings and ethical practices, including lovingkindness (*mettā*) meditation.[993]

Thus, it is not possible to attribute these outcomes solely to Vipassana[M] meditation. Nevertheless, the experiences of participants are consistent with outcomes and processes ascribed to Vipassana meditation in the early Buddhist tradition, which strengthens the conclusion that these findings may be linked to Vipassana[M] meditation.

6.3.6.2 Finally, the Ekici-Garip-Van Gordon 2018 study sample varied considerably in terms of years of meditation practice and ensuring more homogeneity regarding meditation experience remains a challenge for future mindfulness researchers. Nevertheless, this discrepancy also yielded valuable insights into how increased meditation experience may lead to more sophisticated understandings regarding the outcomes and mechanisms of long-term Vipassana[M] practice.

The Ekici-Garip-Van Gordon 2018 study indicated that future research can benefit from investigating emergence of insights during meditation, operationalization of novel Buddhist constructs, integration of ethics and Buddhist teachings into MBIs and examining adverse interpersonal effects of long-term meditation. Research into these topics will require further collaboration between Western contemplative scientists, Buddhist scholars and meditation practitioners.

Such work would also necessitate studies of a longitudinal nature, using novel theoretical and methodological approaches. For example, neurophenomenological studies in both the **Vipassana** (insight) and the **Samatha** (dhyana) traditions which combine first-person perspectives with neuro-

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[988] Eg, E **Shonin**, W Van Gordon, T J Dunn, N N Singh, & M D Griffiths, "Meditation Awareness Training (MAT) for work-related well-being and job performance: a randomized controlled trial," *International J of Mental Health and Addiction* 12,6 2014a:806–823. W **Van Gordon** et al , 2017b.

[989] Based on Ekici et al, 2020:150.

[990] On the Kammatthana meditation traditions, see SD 16,1b (3–5).

[991] On the Samatha Trust, see SD 161b (6–7).

[992] Smith et al, 2009.

[993] B W Mooneyham, M D Mrazek, A J Mrazek, & J W Schooler, "Signal or noise: brain network interactions underlying the experience and training of mindfulness," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1369,1 2016:240–256.

scientific methods (eg Dor-Ziderman et al, 2013)[994] offer an innovative and reliable manner for capturing the subjective experiences of meditators. Likewise, a novel paradigm known as embodied cognition, which acknowledges the role of body processes in shaping cognition,[995] may provide a more comprehensive understanding of an inherently embodied practice of the early Buddhist meditations.

6.3.6.3 WHERE DO WE LOOK NOW?

Thus far, the psychological researchers are not only studying the brain, they are beginning to appreciate the significance of the early Buddhist view of not locating the mind anywhere, that it can be *everywhere*: there is **the extended mind** and extended minds. Of course we are capable of thinking for ourself and for ourselves; hence, our minds can and must also be extended into one another. In important ways, when we understand one mind, especially our own, we also understand other minds—at least the mechanics of human minds.

The mind scientists who study **the meditating minds**, especially the meditating minds of expert Myanmar-based meditators who are purportedly Sotāpannas [6.2], and expert Dutch Vipassana meditators [6.3], are trying to study the minds of others. There was also a 2021 case of veteran UK meditator Peter M Forster who scientifically recorded his daily 90-minute meditation for 2 months, with an analysis of his own practice.[996]

Meditation, especially Theravāda meditation (based on the early Buddhist texts) will surely open up to us other aspects and potentials of our minds. For this purpose, we must seek out Theravāda Buddhists who keep to the meditating or contemplative tradition. We can see that **meditation** is alive and well in the Theravāda communities of SE Asia, especially of the Myanmar traditions (rich in Vipassana), and the Thai traditions (rich in Samatha and Kammatthana).

We have also noticed that some Theravāda countries either *have* lost their contemplative tradition for historical and political reasons—like Khmer [6.1.4] and Laos [6.1.5 f]—or *are* losing their contemplative tradition through modernizing and secularizing—like Sri Lanka [6.1.1]. We also notice the contemplative tradition rising in the West: for example, amongst the Dutch [6.3]. There is also a vibrant contemplative tradition in the UK itself, amongst members of **the Samatha Trust[997]** but which awaits close scientific studies of their meditating minds.

6.3.6.4 Mind scientists who study the meditating mind *only* with science may end up like the Christians or corporate meditators who see meditation the way Cinderella's stepmother restricts her to the scullery. When the scientific mind learns **early Buddhism**, it will be *twice blest* with the mind of modern science and the heart of ancient wisdom. Buddhist works of meditating monastics[998] who are also learned or scholarly would especially be helpful to scientific and humanitarian study. Monastics of the contemplative orders (like those of Myanmar and of Thailand) would especially be worth studying. For this, we must first sit up close to them as practitioners ourselves to properly study contemplative Buddhism and respectfully practise meditation ourselves, before we can put on monastic tonsures and look within them. We must then broaden our own horizons to see beyond scientific progress and work to better human lives.

As a living religion, Buddhism, especially Theravāda, is a rich evolving tradition. The mind scientists have, for example, identified "expert meditators" as the modern Sotāpannas of Myanmar. For better results, the scientists are well aware that they need to distinguish between meditative experience and ethnic and cultural conditionings [6.2.4]. Even then, there is something fascinating and real

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[994] Y Dor-Ziderman, A Berkovich-Ohana, J Glicksohn, & A Goldstein, "Mindfulness-induced selflessness: a MEG neurophenomenological study," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 7 art 582 2013:1–17.

[995] L E Shapiro, *Embodied Cognition,* Routledge, 2010 e-Library, 2011.

[996] P M Forster, "The inner life of an experienced meditator: from shopping lists to awakening," *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling* 6,1 2021:89–105.

[997] SD 6.1d (6).

[998] See SD 60.1b for a study on meditation masters of Myanmar and Thailand.

about these ethnoreligious conditionings, which need the expert scrutiny of both the sociologists and the psychologists.

We will now explore a new area of modern religious experience of the "expert Buddhists"—those who nurture or define this "expertise" [6.4 f] and those who declare themselves as experts [6.6]. We will close this section with a brief study of how even the minds of some of these experts can fail, and try to explore the significance of this [6.7].

6.4 EMBODYING THE PATH[999]

6.4.1 The abstract and the embodied

6.4.1.1 We have thus far examined how expert meditators in Burmese Vipassana [6.2] and expert Dutch Vipassana meditators [6.3] practised. We will look here at Michal Pagis' ethnographic study (2012) into how Goenka Vipassana—henceforth Vipassana[G]—meditators from the US and from Israel meditated over a long term (2 years, 2005-07). Pagis first conducted in-depth interviews with 60 meditators: 20 in the US and 40 in Israel.[1000]

Pagis based the interviews on a snowball sample,[1001] and she further conducted 3 to 5 follow-up interviews with 12 of the Israeli practitioners. She also had informal conversations and interactions with many of them in between the interviews. Second, she conducted participant observation in a Vipassana meditation centre in Israel and, for a shorter period, at one in Illinois.

The participant observation was not continuous, and the longest she stayed at the meditation centre was 10 days. In the meditation center, she recorded all of her observations, interactions and informal conversations in detailed field notes. The total time she spent in meditation centres during this period was 80 days.

Lastly, during these 2 years, Pagis attempted to practice meditation daily, turning herself into a subject of sociological inquiry. She followed her own experiences in a detailed personal diary, where she described her feelings, thoughts and experiences connected to meditation practice. "I found that turning myself into a subject of study was extremely helpful when investigating embodied experiences that resist articulation. It allowed me to do an ethnography *from* the body and not an ethnography *of* the body. It opened my eyes to the phenomenological life-world of the subjects of my study, as she became aware of the nuances of their experience."[1002]

6.4.1.2 Michal Pagis opens her paper by quoting this poignant anecdote as told by Goenka to the meditators on the last day of the 10-day Vipassana[G] retreat[1003] (here abridged and slightly revised):

> An illiterate old sailor met a young well-educated scholar on his ship.
> Scholar: "Have you heard of geology?"
> Sailor: "No, sir. I'm unschooled and illiterate I only know how to sail this boat."
> Scholar: "Too bad, old man, you've wasted a quarter of your life!"
>   Next evening the sailor met the scholar again.

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[999] Based on M Pagis, "From abstract concepts to experiential knowledge: embodying enlightenment in a meditation center," *Qualitative Sociology* 33,4 2010:469–489. [AcademiaEdu]

[1000] Interviews in Israel were conducted in Hebrew. Excerpts from these were conversations were tr by Pagis.

[1001] **Snowball sampling** is a technique to identify and recruit candidates for a study in which existing participants recommend additional potential participants, who themselves are observed and asked to nominate others, and so on until a sufficient number of participants is obtained. Researchers generally use snowball sampling if the population of interest is hard to locate, rare (eg, people who have an infrequent condition or disease), or otherwise limited. (APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015). [SimplyPsychology]

[1002] See M Pagis 2010:473–489. Here Pagis qu T J Csordas, "Somatic modes of attention," *Cultural Anthropology* 8 1993:135 f.

[1003] 10 Day Vipassana Discourses (English) - YouTube Listen to Tape 10, sec 41–45.

Scholar: "Have you heard of oceanography?"
Sailor: "No, sir. I only know how to sail this boat."
Scholar: "Old man, you have wasted half your life!"
        On another evening,
Scholar: "Old man, have you heard of meteorology?"
Sailor: "No, sir, I only know how to swim."
        On the 4th day, the ship struck a rock and was sinking. The old sailor ran to the scholar:
"Scholar sir, do you know swimology?" "What's that?" asked the scholar.
"Can you swim, sir?" "No," said the scholar.
"Too bad, sir, your whole life is wasted then!"

William Hart, who mentions this "story" in his book, ends this anecdote thus: "You may study all the 'ologies' of the world, but if you do not learn swimology, all your studies are useless. You may read and write books on swimming, you may debate on its subtle theoretical aspects, but how will that help you if you refuse to enter the water yourself? You must learn how to swim." (Hart 1987:10 f)[1004]

Any informed Buddhist teacher or a Vipassana instructor would warn us that if we are stuck in a head of theory or abstract concepts, we will never reach the heart of awakening. There is conceptual knowledge, and there is "embodied" knowledge;[1005] the former is theoretical, the latter experiential. To understand their difference, we need to answer the question "how do we know things?" (not in the philosophical sense, but in the "insight" or early Buddhist meditation sense).

How does meditation help us go from mere theoretical knowledge to experiential understanding that can enrich our lives, even free us from suffering? Before we can investigate this interesting development, we need to understand how we know things.

6.4.1.3 How do we know?[1006] We will attempt to answer this question from the early Buddhist textual tradition. This is succinctly explained by the Buddha in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), who tells us that we know *through* our 5 physical senses and the mind, and that *what* we can know (the objects of knowledge) are merely the 6 sense-objects. To imagine knowing beyond this is to vex ourselves.[1007] Thus to know is to be mindful through our senses and to be aware through our mind. We may *sense* things in a physical sense, but it is **the mind** that is behind all the "sensing." When the mind constructs its own truths with the sensings, we call that conceiving.

While we can only *sense* what is present before us, the mind often creates its own images or concepts by *projecting* the past or the future in place of the present. We then lose the present, and sense or see only the *phantom* that is the past or the *fantasy* that is the future. This is *normally* the virtual world, a looped reality of trying to repeat the past and imagining the future that we live in.

We do not see true reality because the sensing and the minding do not really coincide, or rather do not co-operate, that is, work together. Instead of the mind seeing or experiencing what we sense —see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think—we experience each of them as "things," as our creations: hence, they are called "**formations**" (*saṅkhārā*).

The teaching on formations, where the mind projects its own virtual reality parallels the modern idea of "embodied knowledge" [6.4.1.1] of Lakoff & Johnson (1999). Formations (always plural) are

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[1004] For the full anecdote, see W Hart, *The Art of Living: Vipassana as taught by S N Goenka,* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987:10 f. Qu in Pagis 2010:469 f.

[1005] G Lakoff & M Johnson (1999:20) developed the term "embodied concept," defining it as a thought structure "that is actually part of, or makes use of, the sensorimotor system." Embodied concepts challenge our common distinction between perception and conception, since in this scheme the process of using conceptions is based on sensory input. Lakoff & Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought,* NY: Basic Books, 1999.

[1006] On a psychology of knowing, see SD 60.1e (7).

[1007] S 35.23/4:15 (SD 7.1); see SD 60.1b (14.3.1.1).

when the mind is embodied in our body, that is, as sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought. When the knowing occurs deliberately it is <u>conative or karmic knowledge</u>; when it is habitual and un-conscious, it is <u>cognitive knowledge</u>. When we are *conscious* of sense-experiences and that it is this consciousness that experiences the path in this life, too—then it is called <u>spiritual knowledge</u>, that is, when we are conscious of the true nature of reality—its impermanence, unsatisfactoriness or its nonselfness—especially as awakened beings.[1008] We can also call this "embodied knowledge" since we do not see the mind and body as separate, but see only this "conscious body" (*saviññāṇaka,-kāya*).[1009]

6.4.1.4 With millennia of civilization and centuries of education, we have become very good, and are getting better, at **forming** ideas and views of things: we call this <u>knowledge</u>; when we can measure this knowledge, we call it theoretical <u>science</u>. We experience all this everywhere; it is universal; it is <u>universal knowledge</u>.

Simply, this is the knowing *that*—that fire is hot, that certain feelings are pleasant, that certain feelings are unpleasant, or that we know a language, the boiling point of water, or Pythagoras' theorem. On a more sophisticated level, we may know technical skills like being able to cast a fishing rod with skill, or play a game with grace and precision. It is a compound of muscle memory of the highest order refined by a lot of repetition. "It's just like riding a bike" somewhat sums it up. The ancient Greeks called it **techne**, the kind of activity, when well-practised, becomes almost automatic and requires little or no conscious thought at all.

Techne is when the mind simply but well knows how the senses work (or don't) and applies this knowledge in daily life. This is the <u>habitual</u> mind that knows what it's doing, but does not *think* or does not think *much* about it. Hence, it is the <u>reactive</u> mind based on habitual knowledge or instincts. This knowledge is useful in situations of repetitive or predictable actions such as shooting at a target, or playing music (in a broad sense), memorizing a passage or teaching something, and so on.

6.4.1.5 Then there is **metis** (literally "cunning"), the ancient Greek word for knowledge that is *local, specific*, and *practical*. It comes from experience, and cannot be codified the way that *techne* can. James C Scott, in his *Seeing Like a State* (1999), compares the general knowledge of navigation with the particular skill of piloting. Deepwater navigation is a general skill, but a local pilot knows well a specific port—a "local and situated knowledge," as Scott puts it, including its tides, currents, seasonal changes, shifting sandbars, and wind patterns.[1010] A pilot cannot move to another port and expect to have the same level of skill and local knowledge.[1011] In fact, in the UK (for example), only the port's pilot—neither the ship's pilot nor an independent pilot—can escort ships into it.

This is <u>experiential knowledge</u>, that is, a skill acquired by years of trial, error, and learning that wraps the technical skill embodied in *techne* inside a cocoon of accumulated lived and practical wisdom*.* In 1993, researchers in Alaska were baffled why the population of beluga whales dropped dramatically. During a group interview of local inhabitants, when the researchers asked about the ocean conditions, they were surprised by the somewhat incongruous mention of beavers. Then, some local elders clarified: "Don't you see? The beaver populations are increasing, they dam the streams where fish spawn, and that affects the fish that beluga eat." This was an example of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), which is a form of *metis.*[1012]

Such knowledge comes from learning as well as experience. The Pali Commentaries thus note that just as "by watching ripples and bubbles on the water surface we can know that there are fish below;

[1008] On "spiritual knowledge," see SD 60.1e (10.1.4).

[1009] On the "embodied mind" (*sa,viññāṇaka,kāya*), see SD 60.1e (1.2.5.1).

[1010] Such as described by Mark Twain in *Life on the Mississippi,* Boston, 1883. [Gutenberg]

[1011] J C Scott, Seeing Like a State: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed, New Haven & London: Yale Univ Press, 1999:316 f, 333.

[1012] H O Huntington, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge and beluga whales," Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival, 2010. [CulturalSurvival]

in the same way, we can know by observing the immoral actions of others, such as killing and false speech, that their mind is defiled" (MA 2:380). This is the kind of knowledge that comes from the calm and clarity of the meditative mind.

The Dhammapada Commentary (on Dh 285) records how Sāriputta teaches meditation to a monk who was a handsome young goldsmith's son. Sāriputta thinks that the meditation on bodily impurities (*asubha,kammaṭṭhāna*) would be appropriate for such a young man of the world. But the meditation does not work. Sāriputta then takes the monk to consult the Buddha. After interviewing the young monk, the Buddha declares that the goldsmith's son has been working with fine ornaments all his professional life; thus a pleasant (*manāpa*) meditation subject suits him better![1013]

6.4.1.6 The Buddha's wisdom seems to fit the wisdom that is *metis,* specific and practical [6.4.1.4]. It is actually a wisdom that has to do with meditation (*bhāvanā*) and that is cultivated through meditation, which forms a 3rd category of knowledge. Thus we have: (1) theoretical knowledge that is <u>learnt</u> from others, including academic or technical knowledge (*techne*); (2) practical knowledge that comes with careful <u>thinking</u> (*metis*); and (3) <u>liberating knowledge</u> that comes with meditation or mental cultivation. These are "the 3 wisdoms" (*ti,paññā*), as laid out in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) and **the Vibhaṅga,** thus:

(1) wisdom through listening or	academic knowledge	*suta,maya paññā*
(2) wisdom through thinking or	philosophical knowledge	*cintā,maya paññā*
(3) wisdom through cultivation or	insight knowledge	*bhavanā,maya paññā*
		(D 33,1.10(43)/3:219; Vbh 324)

"**Wisdom through cultivation**" or meditative knowledge is <u>spiritual insight </u>(simply *vipassana in* the early texts; *vipassana,ñāṇa* in the Abhidhamma). Spiritual insight or insight knowledge is *the direct experience of true reality* that progressively clears our mind of defilements and views, so that we understand things just as they are, in terms of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and nonself (*anattā*).[1014] In fact, these are the characteristics that the meditators, as reported by Pagis (2010), will be meditating on [6.4.3].

6.4.2 Truth, reality and awakening

6.4.2.1 Pagis continues her report by stating that all traditions of Vipassana practice are based on **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10), the discourse on the foundations of mindfulness[1015] [6.4.1.4]. In this Sutta, the Buddha teaches <u>4 objects of mindfulness</u> (*sati*):[1016] the body, feelings, the mind, and dhammas (realities arising in the mind). Vipassana[G], discussed in Pagis' study, follows a tradition that emphasizes mindfulness of 2 of these objects, those of the body and of feelings. A second popular version of Vipassana meditation also teaches embodied mindfulness, but does not accentuate body and sensations over the other 2 objects of mindfulness.[1017]

While many of the claims in Pagis' paper are relevant to both traditions, the emphasis on observing bodily feelings is unique to the teachings of Goenka (2009:473). Since Pagis sees considerable

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[1013] *Suvaṇṇa.kāra-t,thera Vatthu* (the story of the elder who was a goldsmith), DhA 20.9/3:425-429.

[1014] On the 3 characteristics, see SD 1.2 (2), SD 18.2 (2.2). On nonself, see **Dhamma,niyāma S** (A 3.134), SD 26.8.

[1015] Traditionally, Burmese teachers tend to favour **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 9) [6.5.1.4, 6.5.2.1], to which they add the bulk of **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141) as D 22,18-21, ie, the closing of D 9. [SD 13.1 (1.1.1)]

[1016] Pagis uses the term "awareness" which is usu used for *sampajañña*.

[1017] See eg W **Cadge**, Heartwood: The first generation of Theravada Buddhism in America, Univ of Chicago Press, 2005:35 f; I **Jordt**, Burma's mass lay meditation movement: Buddhism and the cultural construction of power, Athens: Ohio Univ Press, 2007: xii f; J C **Cook**, 'Hagiographic narrative and monastic practice: Buddhist morality and mastery amongst Thai Buddhist nuns," J of the Royal Anthropological Institute 15, 2009:349-364.

similarity when comparing the Israeli and the US cases, her paper uses examples from both coun-tries. All participants came from middle to higher socioeconomic backgrounds, and more than 90% had attained at least a bachelor's degree. The sample of interviewees that participated in this study begins with people who just completed their first meditation course and ends with those who have participated in long meditation retreats of 60 days.

In general, she finds that the participants in her study can be categorized into 2 groups. The first is composed of people who returned to 10-day meditation retreats. For them meditation was merely a tool for self-cultivation, and they showed little interest in progressing on the Buddhist path of awakening. The second was a core of more serious meditators who saw Dharma as their chosen way of life and had taken longer meditation courses. Whereas the examples used in this paper are taken from both groups, the large majority cases embodying Buddhist teachings appear in interviews and conversations with the serious practitioners who took meditation courses longer than 10 days.

6.4.2.2 Utilizing the analytic distinction between **conceptual knowledge** [6.4.1.3] and **embodied knowledge** [6.4.1.4 f], Pagis suggests that the Buddhist path towards wisdom can be seen as com-prising 2 kinds of epistemologies: the first is conceptual knowledge of the Dharma, and the second is embodied knowledge based on the experience of meditation practice. The application of this analy-tic distinction enables us to capture and analyze the experience of meditation practitioners, without assuming that the practice simply reflects theory.

Pagis, in her study, shows that the conceptual dimension of Buddhist knowledge is crucial in supplying guidance to meditation practice and enabling certain embodied experiences to make Bud-dhist sense. On the other hand, *without the embodied dimension*, Buddhist knowledge cannot be validated on the level of the individual—it cannot enter a practitioner's phenomenological reality.

Following Pagis' analysis thus offers a fresh perspective not only on *knowledge*, but also on the *embodied* process through which Buddhist wisdom is realized.[1018] In order to follow the relation between embodied knowledge and conceptual knowledge in Vipassana meditation, Pagis chooses to concentrate on **the 3 characteristics** central to early Buddhism, that is, *impermanence, suffering* and *nonself*.[1019]

6.4.2.3 Although these 3 characteristics are central to the Buddhist teaching, Pagis understands that, according to Buddhism, merely *believing* in these tenets will not lead to awakening. She quotes Collins (1982) in regard to the characteristic of nonself, thus:

> It is thus, according to Buddhism itself, only a first step cognitively to pay allegiance to the denial of self. To "realize" the truth of it personally—both to understand and to make it real—involves an affective change in the personality and psychology brought about by long and arduous practice.   (Collins, *Selfless Persons,* 1982:19)

As written above, the "realization" of the truth is referred to as wisdom. Buddhist texts offer more than one way to enter the field of wisdom and eventually reach awakening. In Burmese Thera-vāda, Vipassana meditation is considered the central practice that will lead a person to the path of awakening.

[1018] Pagis's fn 3: "Until recently, such a study was not possible, since meditation practice was mainly a monas-tic practice not shared with outsiders. The recent popularity of meditation practice among lay people enables us to approach this question empirically, through following ethnographically the gradual process by which Buddhist wisdom is cultivated." (2012:475 (7 digital)). See J C Cook, *Vipassana meditation and the monasticization of popular Buddhism in Thailand*, PhD thesis, Univ of Cambridge, UK, 2006.

[1019] Pagis use the terms "dissatisfaction, impermanence and not-self" (*dukkha, anicca, anattā*) and in this sequence.

6.4.2.4 Since the 20th century, with the rise of mass meditation movements, we have witnessed a growth in the popularity of Vipassana meditation.[1020] In these movements, Vipassana meditation is frequently advocated as a technique that follows "scientific" methods, since the practitioner themself explores the reality within themself and eventually experiences the truth.

Meditation practice is presented as a laboratory-like environment in which certain aspects of reality are exposed. To adapt **the analogy of a laboratory**, like the construction (or exposure) of scientific reality[1021] we can follow the construction of Buddhist reality during meditation courses and practice. Since the epistemic stance of Buddhist philosophy emphasizes embodied experience, Buddhist reality is exposed by supplying a *situated* environment that leads to certain experiences. These experiences are crucial for the realization of wisdom, and are necessary for Buddhist concepts to be able to receive a meaningful role in practitioners' everyday life. Without this embodied base, Buddhist concepts remain an abstraction and cannot become lived, embodied reality.

6.4.3 The sequence of the 3 characteristics

6.4.3.1 Michal Pagis, in her study of the Vipassana meditators (2010) is doing something very remarkable: she wants to know how the meditators understand and accept the 3 characteristics of early Buddhism, which she lists as dissatisfaction (*dukkha*), impermanence (*aniccā*) and not-self (*anattā*). In the suttas (even the Commentaries), we see, as a rule, the 3 characteristics listed as *anicca dukkha anatta,* that is, with impermanence listed first.

Pagis does not explain why she chose to discuss "**dissatisfaction**" (*dukkha*) first. My best guess is that she is keeping to the idea of the 4 noble truths, of which the first truth is that of suffering (*dukkha*). She has also used "dissatisfaction" as her translation for *dukkha,* while like most modern teachers and writers, I find "suffering" as a term that calls the spade a spade. Anyway, for the convenience of the reader, I have opted to use the original Pali, *dukkha* where Pagis uses *dissatisfaction,* with which I feel *dissatisfied*. (I will explain my reasons for this in the next two Sections.)

We are studying a scholar's perception of Buddhism, to understand how they think and see if there are new ways of looking at the Buddha Dharma. We should respect a scholar's work because they depend on it for their living: it's their job. For Dharma practitioners like myself, however, the Dharma *is* our livelihood: we work to live the Dharma for life. We are not scholars (not in the modern professional sense of academic elitism anyway), but since we do *profess* Buddhism—we have faith in the Buddha, we work to practise the Dharma, and look up to the arhats as our exemplars—we put the teaching above all other learning, as the Buddha teaches in **the Gārava Sutta** (S 6.2), that is, to put the teaching above even ourself, as our ideal especially when we are still unawakened.[1022]

For that reason—since our studies are intimately reflective of our desire to understand the Dharma better—we should thus follow the sutta sequence of the 3 characteristics—as *anicca dukkha anatta*—and discuss the significance of each characteristic in terms of what the meditators learned and how they adjust themselves accordingly, as observed and analyzed by Pagis. In a practical sense, this is a modern Buddhist commentary on a secular observation of Burmese Vipassana.

6.4.3.2 If we are to keep to the suttas, then, we should see the 3 characteristics as *anicca, dukkha* and *anatta*. It's proper to begin with reflecting on impermanence since it is the most easily seen of the triad. We do face suffering, but not as often as we see the effects of impermanence; and non-self is the most difficult to see of the three.

For this reason, **the Dhammapada** gives these 3 verses on the 3 characteristics in this sequence:

[1020] I Jordt 2007; J C Cook 2006.

[1021] B Latour, *Pandora's hope: Essays on the reality of science studies*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ Press, 1999: 15 f, 30-32, 949.

[1022] S 6.2 = **Uruvelā S 1** (A 4.21), SD 12.3. I often use "we," etc not in the royal sense (which is dated), but to be inclusive of those who enjoy the Dharma and want to live it, too.

All formations are impermanent.	*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*	(Dh 277)
All formations as suffering.	*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkha*	(Dh 278)
All dharmas are nonself.	s*abbe dhammā anattā*	(Dh 279)

SD 17.6 (6.1.3)

Essentially, **impermanence** (*anicca*) and **suffering** (*dukkha,* that is, bringing us suffering because of their very nature of not satisfying us fully) characterize the projected or constructed universe (**saṅkhārā**). Together these 2 characteristics are the time-space nature of existence. Whatever exists, is time-bound; thus time *is* existence, existence *is* time. What exists is our *experience* comprising of matter, that is, earth (solidity, resistance), water (fluidity, cohesiveness), fire (heat, decay) and wind (motion).

6.4.3.3 "**Formations**" is the term for all that are "mind-made" (*mano,maya*), both to what we make of our sensings (*saññā,* perceptions) and what we think or imagine (*papañca,* mental proliferation).[1023] We thus project our own views onto what is "out there," and they are only meaningful when we are **conscious** of them.[1024] We then *experience* them and *make sense* of them by naming them and giving meaning to them: we define them according to our views, habits, culture and history.

When we fail to understand the significance of impermanence and suffering, we react to them by imagining them as religion (eg the God-idea) or rationalizing them with science (time and space). The truth is not out there, but right here in our own mind. Hence, we have altogether 6 elements of existence, that is, *earth, water, fire, wind, space* and *consciousness*.[1025]

Since we are and can only be conscious *of* something, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is always *dependent* on "space-time continuum" (big words for "changes that occur in time and space"). Changes take up time and space (they just happen) but it is *we* who see that *change* (impermanence), and we are at the mercy of this change: this is suffering for us.[1026]

6.4.3.4 When we say "**changes that occur in time and space**," it seems as if "changes" are a separate reality from time and space. This may well be so but only in terms of language: when we *speak of* change, time and space. For example, we say "*it* is raining." English, being an "analytic" or "positional" language, prescribes that all pronouns must have an antecedent ("it" refers back to *something*). And so we are led into thinking that there is actually *a* "something."[1027]

In this connection, we should reflect on the short but remarkable teaching by the lay disciple Citta Gaha,pati (a non-returner) who, in reply to a monk's question, explains how we tend to reify things on account of the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hatred and delusion). **The Go,datta Sutta** (S 41.7) states that the unwholesome roots drive us to reify things in 3 ways, thus:

• "Lust is a maker of **measures**. Hatred is a maker of *measures*. Delusion is a maker of *measures*."[1028]
  This is overcome by the immeasurable liberations of mind (dhyana attainment of the lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity, then directing the mind into true reality).
• "Lust is **something**. Hatred is *something*. Delusion is *something*."[1029]
  This is overcome by the liberation of mind by nothingness (attainment of the 3rd formless dhyana, then directing the mind into true reality).

[1023] A late synonym is *maññana, "*conception, conceiving, imagining, thinking"; verb *maññati*. See **Mūla,pariyā-ya S** (M 1,3) n, SD 11.8; **Ejā S 1** (S 35.90), SD 29.10 (3); SD 31.10 (2.6); SD 53.11 (1.2.2.2).

[1024] On the early Buddhist teaching on consciousness, see *Viññāṇa* (SD 17.8a).

[1025] On the 6 elements (*dhātu*), see **Titth'āyatana S** (A 3:61,6) SD 6.8; **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,7+14-19), SD 4.17.

[1026] On the primary teachings on suffering, see **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56,11), SD 1.1.

[1027] https://websites.umich.edu/~jlawler/aue/itsraining.html. 30 Oct 2023

[1028] Rāgo kho bhante pamāṇa,karaṇo doso pamāṇa,karaṇo moho pamāṇa,karaṇo (S 41.7,11 f), SD 60.4.

[1029] *Rāgo kho bhante kiñcanaṁ doso kiñcanaṁ moho kiñcanaṁ* (S 41.7,13 f), SD 60.4. *Kiñcana* is a Pali terms for projective mental constructions.

• "<u>Lust</u> is a maker of **signs**. **Hatred** is a maker of *signs*. **Delusion** is a maker of *signs*."[1030]
     This is overcome by <u>the liberation of mind by nothingness</u> (attainment of the 3rd formless dhyana, then directing the mind into true reality).

When any of these **liberations** (*vimutti*) fully uproots the 3 roots, there is **the unshakeable liberation of mind** (*akuppa ceto,vimutti*) by which one destroys <u>the influxes</u> (*āsava*) of sensuality (body-based defilements), existence (existential defilements) and ignorance (the root defilement). One then becomes an arhat, fully awakened like the Buddha himself.

    6.4.3.5 "**Dharmas**" (*dhamma*) in Dh 279 refers to all existents, whatever that exists, except nirvana, which is neither a formation nor a dharma (a "thing").[1031] A good way to understand *dhamma* here is "the nature of things," that is, the *characteristic* or <u>principle</u> behind all that exists is **nonself**, with neither eternal essence nor abiding entity. Whatever exists can only exist in time.
     Since change and suffering just *happen* (the nature of things), we cannot point to any moment in time and say "It started here." In fact, the early Buddhists see time and space as being cyclic, a serpent biting its own tail. This cyclic nature has no "essential nature" or "abiding essence": there's nothing in all this that we can hold on to, or have ("to have" is a relating of "I," "me" or "mine").
     But there is no "I" without all these changes and suffering—the incessant arising and ceasing—of "other" states. We are "I" because there are "others": this is simply **conceit** (*māna*), a mental measuring; but there's nothing really measurable except moments. [1032] We vainly try to "have" these moments that are but <u>processes</u>: this is **craving** (*tanhā*), since we keep wanting "it" (a mental object) but they are impermanent.[1033] So we *identify* with "it" (a process) and see it as permanent or eternal (and call it God, Soul, and so on): these are our **views** (*diṭṭhi*).[1034] The principle that underlies all this process is called **nonself** (*anattā*).[1035]

    6.4.3.6 We often see the *anicca-dukkha-anattā* sequence in teachings regarding the nature of <u>the 5 aggregates</u> (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness), that is, **the aggregate-characteristic pericope**. The best known aggregate-characteristic pericope is found in **the Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59), stated thus (abridged):[1036]

    "Now, what do you think, bhikshus,
    … is <u>form</u> … <u>feeling</u> … <u>perception</u> … <u>formations</u> … <u>consciousness</u>[1037]
permanent or impermanent?"
  "**Impermanent**, bhante."
  "Whatever is *impermanent*, is it unsatisfactory [suffering] or satisfactory [pleasurable]?"[1038]

    [1030] *Rāgo kho bhante nimitta,karaṇo doso nimitta,karaṇo moho nimitta,karaṇo* (S 41.7,15 f), SD 60.4. Comy explains that lust, etc, are called "sign-makers" (*nimitta,karaṇa*) because they mark a person as being lustful, hating, or deluded. The meaning is that <u>lust</u> projects the "sign of beauty" (*subha,nimitta*) onto the mind, <u>hatred</u> the "sign of the repulsive" (*patigha,nimitta*), and <u>delusion</u> the signs of permanence, pleasure and self. (MA 2:354,30-355,5; SA 3:99,19-21)
    [1031] Nirvana is a reality in itself, "sub specie aeternitatis": SD 26.8 (1.2).
    [1032] See Me: The nature of conceit, SD 19.2a.
    [1033] See Mine: The nature of craving, SD 19.3.
    [1034] See I: The nature of identity, SD 19.1.
    [1035] On nonself (*anattā*), see **Is there a soul?** SD 2.16 & **Self and selves,** SD 26.9. On *dhamma* here and *anatta* as the principle underlying existence itself, see **Dhamma Niyāma S** (A 3.134), SD 26.8.
    [1036] A shorter version of this and foll sections are given as **Arahatā S 1** (S 22.76/3:82 f @ SD 26.7) = **Arahatā S 2** (S 22.77/3:84, without verse).
    [1037] This passage repeats in full for each of these 5 aggregates.
    [1038] *Dukkhaṁ vā sukhaṁ vā.* Here, the alternative tr, "painful," reminds us that whatever brings us pain or discomfort (bodily or mentally) is not liked by us. When the pain is gone, we feel some pleasure. However, even the pleasurable is impermanent, and when it is gone, we feel pain. Hence, both the painful and the pleasant are

> "**Unsatisfactory**, bhante."
>> "Whatever is *impermanent*, *unsatisfactory* and subject to change, is it fit to be regarded thus:
>> 'This is mine, this I am, this is **my self**'?"[1039]
>>> "No, bhante."   (S 22.59,12-16/3;67 f; Mv 1.6.42 f @ V 1L14), SD 1.2

From this pericope, we can see how it makes good sense to start the reflection on **impermanence** as characterizing all that exists: whatever exists, exists through change. It is harder for everyone to agree that all things are "suffering": some may claim that they are quite happy or that they think some things that are "eternal" or "heavenly." However, with *impermanence* it means that there is nothing that exists that does not change, we can then accept that to seek such a thing or try to hold on to any such idea would not be satisfactory; it would bring **suffering**.

When we accept that whatever exists is impermanent and suffering, it is not difficult to understand that neither "eternal state" (unchanging being or thing) nor "abiding essence" (a fixed thing) can exist, except perhaps in our imaginations. Even though we may not at first accept the 3rd characteristic (the most difficult of the triad), knowing it prepares us to be able to recognize this reality when we begin to see deeper into existence after understanding its impermanence and suffering. We will, in fact, see examples of such experiences in Pagis' report on the Vipassana meditators.

6.4.4 Seeing impermanence through Vipassana

6.4.4.1 The key practice in Vipassana meditation is the observation of the present moment, bringing about a new experience of time as **change** (*anicca*), that is, the first of the 3 characteristics. For most meditators then, the vision of *impermanence* is the first and easiest of the 3 characteristics (*ti,lakkhaṇa*).

Dan,[1040] a meditator in the retreat Pagis studied, for example, was quite familiar with the characteristic of impermanence even before he took up Vipassana. He had done some reading on *anicca* and could easily connect with the concept. But it was during the meditation retreat, he told Pagis, that he really experienced what impermanence was about:

> For me it [impermanence] is something that has been in my consciousness for a long time,
> at least since I first encountered Buddhism. But I feel like I feel more what *anicca* is about
> through meditation—I understood it pretty well on the intellectual level, but it was so easy
> for me to forget. And I would put it in words, but then forget—and now I remember it more.
> It is not a complex concept. I not only understand it more, I think I understand it more often.

In fact, we can clearly see that the very first and basic experience of Vipassana is seeing impermanence in the rise and fall through one's meditation. The Vipassana retreat begins with 3 days of

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"suffering" (*dukkha*). It is useful to understand this difference between pain and suffering. Simply put, pain is natural (we have a physical but conscious body, so we feel pain, whether tolerable or intolerable, which is a sign of irritability or sensitivity of our experiences); suffering is optional (we can train our minds not to be attached to what is pleasant or to reject what is unpleasant, and to regard even the neutral as being impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.)

[1039] *Etam mama, eso'ham asmi, eso me attâti.* These are "**the 3 graspings**" (*ti,vidha gāha*), ie, of view (*diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*), of conceit (*māna*) (MA 2:111, 225). The notion "this is mine" arises through craving; the notion "this I am" arises through conceit; the notion "this is my self" arises through views. These 3 considerations represent respectively the 3 kinds of mental proliferation (*papañca*) of self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*), and of conceit (*māna*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f). The opposite formula, *n'etaṁ mama, n'eso 'ham asmi, na mêso attā ti,* is applied below to the 5 aggregates [§§17-21]. See **§17** n. See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind,* 1995:32 f. For detailed studies, see **I: The nature of identity,** SD 19.1; **Me: The nature of conceit,** SD 19.2a; **Mine: The nature of craving,** SD 19.3.

[1040] The names of all interview subjects, as well as some details of their personal lives, have been changed to provide anonymity.

breath meditation. Only on the 4th day meditators begin mindfully observing <u>bodily feelings</u>. How-ever when novice meditators try to focus on breathing, they usually are unable to do so beyond just a few seconds.

When the meditator notices where the mind wanders to, they usually see a chaotic swing of the attention amongst the mind-objects. The meditator is distracted when they follow this distraction; but when they simply note how the mind is inconstant, they begin to see this as **the first experience of impermanence**.

6.4.4.2 The Vipassana retreat is organized in such a way so as to facilitate the students' seeing the occasions of impermanence. During the retreat, the students have to abstain from speaking, reading, and listening to music. They may speak with the meditation teacher just once a day if they wish, but even then for only 5 minutes. There is thus a careful restriction against arousing external mind-objects that distract the mind.

While it may be easier to keep out external mind-objects that are distracting, the untrained mind easily and often wanders *within* the mind. We think about <u>the past</u> or hope about <u>the future</u>; our mind swings between being *happy* and being *sad*; and these changes can happen quite rapidly. Take, for example, an incident Pagis witnessed in the meditation hall during one of the retreats.

Rina, a young woman, started <u>giggling</u>. She attempted to keep her mouth closed, but the bursts of laughter could be clearly heard. After a few minutes her laughter suddenly turned into loud sob-bing. Her whole body trembled and tears ran down her cheeks. She was trying to control her crying, but without success.

She then looked at the teaching assistant, who came to her and whispered in her ear that she could leave the room if she wished. She left the room sobbing. The emotional instability that Rina experienced is quite common in meditation courses. Again, with mindfulness, such events can be used by practitioners as a lesson regarding the <u>transient</u> nature of emotions.

When Pagis spoke to Rina at the end of the retreat, she said that after leaving the meditation hall she walked around the courtyard until she calmed down. In fact, after the incident she felt a deep peacefulness that stayed with her until the end of the retreat. When Pagis asked her why she laughed and cried, she said that she had not thought of their cause. She added that this experience led her to understand how all feelings and emotions are just arising and ceasing, and to understand why she should just observe them mindfully.[1041]

6.4.4.3 By keeping her emotional state in the conceptual frame of *impermanence*, Rina was able to work out a generalized rule, to enter **thirdness** (a general abstract understanding; see below). Giving a Buddhist meaning to this experience led Rina to accept it as progress on her path towards wisdom and thus gained support and motivation for her practice.

Firstness (in the writings of C S Peirce) refers to the experience of the present, before the past, the future, or other people enter the scene. It holds freshness and novelty that can only be felt but not articulated. **Secondness** is the experience of a brute fact, the moment in which future and past, self and other, enter the scene. **Thirdness** is the rule, the generalization, the abstract understanding.[1042]

6.4.4.4 From the 4th day of the retreat onwards, meditators observe bodily feelings. This is when their experience of <u>impermanence</u> occurs more often in an amplified manner. Watching the present moment highlights the subtleties of experience that are often ignored in daily life, or the pain is no-ticed with negative emotions worsening the pain by minding it more closely. This is called "owning the pain," instead of letting it go.

By simply watching the present moment of rising and falling of pain, we often notice it dissolving into subtle feelings. This observation often brings surprising nuances when the pain is *noticed but*

[1041] Pagis 2012:12 (digital).
[1042] See C S Peirce, *Collected Papers,* Harvard Univ Press, 1960: ch 2. Pagis 2010:326.

not felt, or it turns into an amalgam of feelings that are not painful. **Maria**, after her 2nd meditation retreat, described it thus:

> I was sitting and experiencing all this pain, and all this notion of impermanence seemed ridiculous to me—I mean, maybe this pain will go away one day, maybe when I die, but there is no way I am going to wait for this moment. But then, as I continued observing the details of the pain, it slowly disappeared and all these subtle sensations appeared. It was amazing.

Maria's feedback helps us understand the nature and importance of **conceptual knowledge** in the process of attaining Buddhist wisdom. The fact that Maria engaged with the concept of impermanence even before she experienced it explains why she easily accepted the feeling of bodily dissolution as "amazing."

6.4.4.5 For many meditators, however, the same bodily feeling can be viewed as frightening and unwelcome. **Sara** described this well: "I got to a point that in the meditation I felt that everything is constantly moving and changing, the sensations, and nothing felt solid in my body, and it was really scary so I immediately moved so that feeling would go away and I would have something stable to hold on to."

The awareness of the characteristic of *anicca* enabled **Maria** to give the experience its full Vipassana meaning, so the experience made good Buddhist sense and is not a random unpleasant event. For **Sara**, who did not attach the idea of *anicca* to her experience, the meaning of the event had little to do with Buddhist wisdom. However, instead of seeing that everything is impermanent, Sara moved in order to regain mental stability.

The rule is that to advance in meditation we have to keep observing painful feelings without moving for long periods. The conceptual frame of impermanence is vitally important in giving us the guidance and structure to our practice, motivating us to continue to meditate regardless of the unpleasantness of the experience.

6.4.4.6 In long meditation courses, our vision of impermanence is likely to grow deeper and wider: we see change in our feelings and in everything around us. Pagis spoke to **Dora** a week after she returned from her 2nd 20-day retreat. Comparing this retreat to the shorter ones, she saw the main difference is when in the past she *felt* impermanence:

> In the long course I could feel *anicca*. How everything changes. How my moods, emotions, sensations change all the time. I was really with *anicca*. I don't think that in a short course I ever felt it so clearly. It is something you can only experience in a long course. Now, for example, I cannot feel it. Maybe if I sit and meditate I could feel it, but not in the same depth as I did in the course.

From Dora's feedback, we can see that the better we are at meditating, the more proper effort we put into it, the more we are able to *feel* impermanence more "clearly." This feedback is similar to descriptions of perfecting other embodied skills: there is a shift from "thinking" to "feeling." According to Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1999), learning a skill involves a move from *rule following* to embodied knowledge.[1043]

Novice practitioners, in fact, tend to rely on rules and prescriptions, while better meditators do not need these abstractions, since the better they are the more they internalize such technicalities: their whole body sits and moves with the mind. It's like learning to play the piano. At first, the learner tends to be conscious of the notes, the fingering, the timing, the pedal and so on. The playing be-

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[1043] H L Dreyfus & S E Dreyfus, "The challenge of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment for cognitive science," on (edd) G Weiss & H F Haber, *Perspectives on Embodiment*, NY: Routledge, 1999.

comes mechanical. As the pianist becomes more proficient, they become natural, they play spontan-
eously with the whole body, being and beauty.[1044]

6.4.4.7 Buddhist training (*sikkhā*) is not about rules and rituals (although they serve their vital
purpose at the start), but about whole and wholesome self-transformation: spiritual liberation in-
volves both body and mind. This often starts, for most people, with embodying impermanence, see-
ing change in our body and mind. It is **an embodied transformation**.

To return to **Maria**'s description, we see that as a novice meditator, she processed the concept
of impermanence, analyzing it, wondering how and if it would appear in her meditation. The ab-
stract concept stood out, limiting her view: she was *thinking* about impermanence but not feeling it.

On the other hand, **Dora**, a more advanced meditator, began her feedback with the words "I
could feel *anicca*." For her, *anicca* was an embodied experience that came naturally to her during
her meditation. She neither analyzed it nor rationalized it. She felt *impermanence* in her whole
being, body and mind: it was an embodied skill.

Dora's feedback shows that she made good use of retreat conditions to intimately feel the full
range of the 3 characteristics in her meditation. She **contextualized** impermanence in her own mind;
she **situated** *suffering* in her body [6.4.5.3]. Even though Dora could not feel impermanence in every
moment, impermanence is a lived reality that pervades her life.

Thus when Pagis talked with Dora about her life, Dora frequently referred to impermanence. For
example, when she was having trouble at work and was feeling upset about it, she would say, "Yes,
you know, I am upset, but it will pass." When Pagis asked Dora if she used this insight regarding im-
permanence when she spoke with friends and family about their troubles, Dora said she did not:
"People do not want to hear that it would pass. You have to experience it in order to understand it."

6.4.5 Abstract purpose, embodied meaning: knowing *dukkha*[1045]

6.4.5.1 *Dukkha* is the second of the 3 characteristics [6.4.3.2]. Everyone experiences *dukkha* in
our daily lives. We have the means of avoiding *dukkha* (like not going out in the hot sun, or avoiding
certain people) or we learn to cope with it (we rest when we are tired, we watch a movie when we
are bored). In Buddhist teaching, we are taught not to fear *dukkha* but to face it and see it for what it
is. We are told, for example, that pleasure and pain are the sides of the same coin: the absence of
one brings about the other.

Due to the nature of **a meditation retreat**—especially constraints of time and resources, and
also for the right environment for practice—we must each keep to a timetable, given just enough
food and sleep, and are expected to practise for long hours with the minimum of comfort. In real
ways, we can say that the retreat environment is meant to exact some palpable suffering into us,
partly so that we see how we are attached to comfort, partly to see how our suffering is commen-
surate with that attachment. Then, as we let go of that attachment, and focus better on our medita-
tion (considering that we meditated properly), we begin to see *dukkha* for what it is, as a bodily
experience that we learn not to mind, that is, we leave the discomfort at the body level.[1046]

Sooner or later we must face *dukkha*. In order to embody *dukkha*, meditation courses are built
in a way that mirrors back to the students their attachments and love of comforts. The temporal and
physical patterns of the retreat differ from what our bodies are accustomed to. Retreatants wake up
at 4.00 am and begin to meditate at 4:30 am. They have breakfast at 6:30 am and then lunch at

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[1044] Matt Jenkins (one of my proofreaders) tells me that his driving instructor talked of 4 stages of learning:
1. unconscious incompetence (we do not know that we know nothing about a skill);
2. conscious incompetence (we are very aware of our failings);
3. conscious competence (we feel quite proud of ourselves that we are doing things correctly and well);
4. unconscious competence (we just do things without needing to reflect on them). 30 Oct 2023
[1045] Due to the different words for *dukkha* by Pagis, we will generally use the Pali term itself.
[1046] On the 2 kinds of pain, bodily and mental, see **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1), SD 5.4.

11.00 am. This early lunch is the last substantial meal of the day. At 5.00 pm, the new students receive a snack, while the experienced meditators receive only lemon water. The retreatants, therefore, are introduced to a new order of eating, sleeping and comfort, one that is very different from their daily life.

6.4.5.2 In Pagis' report, **Rachel**, describes her typical retreat experience:

Some people say they are hungry in the beginning of the course, and then the hunger goes away. For me it is the other way around. In all my meditation courses I was very hungry. And it becomes harder as the days go by—in the beginning I feel I have some reserves, but as the time passes I feel like I am disappearing. And I have pain. In the last course I had hard pains in my knees. It was very difficult.   (Pagis 2010:477)

Rachel's pain comes from the long hours of sitting meditation, a total of 11 hours a day, and therefore frequently experience soreness and pain. During these sittings, the meditators are told to observe their breath or their bodily feelings and avoid thinking or being distracted.[1047] Of these 11 hours, 3 hours—once in the morning, once in the afternoon and once in the evening—are called "*aditan*" (*adhiṭṭhāna*) sittings. *Aditan* means "strong determination," which means that the meditators have to sit very still while meditating. These hours are when they feel the full impact of *dukkha*.

Pagis herself attended one such meditation course, and recorded her experience of one of these sittings, thus:

In the beginning it all felt fine. I was sitting silently observing my breath and my bodily sensations. In fact I felt quite calm. After thirty minutes my leg started aching. I wanted to move it but remembered that I must stay still. And then I felt that a fly was walking on my hand. I almost opened my eyes to check if this was really a fly or my imagination. Now all my attention was on feeling that fly. I completely forgot about the leg. The movement of the fly was extremely irritating. I felt it move around, and was wishing so hard I could scratch my hand. I don't know how much time passed but it felt like forever. Then suddenly the fly was gone and I could go back to observing my breath and sensations. After a few minutes of relief, my leg started aching again. This time the pain was unbearable so I decided to move the leg just a little bit to relieve the pain. I did not stretch the leg; I just moved it very slowly so my other leg would not press on it. I felt such a relief. However, one minute later the leg started hurting again in its new position. It was as if the pain would not leave me.
                                                                            (Pagis 2010:477)

Painful sitting is common to all meditators, and with this comes a vital lesson. We feel pain in our leg and try to relieve it; then the back starts aching. We stretch our back to relax; then the leg starts aching again. *Dukkha* becomes an <u>embodied reality</u>: we realize how our body is attached to comfort, how unaccustomed we are to these postures, and how your body constantly begs you to move and end the pain; yet only new feelings of *dukkha* arise.

The suttas tell us that pleasant feelings, when they end, become a source of *dukkha*.[1048] Embodying *dukkha* is not limited to painful feelings: we realize that pleasures and good feelings, too, are a

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[1047] As Pagis has written elsewhere (Pagis, "Embodied self-reflexivity," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 62 2009: 265-283), Vipassana meditation is based on embodied self-reflexivity, one that avoids entering the realm of symbolic interpretation (ie, the realm of "thirdness"), thus not searching for the cause or meaning of sensations. In the examples presented in this paper, the interpretations of experiences as connected to Buddhist teachings take place through discursive reflexivity that follows meditation practice.

[1048] **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44) says: "pleasant feeling is *pleasant* when it persists, *painful* when it changes; painful feeling is *painful* when it persists, *pleasant* when it changes; neutral feeling is *pleasant* when there is knowledge of it, *painful* when there is no knowledge of it." (M 44,24.2) SD 40a.9.

part of *dukkha* as an advance stage in embodying *dukkha*. For example, as we keep watching the pain for longer periods, the painful feeling typically dissolves into subtle sensations, even disappears.

This change brings about a feeling of bliss and peace; yet such an experience is regarded in Buddhist teaching as not helpful, even a hindrance to progress on the path of awakening. The meditation teacher specifically warns us against this experience in our sitting, warning us not to be attached to these feelings: attachment will only lead to more suffering. These sensations, we are told, will also pass: when a pleasant feeling passes, pain returns. Yet, very often, we hope for such subtle sensations.

6.4.5.3 Dina recognized this tendency regarding pain [6.4.4.7] during her 4th meditation course:

"In the 4th course I realized that I am not really observing sensations, but instead I am searching for pleasant sensations, and if I have hard sensations I observed them wanting them to turn into pleasant sensations. And this wanting, this wanting to turn them into pleasant sensations, was an important part of my pain."   (Pagis 2010:478)

Dharma-wise, Dina's realization is a vital moment in the gradual embodiment of *dukkha*. She now knows that pleasant feelings are a source of *dukkha* and that, in fact, the expectation of pleasant feelings only worsen the pain. She came closer to realizing the Buddhist wisdom of *dukkha,* that the pleasures of life are not the opposite to *dukkha*, but are only latent *dukkha,* one side of the same coin whose other side is pleasure.

Dina says that she did not realize how pleasure and pain are related until after 4 meditation courses. She confessed to Pagis that she still has not fully internalized this reality that pleasure is latent *dukkha*. She still frequently finds herself trying to satisfy her desires and seek comfort. It seems that more than 20 days, even including meditation courses, are needed to internalize the reality of *dukkha.* Pagis, in fact, thinks that retreatants should prepare well for the long retreats, that only after taking 5 courses of 10 days, and practising at home for 2 hours a day for a year, can practitioners join a course of 20 days. (2010: 478)

6.4.5.4 When **Peter** returned from his first 20-day course he described his emotional state as follows:

I tried to watch TV and it was *Special Victims Unit* in *Law and Order* in which some 16-year-old girl in Queens dies and it turns out she was in porn movies and HIV positive and she infected like the entire population in Queens, and then there was this show about children who were locked in a basement, and I just felt—this is just terrible, this is so sad, so bad, I felt horrible emotionally and physically. And I just said, this is not getting easier!

Since in the 20-day course you get a chance to understand the enormousness of the task, in which you have to stay with *dukkha* and bad sensations in every waking hour—and you can't switch it off, there is an effort required to stay with physical sensations—and this is why it is such an enormous task, since anything else you can turn off from time to time. And that really scared me.

And there is this thought about your sense of *dukkha*—and I felt, why do I want to know more about *dukkha*? I have enough of that, does that mean that everything in my life is going to taste like sand, is going to have a bitter after-taste? And this is the emotional stage with which I came back.   (Pagis 2010:478)

From Peter's feedback, we can see how the 2 dimensions of knowledge—the conceptual and the embodied—support one another in a total meaningful act leading to an understanding of *dukkha* as a transcendent but generalized sense of reality. Although this is a new experience for Peter, he is surprised by its depth: this taste of the bitter fruit of *dukkha* is an experience of **firstness** [6.4.4.3], of which Peter "felt horrible, emotionally and physically." The Buddhist term for this kind of feeling is

saṁvega, a sense of spiritual urgency: the emotion that overwhelmed young Siddhattha when he sees the first 3 of the 4 sights, spurring him to renounce the world.[1049]

6.4.5.5 In Csordas' (1990)[1050] terms, this experience was <u>pre-objective</u>,[1051] being both spontaneous and physical. Yet this experience did not stay in the realm of firstness. If we follow the process of objectification that took place, we see that while reflecting on this embodied experience, **Peter** used an available cultural or conventional frame, the one offered in Vipassana courses, in order to give the experience its fully objectified conventional meaning. He therefore moved from firstness to thirdness, connecting between embodied experience and abstract concepts.

However, the conceptual frame of *dukkha* did not merely serve as a prior "mental category"[1052] that was not influenced by its implementation. The experience itself, as an embodied and sensual event, left its mark on Peter. It changed the way Peter understood *dukkha*—it was suddenly enormous, encompassing, immanent, taking over every moment of life. When Pagis talked to Peter again a few weeks later, he told her that the strong feeling of *dukkha* had weakened since the end of the course.

But, Peter added, the memory of this feeling did not disappear. Whenever he thought of *dukkha,* that emotional feeling with which he had ended the course arose in his body again. Utilizing Lakoff and Johnson's term,[1053] *dukkha* had turned into an "embodied concept." To recall, <u>an embodied concept</u> is a thought process that is based on information coming from the sensorimotor system (the physical sense-faculties). An embodied concept, thus, involves both thinking and feeling at the same time and the mind. For Peter, to think *dukkha* is to feel *dukkha*. The concept was no longer abstract; it was now internalized with the body.

6.4.6 Experiencing nonself

6.4.6.1 Nonself is the most profound of the 3 characteristics, and also the most difficult simply because of the way we are used to thinking and speaking. Hence, it is not easy to embody <u>nonself</u>, especially when the culture and religion we come from tend to be self-centred even when we think we do not identify with them. We have nevertheless been conditioned to think of "the self" since the time we were born. Indeed, this self-identification with our mate, our family, our tribe, our environment, with the universe, goes as far back as our evolution.

As society becomes civilized, the urbanized rulers and priests desired <u>social control</u>. The idea of **self** (*attā*) is nurtured by rulers and priests so that this self or soul could be identified with some higher power, with God and so on. Those who identify closest to the God-idea and similar idea are then able to control others not so familiar with such a view.

In the Buddha's time—as was common throughout the ancient civilized world then—the priests exploited the self-view to proclaim themselves as the way, the truth, the life—there is no other—so that the masses had to look up to them and depend on them. It was also an age of religious reform and intellectual revolt. The loudest and clearest voice of dissent against <u>the priestcraft of the self</u> was that of the Buddha.

[1049] On *saṁvega*, see SD 1.11 (3); SD 9 (7.6); SD 60.1e (8.1.1).

[1050] T J Csordas, "Somatic modes of attention," *Cultural Anthropology* 8 1993:135-156.

[1051] "Pre-objective" refers to an embodied experience that has not been given a name and an abstract category, that has not reached thirdness. M **Merleau-Ponty**, *Phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge 1945, 2018:xvii passim; T J **Csordas**, "Embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology," *Ethos,* 18 1990:5-47. **Pagis** 2010: 472 f.

[1052] E Zerubavel, Social mindscapes: an invitation to cognitive sociology, Cambridge: Harvard Univ Press, 1997.

[1053] G Lakoff & M Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought, NY: Basic Books, 1999.

6.4.6.2 Understandably, one of his key teachings concerns "**the conceit 'I am'**" (*asmi,māna*),[1054] the notion that we are unique and above all else. When this insidious wrong view is manifest polit-ically, we have social strife, violence, war, and leaders of nations trying to conquer or at least subdue other nations.

On a personal level, we are each similarly primed and driven by self-view, such as the conceit "I am" to impose our self on others, to dominate others, even to violate others. Hence, the Buddha prescribes not killing, the gravest violence, as the very first precept, in our moral and social training. On the basis of this moral training, we should then train ourself to let go of the self-view by looking deep into ourself to feel the 3 characteristics: *impermanence, suffering and nonself*.

Thus we have many **suttas**, records of the teachings of the Buddha and the early arhats, discuss-ing the process of mental transformation. In this connection, **the Khemaka Sutta** (S 22.89) gives a very instructive (somewhat humorous) account on the difficulty of realizing nonself.

Some 60 elder monks, learning that the forest monk Khemaka is gravely ill, sends another monk to ask after Khemaka. The elders wonder if Khemaka has attained arhathood. Khemaka replies:

> "Although the notion 'I am' in terms of the 5 aggregates of clinging has come to me, I do not regard any of them as 'This I am'."
> (*api ca me āvuso pañcasu upādāna-k,khandhesu asmî ti adhigataṁ ayam aham asmî ti ca na samanupassāmî ti*).   (S 22.89,11+20/3:128, 130)[1055]

Khemaka then uses the metaphor of **lotus-scent**: the smell is there, but we cannot say that origin-ates (from the petals, or colours, or pollen, etc). Even though a noble disciple has eradicated the 5 lower fetters,[1056] there is still a residue of the conceit "I am," of the desire "I am," of the latent tend-ency to think "I am" in the aggregates of clinging.

Using another metaphor, Khemaka explains how a piece of cloth, after being washed clean, still has a residual smell of what is used to wash it. At that time, Khemaka is still a non-returner (*anāgā-mi*): he does not hold on to any self-view even when it does arise in his mind. Only the arhat is fully free from all forms of self-view. At the end of the sutta, while Khemaka teaches the Dharma to the 60 elders, they all (including Khemaka) become arhats.

The point of the Khemaka story is that even a non-returner—who has overcome the 5 lower fet-ters (meaning that he would never be reborn in the sense-world)—still has thoughts of self-view arising in him even though he does not hold on to any such views. Hence, it is impossible for the ordinary person to overcome non-self. However, we can begin to understand what it is, and not be driven into unwholesome actions on account of self-view, and to quickly recover from mistakes we have made on that same account.[1057]

6.4.6.3 Although the teaching of nonself and the idea that "there is no I" are mentioned during retreats, during the meditation interviews they rarely come up naturally. Even when retreat teachers asked meditators about it, they would often reply in ways that do not relate to Buddhist teachings. The point is that this is the least familiar of the 3 characteristics to most meditators. Even in the more advanced meditators who may show some understanding of the concept, they do not normally

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[1054] SD 19.2a (6.3) 5; SD 31.13 (2).

[1055] "He notices a self or that which pertains to a self ... " (*na kiñci attaṁ vā attaniyaṁ vā samanupassati*); "I have a *sense* of 'I am' ... " (*asmī ti adhigataṁ ... ayam aham asmī ti ca na samanupassati*); "the conceit of 'I am'" (*asmī ti māna*); "the desire for 'I am'" (*asmī ti chando*) "the latent tendency to (think) 'I am'" (*asmī ti anusayo*) (S 22.89/3:126-132), SD 14.13. Cf **(Anattā) Udayī S** (S 35.193) *n'ev'attānaṁ na attaniyaṁ samanupassati* (S 35.193 [Be 234] /4:168), SD 26.4.

[1056] The 5 lower fetters are: (1) self-identity view, (2) doubt, (3) attachment to rituals and vows, (4) sensual lust, and (5) repulsion: SD 60.1d (3.3.4.1).

[1057] See Amaro, "Unshakeable well-being: is the Buddhist concept of enlightenment a meaningful possibility in the current age?" *Mindfulness* 10 2019:1954.

relate it to their meditation experience. At best, the concept of nonself remains at an abstract level, a theoretical idea.

When for example Pagis asked **Dora**, who had taken two 20-day courses and more than a dozen 10-day retreats, if she was familiar with this concept of nonself, she answered:

> I found it difficult to connect to this notion emotionally. I connect to it intellectually. I think that this is how it is, that there is not "I," it is just a system that nourishes itself. But the whole point is to be in an emotional state in which you have no attachments, in which it does not matter—now something is happening that I want, and now something is happening that I don't want, and all this does not matter since this is the system and it's karma. And I am not there—I have a lot of "I," a lot of things I want or don't want.
>
> (Pagis 2010:482)

Like Dora, many meditators see nonself as a concept that none of them has internalized: they have not experienced it. Some meditators even "warned Pagis against trying to act according to the notion without yet realizing it as a reality."[1058] **Daniel**, for example, said:

> I think I had experiences in which I tried to act as if there is no "I" and it hasn't helped at all, and in fact it just put me deeper into suffering, since it was not coming from the authentic belief that there is no I, it was coming from "I should believe that there is no I."
>
> (Pagis 2010:482)

6.4.6.4 How does one embody a key Buddhist teaching that is so far from one's normal or natural experience? A strong hint is given in **the aggregate-characteristic pericope** [6.4.3.6] which is a reflection on the 3 characteristics: we begin by examining <u>impermanence</u>; what is *impermanent* can never really satisfy us: it's <u>suffering</u> to want any of it. We cannot *have* or *own* whatever that is impermanent and suffering: this is <u>nonself.</u>

Would it help in our understanding of **nonself** to see what is palpably *impermanent* and *suffering,* especially the nature of our own body?[1059] In an advanced meditation course called **the Satipatthana Course**, the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (D 9) [6.5.1.4] is read and explained. In this first of the 4 satipatthanas, the "contemplation of the body" (*kāyânupassanā*), the Buddha recommends monks to observe the impermanent and decaying nature of the rotting corpses in a charnel ground:

> … just as if he were to see bodily remains [a corpse] thrown aside in a charnel-ground,
> one, two, three days dead, bloated, livid [discoloured], festering,
> so, too, he compares this very body with that, thinking:
> "Such is the nature of this body: it will become like that—this is unavoidable."
>
> (D 9,7/2:295), SD 13.2

For the laity, especially those habitually world-bound, the "charnel ground" practice is simply overkill; it is specifically meant only for the ready monk, and there are rules governing the practice for safety and efficacy. Anyway, we can hardly see a charnel ground nowadays, except perhaps the "sky burial" grounds in remote Tibet.[1060] We know today that such places can be unhygienic, too.

A modern alternative to the ancient charnel ground practice may be watching an autopsy (especially when the meditator is a medical student). In fact, in the first years of the Satipatthana Course it included a video screening of an autopsy, so that meditators were able to see dead bodies. It is

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[1058] Pagis 2010:482.

[1059] See eg S Collins, "What are Buddhist *doing* when they deny the self?" in (ed) F E Reynolds & D Tracy, *Religion and Practical Reason: new essays in the comparative philosophy of religions*, State Univ of New York Press, 1994:73-79.

[1060] D Martin, "On the cultural ecology of sky burial on the Himalayan Plateau," *East and West* 46,3-4 Dec 1996:353-370. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sky_burial.

unlikely to be like looking at a charnel ground, and would probably be more gruesome. Anyway, the screening was abandoned due to the negative reactions of some students. Anyway, the charnel ground practice is an unwise choice (mainly due to health reasons) for the laity and is best avoided.

6.4.6.5 After completing a Satipatthana Course, **Rachel**, who had been meditating for 3 years, felt that she had gotten a glimpse of what <u>nonself</u> is really about. In her feedback, she said:,

> I was sitting in meditation going through my body, and I was feeling the bones, the teeth, the muscles, the flesh, all this flesh, and suddenly you realize that this is all there is, just bones and muscles and teeth and fingernails and it is all rotting away, every minute it is just rotting away.
>
> (Pagis 2010:483)

Deep meditations may bring some people closer to some appreciation of nonself. Even then, such experiences are likely to be chance glimpses of a very profound experience. However, there may be the rare exception. **Josh**, for example, who took a 30-day meditation course, described an experience he had a few times while in deep meditation as follows:

> For me that can happen primarily in meditation as I recognize the solution [the realization of nonself], and then it comes to me—what here is solid? What here is lasting? What is going to stay when this body falls away?
>
> And I don't have an answer, the only answer that comes up is again something that I can't really try to explain, it would be silly to try and explain … and you know, at a certain point I say, "Jesus, everything is hollow here—what the hell is going on?" … not that I have experienced the solution, but it is an extrapolation of what I feel now.
>
> (Pagis 2010:483)

6.4.6.6 Ordinarily, not all meditators, even during advanced meditation retreats, will experience nonself or, to use **Josh**'s word, "recognize" a vision of nonself. It is more likely that advanced meditators will internalize the concepts of *dukkha* and impermanence than experience "a feeling of hollowness as implying that there is no 'I'." Only in one of Pagis' course interviews, conducted with a senior teacher who had taken meditation courses of 45 and 60 days, did a meditator speak passionately of an experience of the disappearance of the feeling "I am":

> There is nothing here—you understand that this is just a sequence of happenings. It is not me that is recognized with this name, with what I like, with my personality. Nothing! It all disappears. And you understand it both when looking to the past and when looking to the future. This fixation of yours on your name is totally temporary—it is just a block in an ongoing sequence to which you suddenly give a specific name and you are so identified with that name—this is I and this is mine.
>
> (Pagis 2010:483)

Pagis thinks that **nonself** is:

> a process that requires intensive and continuous meditation. Since this concept is extremely distanced from daily reality, for most meditators, not-self remains an abstraction and has little anchoring in the body. Some may believe they can imagine what such an experience would feel like. Others simply feel no connection with the experience at all.
>
> Again, knowing the concept and the theory, in this case, is not a guarantee of reaching a full realization of not-self. This realization only takes place when a meditator finds the right embodied experience and utilizes the conceptual frame in order to move from firstness to thirdness. These instances of realization infuse the concept with embodied meaning, thus connecting not-self to the realm of lived reality.
>
> (Pagis 2010:483 f)

6.4.6.7 What Pagis writes about **nonself** [6.4.6.6] is mostly true, but it is a scholar's insight that is much closer to early Buddhist teachings than most scholarly writings and enterprises. The next step that Pagis should take is to consider nonself as a <u>feeling</u>, in the sense of a direct joyful experience. It is unlikely that nonself will ever be experienced or appreciated in Vipassana meditation, which is for the cultivation of insight, except perhaps by those who truly enjoy their meditation. I am thus inclined to see nonself as an experience that is more readily experienced with samatha practice, that is, the calming of the mind to the level of samadhi, even dhyana.

An arhat could break through into a thoroughly joyful vision of nonself mainly because they are not hindered by any sensual desire. The greatest hindrance to seeing nonself are the senses; a sense-experience draws us out of our body to project a sense of self onto that experience. To embody nonself we must still ourself within the body through the mind. Only then we are able to transcend the senses, even for a moment, perhaps to catch a glimpse of <u>the bliss of nonself</u>. Hence, a good musician or artist or dancer or poet, someone who is able to fully renounce the senses for pure feelings—the free mind, so to speak, or the full heart—will enjoy nonself. We must learn to be joyful first before we can ever taste nonself.

To savour the sweet taste of nonself, we must lose the self into everything around us. This total renunciation of the self can only be done by an arhat or an adept meditator, but we can feel the subtle yet explosive touch of nonself through a simple nature exercise, such as losing ourself into the ripples in a still water surface.[1061]

6.4.7 Living true reality

6.4.7.1 Let me venture to say that the essence of Pagis' paper is the <u>internalizing</u> of the 3 characteristics by **embodying** them, at least the first 2 characteristics: impermanence and suffering. Pagis feels that a long retreat or long meditation is needed for such an embodiment of any of these characteristics.

We begin with what we **know**, an abstract concept of impermanence, suffering and possibly nonself. Then there are <u>moments</u> of realization, when we experience impermanence or suffering, even nonself. However, though we can meditate anywhere and any time, **long meditation retreats** are the best conditions for reaching <u>deep embodiment</u> of the 3 characteristics.

This wisdom—self-realized understanding of any of the characteristics—is called "**situated knowledge**," meaning knowledge that is enacted and gained in specific environments or situations.[1062] Scientists, as a rule, learn from <u>situated knowing</u>: they often learn new and important facts in an ideal "situation" called **the laboratory**.

A proper meditation retreat is like a "laboratory," separated from distractions of daily life, and where we can use the ideal space and situation to discover calm and clarity through meditation for learning more about ourself. Like laboratories, meditation centers are places where the complexities of life can be put aside, so that we can observe, analyze and reconstruct the self in a relatively "sterile" environment.[1063] Meditation centers are very similar around the world, having almost identical spatial, temporal and social arrangements.[1064] The strict control over these retreat conditions increases the probability that they will help us embody our experiences of the 3 characteristics.

[1061] For the ripples reflection, see SD 17.8b (2.1.3).

[1062] D Haraway, "Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14 1988:575-599.

[1063] K Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic cultures: How the sciences make knowledge*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

[1064] M Pagis, "Producing intersubjectivity in silence: an ethnographic study of meditation practice," *Ethnography,* 11 2010:309-328.

6.4.7.2 However, the fact that this realization is situated in a particular environment creates a tension between the retreat centre and everyday life.[1065] Early Buddhism is aware of such a tension, and to ease it, the suttas explain reality in terms of the 2 truths (*sacca*) or realities (*dhamma*):[1066] the ultimate and the conventional. **Ultimate reality** is seen in meditation, where the meditator experiences impermanence, suffering and nonself. **Conventional reality** is the routine we see in daily life, where we perceive selves as permanent and the body stable. These 2 truths are simply 2 perspectives of the same reality.

Ultimate reality is considered the appropriate perspective in the context of meditation practice, while conventional reality is the practical perspective in our daily life and social interaction. Even after experiencing ultimate reality, when leaving the meditation center for everyday life we have to change back to a conventional perspective, since we will have difficulties acting in daily life while feeling our body dissolving into subtle sensations, or while constantly experiencing deep suffering.

Pagis, for instance, once observed how a practitioner could not stop feeling subtle sensations in his body even after completing a course. During the course, experiencing these sensations was seen as an experience of impermanence. After the retreat, the practitioner was terrified by the fact that these feelings kept haunting him. He walked around the meditation centre looking quite startled and was afraid to leave. At the teachers' recommendation he stayed on at the meditation centre one more day. By the end of the day the feelings had subsided and he was able to return to normal, daily reality.

6.4.7.3 Understandably, the distinction between ultimate and conventional reality is not meant to be strict. The fact that one reality is called "ultimate" and the other "conventional" implies that one perspective (the ultimate one) is superior to the other in terms of reflecting the truth. Therefore, to progress towards the path of awakening, we should fall back on the perspective of ultimate reality even outside the retreat centre.

In order to progress towards awakening, a certain level of understanding of **ultimate reality** must remain with us even when we are acting in conventional reality, constantly reminding ourselves that the way we are currently experiencing life is merely *conventional*. In order to achieve such a state, while at the same time managing the tensions between daily life and meditation retreats, we allocate a separate quiet time and peaceful space in daily life for reactivating ultimate reality. This is done through daily meditation practice, usually for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. During this daily practice we temporarily renounce our daily interactions, and retreat into meditation mode.

6.4.7.4 Pagis compares the ideal or proper meditation ambience we create for ourself to a **labscape**. This is a concept introduced by Kohler as an attempt to bridge the lab and nature by creating a hybrid: a lab located in the midst of nature (2002). Similarly, our daily meditation provides a near-sterile environment in which we can momentarily renounce social interaction and cultivate Buddhist wisdom.

This lab-like environment is a sort of re-creation of the retreat ambience: a temporal and spatial renunciation from daily life by way of sitting in peaceful solitude, turning off the phone, dimming the lights, and focusing on bodily feelings for 1 hour uninterruptedly. This daily return to ultimate reality enables us to refresh, even enhance, our embodied understanding of the 3 characteristics.

Former Vipassana practitioners who stopped meditating find that with time, liberating knowledge turns into a mere memory. Conventional perspectives overwhelm them so that they are obliviously drawn in the merely conventional. As **Dora** reminds us, if we want to continue "to experience it in order to understand it," we must keep up daily practice.

[1065] R Kohler, "Labscapes: naturalizing the lab," *History of Science* 30 2002:473-501.

[1066] Both pairs are Abhidhamma terms and commentarial, but are useful. *Sammuti,sacca* and *ssmmuti,ñāṇa* (Kvu 310). Cf *parama,sacca* (A 2:115). See SD 60.1e (10.3).

Even then, daily meditation practice usually does not lead to the same deep embodied experiences that practitioners encounter in long meditation retreats. As **Dora** said, "Maybe if I sit and meditate I could feel it, but not in the same depth as I did in the course." Still, practitioners of Vipassana report that daily meditation allows them to recognize the virtual reality of daily life and re-vitalize, even partly, a vision of *anicca* or *dukkha*, even *anattā*.

6.4.7.5 With constant progress in meditation, ultimate reality permeates more aspects of our daily life. Very advanced Vipassana practitioners meditate during every available moment—while waiting for an appointment, while walking, while eating. In a significant way, they do not need a separate space and time to resurrect Buddhist wisdom.

In fact, many Vipassana meditators report that even without deliberation their attention naturally turns to their bodily feelings. For them, there is no strict distinction between the meditation hall and daily life. An advanced practitioner who had attended retreats of 30 days told Pagis: "In the beginning there was this shock every time I completed a meditation retreat and returned home. But after participating in long retreats, and with meditating at home, there is no longer a big difference between a retreat and daily life." (Pagis 2010:486)

Advanced practitioners may not feel impermanence, suffering or nonself every moment, but whenever they choose to, they can (under safe conditions) easily direct their focus to their body to envision ultimate reality. The embodied knowledge and vision of the characteristics are thus present in their daily life.

6.4.8 Situated dharma: meaning, purpose, realization

6.4.8.1 The purpose of Vipassana meditation, indeed of any Dharma-spirited Buddhist meditation, involves the process by which abstract Dharma concepts (like the 3 characteristics) become embodied realities. Abstract concepts are like the clothes we wear: we may look smart, but we still need to take proper food for our health. We need to embody these abstract Dharma concepts; we need to live them so that we *become* the path.

Meditation retreats provide the ideal conditions for the lay practitioner to properly and fully experience the Buddha Dharma. Using our ingenuity, we can modify our bodily conduct in terms of food, sleep and lifestyle in a moral ambience: that is, with respectful living, having, loving, communicating and minding (free from intoxication). With such a skillful living, enjoying both the conceptual and the ultimate realities, we are better prepared to live the Dharma more fully and fruitfully.

6.4.8.2 Pagis, in the conclusion to her insightful paper, "From abstract concepts to experiential knowledge: embodying enlightenment in a meditation center" (2010), speaks of 3 analytical characteristics to recapitulate the interaction between conceptual theory and embodied experience. The characteristics—those of relativity, directionality, and mutual influence—enable us to situate her case study in a more generalized framework.

> **Relativity** refers to the ratio between the conceptual and the embodied dimensions of knowledge. When practitioners begin to meditate, their knowledge of Buddhist tenets is relatively conceptual. As they continue, the embodied dimension of their understanding of the tenets grows, and[,] while the conceptual dimension does not disappear, its centrality diminishes.
>
> This progression also reveals the **directionality** of the process of knowing presented in this study. In the case of vipassana, some level of conceptual knowledge precedes the acquirement of embodied knowledge. Therefore, though in each of the events analyzed we witnessed a move from firstness to thirdness, from an embodied experience to a generalized rule, the overall directionality of the process of knowing is from abstract concepts to embodied knowledge.

This directionality is connected to the particular nature of **the mutual influence** these two dimensions of knowledge exert on one another. As illustrated throughout the paper, embodied experience refines and influences one's understanding of Buddhist concepts. However, this influence has limits. Embodied experiences that are encountered during meditation do not lead to a complete alteration of the Buddhist concepts. Advanced vipassana practitioners rarely build new theories regarding reality—they usually adopt the theories provided by Buddhist philosophy.   (Pagis 2010:486)[1067]

Pagis goes on in some detail to explain these 3 analytical characteristics (2010:486-488).

6.4.8.3 Pagis' 3 analytical characteristics remind me of the Buddhist teaching called **the "3 good truths"** (*saddhamma*), that is, those of <u>theory</u> (*pariyatti*), <u>practice</u> (*paṭipatti*) and <u>realization</u> (*paṭivedha*) of the true Dharma.[1068] Specifically, this triad refers to all the aspects of the 4 noble truths that need to be fulfilled for us to gain awakening; [1069] broadly, this refers to doctrinal **theory** with which we begin our study of Buddhism; then the **practice** or embodiment with which we follow them up; and finally the **realization** of the true Dharma that brings us to the path of freedom and awakening.

The 3 good truths combined with Pagis' 3 analytical characteristics give us **the 3 good characteristics** (*sadhu lakkhaṇa*)—**meaning** (*attha*)**, purpose** (*āsaya*) and **realization** (*abhisamaya*)—which refer to the process of transformation of our life towards the path of awakening. They are not really a new Dharma set, but an engaged way of applying *the 3 good truths* to our Dharma-spirited life. The Dharma *gives meaning and purpose to our life, and by them we realize awakening*. The 3 good characterics in parts connect, overlap or develop with Pagis' 3 analytical characteristics. In short, the Buddha Dharma itself *is the meaning and purpose of our life so that we realize* the path of awakening.

By **meaning** (*attha*)[1070] is meant the <u>theory</u> (*pariyatti*), that is, the *terms* and *teaching* with which we see our life and the world as *spatial location*, as *beings* and as *formations*.[1071] We have spoken about <u>space</u> for living and practice at length; <u>beings</u> are the society we live in and must learn to live with as our *extended* minds or network of consciousnesses [3.1.1.1, 5.1.2.1]. They are all characterized as being *impermanent, suffering and nonself*. This is what I *am* and what we *are*: a meaningful interbeing. This is the very <u>ground</u> of our path to awakening.

By **purpose** (*āsaya*) is meant what we *do* with these meanings we have given to our life through the Dharma. This is our <u>practice</u> (*paṭipatti*). This is how we <u>embody</u> the Dharma—especially the 3 characteristics of *impermanence, suffering* and *nonself*—in our being; we internalize the Dharma. As we embody impermanence—we see ourself as being *impermanent*—we understand that our purpose in life is <u>to grow</u> in the Dharma sense. There is nothing we can really have except the present; to impose the past on the present or to press the present into the future is to create an unnatural tension that is *suffering.* The best thing we can do now, and keep doing *now* is to value and respect our lives (mine and others), what we have, our freedom, this common reality, and our mindfulness that keeps them moving in the right direction: towards the path of freedom and awakening.

Realization (*abhisamaya*) or breakthrough (*paṭivedha*)[1072] is the knowledge and vision that we are embodying <u>the 3 characteristics</u>—that we are (all) *impermanent*, we are (all) *suffering*, we are (all) but passing moments, not fixed creations. We are not alone in this: all things are *nonself.* We

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[1067] M Pagis, "From abstract concepts to experiential knowledge: Embodying enlightenment in a meditation center." *Qualitative Soci*ology 33, 2010:469-489.

[1068] See **The levels of training,** SD 40a.4 (6.2.1); **Notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40a.1 (3.4.2).

[1069] See **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana** (S 56.11,9-12/5:422), SD 1.1.

[1070] In Pali, *attha* can mean either "meaning" or "purpose" in their modern senses.

[1071] These are the 3 types of worlds (*loka*), as space (*okāsa,loka*), as beings (*satta,loka*), and as formations (*asṅkhāra,loka*) (Vism 7.37/204 f; DA 1:173 f; MA 1:397, 2:200; see SD 15.7 (3.5.1 (2)); SD 17.6 (3.1.3.2).

[1072] These 2 words are actually synonyms. Usually *paṭivedha* is tr as "realization," and *abhisamaya* "breakthrough."

then see others just as we see ourself—with **love** (*mettā*);[1073] we feel for others as for ourself —with **ruth** (compassion) (*karuṇā*); we feel **joy** (*muditā*) in the reality that we are all alike and interconnected; and we feel at harmonious **peace** (*upekkhā*). This is only the true beginning.

6.4.8.4 Pagis' article is a remarkably insightful, respectful and visionary analysis of Vipassana and early Buddhism, and I dare say a vision of future scholarship that loves *truth and goodness*, not just the paycheck and the bespoke suit. She writes with a passion of a scholar practitioner, or at least she is capable of doing so. If there is any flaw, *limitation* is a better word, to her paper, it is that she makes us think that Vipassana meditation is such a difficult practice and that working for the path such a demanding task. The reason for this seems to be that her vision of Buddhist meditation is that of a diligent monastic. The conditions of a good meditation forest monastery are certainly ideal for the kind of meditation she has described in her paper.

From the sutta accounts, the immediate goal of monastic life seems to be that of becoming a non-returner or an arhat, who in either case have totally given up sensual desire and hatred. It is well known that these 2 paths are often beyond the lay practitioner. On the other hand, the Buddha provides an easier alternative for the laity to reach the path as streamwinners or once-returners within this life itself.

6.4.8.5 The (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta (S 25.1) is the first of 10 suttas in the Okkanta Saṁyutta (connected teachings on the descent) (S 25) with the same theme: the possibility of attaining **streamwinning** (*sotāpatti*) in this life itself. There is no mention of meditation (no dhyana) at all. All these Suttas mention the 2 kinds of individuals who can attain streamwinning in this life itself, that is, **the truth-follower** (*dhammânusārī*) and **the faith-follower** (*saddhā'nusārī*). They will gain "the certainty of rightness" (*sammatta,niyāma*), meaning the supermundane noble eightfold path, including the path of streamwinning (*sotāpatti,magga*).[1074]

The only difference between the 2 kinds of individuals is their dominant spiritual faculty (*indriya*). The **faith-follower** (*saddhā'nusārī*) is one who has strong faith, with which they resolve (*adhimuccati*) their mindfulness on the impermanence of the senses, the aggregates, etc, as listed in the 10 suttas (**S 25**): "one who has **faith** thus, who *firmly believes* these truths [the impermanence of the sense-faculties, or the 5 aggregates, and so on]."[1075] **The truth-follower** (*dhammânusārī*) focuses on wisdom, gains understanding of the impermanence of the same factors: "one who *accepts* these truths [the impermanence of the sense-faculties, or the 5 aggregates, and so on] after just some pondering over them with **wisdom** thus."[1076]

The Buddha guarantees that either of these 2 individuals "is incapable of dying without having attained the fruition of streamwinning."[1077] The Sutta closes with the phrase they are those "**surely going over to self-awakening**," meaning that streamwinners will surely awaken (attain arhathood or nirvana)[1078] in the very next life, or within a couple of lives, or within 7 lives at the most.[1079]

[1073] Love (*mettā*) and the following 3 qualities of ruth (*karuṇā*), joy (*muditā*) and peace (*upekkhā*) are the 4 "divine abodes" (*brahma,vihāra*), also called the 4 (positive) social emotions: **Tevijja S** (D 13,76-79), SD 1.8; SD 51.14 (3.2.2.3); *Brahma,vihāra,* SD 38.5.

[1074] S 25.1/3:225 (SD 16.7).

[1075] On the faith-follower, see SD 16.7 (1.3).

[1076] On the truth-follower, see SD 16.7 (1.2).

[1077] S 25.2,4.4=5.4 (SD 16.7). See Amaro 2019. [Springer] [ForestSangha]

[1078] VbhA 430.

[1079] **A 3.87**/1:232-234 (SD 80.13) & **A 9.12,**8-10/4:380-382 + SD 3.3(3). See SD 16.7 (1.7.3.4).

6.5 ATTAINING THE PATH IN MODERN MYANMAR

6.5.1 The Path as moral order in society[1080]

6.5.1.1 It should first be noted that not all Theravāda—especially those in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand—see meditation in the same way. Myanmar developed its Vipassana, and Thailand evolved the Kammatthana tradition that goes back to the early days of Buddhism in Siam, that is the Boran Kammatthana.[1081] Sri Lanka once had a vibrant forest meditation, and its monks brought Dharma-spirited Theravāda in the 13th-century to Sukhothai[1082] and to Khmer [6.1.4.1].

However, even in the 18th century, the Sri Lanka's caste-ridden Sangha was devastated by their wealthiest priests, the Siam Nikāya, who lived like the laity as *gaṇinnanse* (secularized priests).[1083] In the mid-20th century secular priests like W Rahula dismissed meditation, especially samatha, and promoted clerical modernism which scholars labelled as "Protestant Buddhism"[1084] due to its influence of the ideas and ways of Protestant Christianity, the religion of Sri Lanka's colonizers (the British). Much of Sangha Buddhism in Sri Lanka today is modernized and secularized; for example, they openly reject the Vinaya. [6.1.1]

It is thus very remarkable to see how the modern Burmese have re-applied or reinterpreted Vipassana to bring <u>moral stability</u> to the masses. Of course, meditation—both in theory and in practice—was not the only determining factor in this process, which was the result of a complex interplay of religious and sociopolitical factors.[1085] However, as a meditational phenomenon, it is unprecedented and unparalleled.

6.5.1.2 In December 1994, Sangha representatives from the 332 Vipassana meditation centres of the Mahasi Thathana Yeiktha (MTY), the Mahasi Sayadaw[1086] organization, met in Yangon (Rangoon), the capital of Myanmar (Burma). During that meeting they compiled a record of all Mahasi practitioners' meditational accomplishments since the organization's founding in 1947. They officially determined that 1,085,082 people (most of whom were lay people) had *nyanzin* (Vipassana or Insight), even *magga,phala* (Path and Fruition), that is, Streamwinning, Once-returning, Non-returning, even Arhathood[1087] itself (Jordt 2007:34-36).[1088] This number demonstrated the Mahasi organization's faith in Mahasi's teachings and its belief in a remarkable record of religious accomplishment in modern times.

From the outsider's perspective, it also indicates a remarkable level of meditation practice. As **Erik Braun**, a specialist in modern Burmese history, notes,

> Scholars often take such an example of widespread meditation practice as the hallmark of
> modern Buddhism.[1089] Yet the Mahasi organization's claim of so many (at least partially) en-

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[1080] See I **Jordt**, *Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement: Buddhism and the cultural construction of power,* Athens, OH: Ohio Univ Press, 2007. E **Braun**, "Local and translocal in the study of Theravāda Buddhism and modernity." *Religion Compass* 3,6 2009:935-950.

[1081] SD 60.1b (4.2-4.4).

[1082] SD 60.1b (4.2.2).

[1083] SD 60.1b (4.2.3).

[1084] SD 60.1b [2.1.1.2]; SD 60.1c (7.2) Post-Buddha Buddhism and Protestant Buddhism; SD 60.1d (4.4.4) Protest Buddhism?

[1085] See E Braun, Ledi Sayadaw, Abhidhamma, and the development of the modern Insight Meditation movement in Burma, PhD thesis, 2008.

[1086] For a biography of Mahasi Sayadaw, see https://www.budsas.org/ebud/ebmed039.htm.

[1087] On the significance of the usage of initial capitals for Streamwinning, Once-returning, Non-returning and Arhathood, see [6.1.3.2].

[1088] Ingrid Jordt, *Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement,* Ohio Univ Press, 2007.

[1089] In Donald Lopez's overview of the development of modern Buddhism, he writes: "The essential practice of modern Buddhism was meditation" (Lopez, *Modern Buddhism: readings for the unenlightened,* Penguin, 2002a:

lightened individuals is highly unusual. Not all modern Buddhists meditate, for one thing, and, so far as I know, even among those groups of Buddhists that do, no other—in Southeast Asia or beyond—has made a public claim of such numerical specificity and size.

The distinctiveness of the Mahasi tradition in this regard suggests that different groups of modern Buddhists assign different values to meditation.   (2009:935)[1090]

Braun adds: "Even if the most important factor for the Mahasi organization is the power of the public claim to such meditative accomplishment, rather than actual attainment, it still indicates a conception of meditation that allows such a claim to be made." (2009 fn 2; emphasis). Simply, this means that the Mahasi organization was showing that they had the authority to certify who is or is not a Path-attainer. In doing so, we are dealing with a Path defined by the organization.

In this study, I will exemplify this "concept of meditation" being used by the Burmese leaders and teachers in at least 2 ways, that is, for the construction of:

(1) "a moral nation," and   [6.5.1.5]
(2) "a path individual."   [6.6]

These ideas are not new, but have already been noted by scholars like Ingrid Jordt (2007) and Erik Braun (2009).

6.5.1.3 Mahasi Sayadaw's reinterpretation of Vipassana specially for the benefit of the laity was a radical innovation that put a modern value to an ancient Buddhist doctrine. It shows that new or different values can contribute to divergent understandings of the nature of monks and monastic life, of the nature of lay practice, and of the role of Buddhism in society. It is in this spirit that we can better understand how the U Ba Khin's Vipassana movement became a new Vipassana "religion" centred on Goenka,[1091] and how Pa Auk Sayadaw was able to centre his own teachings on the *kalāpa* concept.[1092]

Mahasi's reforms, for instance, were actually initiated and patronized by U Nu (1907-95), Prime Minister of independent Burma after World War 2. Historically, U Nu built on the Buddhist work started by Ledi Sayadaw and must have noticed how Ledi's efforts in popularizing Abhidhamma and meditation amongst the laity were very successful.[1093] U Nu needed a learned and capable monk to intensify this drive to bring meditation to the masses for the benefit of the whole country. He decided that such a person was purportedly the most learned Burmese monk then, Mahasi Sayadaw.

In significant ways, Mahasi's reform teachings were simpler and more practical than Ledi's[1094]— Mahasi introduced a simplified but effective meditation method with almost no need of traditional Vipassana, but more of sutta teachings—a practice suitable for the laity. After all, Mahasi Vipassana was part of a broader attempt to unify the Burmese state and purify it, monastic and lay.[1095] In this, Mahasi Vipassana had done very well, for which we will explain below.

6.5.1.4 Mahasi Sayadaw wondered how long the laity would need, on the average, in the present era of the Buddha's dispensation (*sāsana*), to build up their "good karma" (*pāramī*, "karmic perfection") that would ripen in *thotapan* (Sotāpanna), the first stage of the path (Magga) of Awaken-

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xxxvii). See also McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism,* NY: Oxford Univ Press, 2008:182-185. [Braun's fn extended]

[1090] E Braun, "Local and translocal in the study of Theravāda Buddhism and Modernity," 2009.

[1091] On U Ba Khin and the Vipassana movement down to Goenka, see SD 60.1b (2.4.7-2.4.11).

[1092] On Pa Auk Sayadaw, see SD 60.1b (8.1).

[1093] On Ledi Sayadaw's revival work, see SD 60.1b (2.3 f); also E Braun, *Ledi Sayadaw: Abhidhamma, and the Modern Insight Meditation movement,* unpubl PhD thesis, Harvard Univ, 2008.

[1094] On Ledi Sayadaw;'s reforms, see SD 60.1b (2.3 f).

[1095] **Jordt** 2007; E M **Mendelson**, *Sangha and State in Burma,* Cornell Univ Press, 1975:262-270; J **Schober** 2006.

ing. Based on his own meditation experience, Mahasi searched and sieved the suttas and Comment-
aries for the most direct method for gaining awakening "in this very life." His prescription of the 2-
month training was based on his observations of thousands of meditators, how their meditation
fruited in the Path.

Clearly, he was inspired by the well-known closing of key texts such as **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna
Sutta** (D 9), **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) and **the Udumbarikā Sutta** (D 25)—texts well known to
Mahasi[1096]—where the Buddha makes the very same declaration, guaranteeing the path with a
maximum training duration of 7 years and a minimum of just 7 days training,[1097] one will attain the
fruit of the path, that is at least streamwinning. Indeed, with proper practice—with the perception of
impermanence (which is a natural part of Vipassana practice), one would surely attain streamwinning
in this very life itself, if not certainly with the very last breath.[1098]

6.5.1.5 Prime Minister U Nu [6.5.1.3] had, in fact, made it a requirement for his cabinet mem-
bers to meditate long enough to gain either first-stage of the Path or the stage just before it, that is,
the stage of the "knowledge of equanimity regarding formations" (*saṅkhār'upekkha,ñāṇa*).[1099] What
is implied here is that by attaining first-stage of the Path, one would no longer be capable of breaking
any of the 5 precepts: not to kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie, or take intoxicants. This would
make one a truly moral individual and citizen, who would thus constitute a **moral nation**.

U Nu had deep faith in the belief that people became morally incorruptible through achieving
such an Awakening. This was reflected by the fact U Nu introduced Vipassana into the prisons. Those
who "passed the course" were given full and permanent freedom. They were then considered mor-
ally trustworthy people who would not transgress against other citizens.

According to political analysts, U Nu's programme to promote Buddhism nationwide in such an
intensely faith-based manner contributed to the fall of his government and the takeover by military
rule in 1962. According to Manuel Sarkisyanz, U Nu's Buddhism was steeped in nationalist senti-
ments in the quest for a Burmese identity, creating a great deal of uneasiness among various ethnic
minorities whose identities were constructed according to different religious traditions.[1100]

In any event, at least between 1947 and 1962, actions taken and institutions formed for the revi-
talization of Buddhism were placed under the special protection and patronage of the government.
This pattern would be repeated in some form by every post-independence government. Political rul-
ers understandably "protected" Buddhism so long as it was to their advantage and served their pur-
pose.

6.5.2 Mahasi's Vipassana

6.5.2.1 Mahasi Vipassana is unique in that it teaches watching the rise and fall (*poun dey pin
dey*) of the abdomen (two fingers breadth above the navel) as the object for sustained and repeated
observation and focus.[1101] "Watching rise and fall" (*uday'attha*) is often mentioned in the suttas,
such as **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** (A 8.54) as a practice that the laity should do.[1102] To faithfully follow the

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[1096] Jordt (2007:33) says that Mahasi "focused on a line in the Dhammadāyāda Sutta [M 3, SD 2.18]," which is
simply unlikely: there is no such line in the Sutta.

[1097] **D 9**,22/2:314 f (SD 13.2), **M 10**,46/1:63 (SD 13.3); **D 25**,22/3:55 f (SD 1.4).

[1098] See any of the 10 suttas of **Okkanta Saṁy** (S 25.1-10/3:226-228), eg **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

[1099] *Saṅkhār'upekkha.ñāṇa* is part of 6th stage of the 7 stages of purity (*satta,visuddhi*), which is the Abhidham-
ma system of grading the path: SD 15.1 (11.5).

[1100] E Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist backgrounds to the Burmese revolution,* The Hague: M Nijhoff, 196:233-236.

[1101] Mahasi's contemporary meditation teachers like Sun Lun Sayadaw and Mogok Sayadaw stressed watching
the in-out of the breath at the nose-tip. Lay practitioners and zealots tended to support one or other technique
of these sayadaws, often championing it and degrading the others. This petty rivalry was not between the
sayadaws themselves but among their disciples.

[1102] **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,15/4:284 f), SD 5.10. Other refs incl **Saṅgīti S** (D 33/3:237, 268), **Das'uttara S** (D 34/-
3:277, 290); **Sekha S** (M 53/1:356), SD 21.14; **Bodhi Rāja,kumara S** (M 85/2:95), SD 55.2; **Kaṇṇakatthaka S** (M

suttas, however, we should simply watch *rise-and-fall* as a mind-object, that is, we *know* it is "rising," we *know* it is "falling." We are mindful of the *knowing.* This approach sees the *impermanence*, not <u>what</u> is impermanent: there is neither a "what" nor a "something."[1103]

The controversy here is that Mahasi *locates* where the process should be watched, that is, the abdomen. Mahasi stressed that because <u>materiality</u> (*rūpa*) is easier to discern than are mental states, the beginner should focus on the tactile sensation of the breath's rise and fall as it is experienced as pressure and movement (that is, as the earth element or the wind element). However, the location method may be *provisionally* helpful for those who have difficulty with the subtler watching of rising-falling.

Since breathing is involuntary, it's easier for the yogi to focus on a natural and independent (nonvolitional) process as the object for seeing the characteristics of any of the 4 elements—here, earth or wind—as the manifestation of <u>the universal characteristics</u> of *impermanence, suffering, and nonself* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*).[1104]

Initially, yogis employ conceptual labels to draw their attention to precise objects for observation. Eventually, these labels are dropped, and the yogis come to experience physical sensations, for example, in terms of their sensate qualities (of hardness [earth element], warmth [fire element], movement [wind element], and so forth). Mahasi says he chose the Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassana method because it is the fastest way for a yogi to establish themselves on the path to nirvana.[1105]

6.5.2.2 Advanced yogis—meditators who knew in depth some levels of at least a number of <u>the stages of the insight knowledge</u> (*vipassanā,ñāṇa*)[1106]—were allowed, on full-moon and new-moon days at the Mahasi Thathana Yeiktha (MTY), to listen to a tape of Mahasi Sayadaw discussing these

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90/2:128), SD 10.8; **S 48**.9/5:197, 48.10/5:199, 48.11/5:200, **55**.33/5:392, 55.37/5:395, 55.43/5:402; **A 5**.2/3:2, 5.14/3:11, 5.47/3:53, 5.53/3:65, 5.122/3:143, 5.134/3:152, 5.135/3:153+154, 5.136/3:155; **A 7.4/**4:4, 7.67/-4:111; **A 8**.30/4:234, 8.54/4:285; **A 9**.1/4:352+353, 9.63/4:457; **A 10**.11/5:15, 10.17/5:25x2, 10.18/5:28x2, 10.50/5:91x2; **U** 36, 37.

[1103] On the problem of "something" (*kiñcana*), see **Go,datta S** (S 41.7,13 f), SD 60.4.

[1104] Mahasi, in *Practical Insight Meditation* (1980), ques from **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 9) to show how one keeps to the Buddha's exhortation to "reflect upon this very body, however it is placed or disposed, with respect to its fundamentals (ie, the 4 elements). … In consonance with these teachings of the Buddha, it has been stated in colloquial language thus: 'rising' while the abdomen is rising; 'falling' while the abdomen is falling; 'bending' while the limbs are bending; 'stretching' while the limbs are stretching; 'wandering' while the mind is wandering; 'thinking, reflecting or knowing' while one is so engaged; 'feeling stiff, hot or in pain' while one feels so; 'walking, standing, or sitting or lying [down]' while one is so placed, etc." (Mahasi 1980: 46 f).

[1105] Another point of controversy in the Mahasi method is whether one must first be established in concentration through practising samatha meditation (Buddhaghosa lists 40 meditation subjects) before proceeding to Vipassana (Insight) meditation. Mahasi explained that Vipassana could proceed without prior dhyana (*jhāna*), which arises from samatha. In other words, he believed that through focus on the rise and fall (such as in breath meditation), sufficient concentration could be developed so that the yogi could turn to Vipassana. This remains a source of dispute among monk-teachers even today. **Pa-Auk Sayadaw**, one of Mahasi's disciples, for example, teaches an entirely literal approach to the Path. He says that each of the 40 meditations must first be mastered, including reobservation of one's prior life experiences going back to 7 lives, before one can undertake Vipassana. Despite claims made for Pa-Auk Sayadaw himself and for a *thilashin* practising there, his followers have admitted that few, if any students, have actually mastered the full range of these meditative techniques. Jordt: "During my last visit in 1995, Pa-Auk Sayadaw's 5 books describing his methods and techniques were still awaiting approval for publication from the Government Scrutiny Board on religious writings. Though he has devotees on that board who are anxious to pass his books, his implicit claims of accomplishment in so many types of practice (samatha and vipassana) run the fine line of sounding like boasts or declarations of attainment. Were this determined to be the case, Pa-Auk Sayadaw could be considered to have breached the vinaya rules, and he would be required (by classical reckoning) to disrobe." (2009:228 n12)

[1106] For details on the 16 stages of insight knowledge (Vism 18.1-22.31/587-678), see, eg, Mahasi Sayadaw, *The Progress of Insight,* Kandy, 1965 [pdf]; *Manual of Insight,* tr Vipassanā Mettā Foundation Translation Committee, Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2016: 303-466 (ch 6). For a summary: SD 28.3 (1.3) n.

stages. A yogi listened to the tape and decided for himself to what level he experienced. Mahasi introduced this "know by yourself" procedure so that monastics need not make declarations of their attainments.

However, as scholars like Jordt have observed, yogis might still try to communicate their accomplishments to each other and to the public after their meditation course.

> Questions such as "Did you listen to the tape?" or "Did you pass the course?" were common signals referring to having attained the first stage of enlightenment. So too was the polite request after a long meditation period, "Did you get the insurance policy?"—referencing the idea that rebirth in lower realms of existence is forever cut off to the sotāpanna.
>
> (Jordt, *Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement,* 2007:66 f)

As a rule, monastics were cautious only to make public their attainment only in the context of discussing their progress with the teacher. Lay yogis were not bound by such a monastic rule, but were reminded to be restrained when talking about such attainments. However, **Mahasi's tape** was not merely a means of measuring one's attainment. On the one hand, the tape has negative effects in encouraging bragging about one's attainment; on the other hand, it often had a positive inspiring effect on the listener to have greater confidence in his practice and to proceed further.

6.5.2.3 How did Mahasi know the progress of his students or measure their attainment of the path? How did his followers in the 1994 gathering, for example, determine the Path stages of the 1,085,082 yogis since 1947? According to Ingrid Jordt, there are 2 ways Mahasi did this.

In the first way, Mahasi insisted that the meditation teacher should ascertain that the yogi was describing an authentic experience, not just narrating conceptual knowledge about it or reacting with their conditioned experience. Basically, it was the experience and wisdom of the interviewing teacher that would decide on the authenticity of the yogi's level of attainment, and to encourage the yogi to diligently continue with his practice. The teachers (who were also the interviewers) must also be familiar with Mahasi's pedagogical manual.

Mahasi kept records of the responses of yogis' interviews regarding their practice. He analyzed and commented on the yogis' feedback, and gave instructions for determining the progress and Path level of the yogis. These records were compiled in Burmese, and were translated as ***Meditation Teacher's Diary (or) Records*** (probably during the 1960's)*,* to be used as an official "Manual of Insight for Paṭipatti Teachers."[1107]

Mahasi's empirical findings became the basis for this Manual so that "These records can guide the teachers in interviews with their students or yogis. It will also be useful in judging the yogi's level of Vipassana (insight) knowledge attained." (1)[1108] Keeping to Mahasi's instruction, the Buddhasasana'nuggaha[1109] (or Nuggaha for short) restricted the distribution of these materials to the branch centres, and issued the manual to monk teachers only on the advice of a nayaka sayadaw (senior elder, usually the abbot).

[1107] Mahasi Sayadaw, *Meditation Teacher's Diary (or) Records*," compiled by Saya Kyan & Saya Kywet under the supervision of Mahasi Sayadaw. Unpublished. Compiled prob in the 1960s. Available only to qualified teachers.

[1108] The number within parenthesis refers to the paging of the original Burmese edition.

[1109] Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha (Burmese: ဗုဒ္ဓသာသနာနုဂ္ဂဟ, *buddha,sāsanā'nuggaha*) Organization "for the promotion of the teaching," is a lay Buddhist association based in Yangon, Myanmar. It was founded on 13 Nov 1947 by U Nu, Sir U Thwin, and other laypeople, for promoting the study of Buddhism in theory (*pariyatti*) and in practice (*paṭipatti*).

6.6 A SINGAPOREAN SOTAPANNA

6.6.1 Path certification by a lay meditation teacher

6.6.1.1 Not only well known monk teachers certified others as Path-attainers, but certain well known lay Myanmar teachers did so, too. One such person was the renowned lay Vipassana teacher from Yangon, **U Ko Lay** (1933-2021).[1110] My informant, a family friend, is **Phyo Hein Zaw** (a young Singaporean Burmese and an engineering graduate from a Singapore university) who often returned to Myanmar with his parents to visit relatives.

Photo 6.6.1 U Ko Lay, Myanmar meditation teacher (1933-2021)

During such visits, between 2004-2010, they would give dāna (alms-offerings) to monks and go for meditation lessons with U Ko Lay, in the Nyaungram Damaryon Meditation Centre (Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, near Nyaungram Pagoda, Yangon). During these meditation sessions (open to the public), U Ko Lay would make his rounds, sitting with each meditator in turn. In **Photo 6.6.2**, U Ko Lay is seen seated in meditation, the only one facing in a different direction from the rest.

6.6.1.2 From how my informant describes a sitting, U Ko Lay sat in this manner facing the student. Such a session might last from a few minutes to 30 minutes per person. U Ko Lay would be able to "feel" the student's mind and guided him along in a sort of "mind-melding" or mind-to-mind connection. At the end of this "mind-meld" process, when the student was ready, U Ko Lay would then assign the student to sit in the appropriate section of the main meditation hall for further practice: Anagamis (Non-returners) sit right in front, Sakadagamis (Once-returners) in the section behind the Anagamis; then the Sotapannas (Streamwinners), and backmost section, other "unassigned" meditators.

6.6.1.3 To ensure that he was able to probe the meditation of all the meditators gathered in the hall, U Ko Lay would make his "probing" session with each student very brief (about a couple of minutes) speaking only when necessary and doing so tersely. Sitting facing each meditator, U Ko Lay would meditate along with them mentally guiding them in their meditation until they reached "the right path" to the best of their ability.

During Phyo Hein Zaw's visits to Myanmar (2004-2010), he sat in meditation with U Ko Lay for a total of about 10 sessions. In the earlier sessions, U Ko Lay would "probe" Phyo's meditation for about 2 minutes each time to put him "on the right path." In later sessions, when he felt Phyo was more ready, he would sit as long as 10 minutes with Phyo, guiding him along the proper path of meditation to Phyo's best ability. Phyo's last session was done in U Ko Lay's residence (where he passed away in 2021).

6.6.2 Mind-to-mind-transmission?

6.6.2.1 Phyo describes his session with U Ko Lay thus:

When U Ko Lay sits in front of myself, I can feel [his] presence. If focus can be described in a spatial manner, he concentrates and focuses the attention to a very concentrated spot.

[1110] U Ko Lay (from Sagaing) was a meditation student of U Ba Khin and founder of the Mandalay University, in 1948 (the year of Burma's Independence), and became its first vice-chancellor. He retired from the university in 1963 and devoted himself to full-time practice and teaching of Vipassana meditation and to translating Pali suttas into English.

Photo 6.6.2 U Ko Lay meditating with a student. (Yangon, Myanmar, 2010)

After which, there is a sensation of shedding of the body and a feeling of pushing out of the body, usually through the head area.

The "push" is usually upwards at some angle, not perfectly upwards. The "mind" or "awareness" is brought to a place which feels like a room that is sound-proof and totally dark. It is total emptiness with nothing to hold on as the body has disappeared. There is no feeling of [the] breath as well.

After U Ko Lay moves on to the next subject, I will start to sense the body and surroundings again. A few minutes later I will end the meditation.

[After the sitting,] I will feel lighter and relieved after the meditation. There are no thoughts, only existing in the meditation hall. There is usually perspiration after the session, so the body feels cool.

6.6.2.2 Further, **Phyo** described the following experience that he had at the Meditation Centre:

It was commented [by] U Ko Lay [that he] had to meditate by himself for a few moments after helping the meditators. To put it crudely, he is cleansing himself of the "filth" that he had to manage during his rounds.

It was also commented by U Ko Lay that this meditation burns quite a bit of calories. In my opinion, this contrasts with other forms of meditation where there is more awareness and less of Samadhi.

For those who are beginning, there is walking meditation to [experience] the concept of rising and falling. This is done at the side of the hall.

At the start of each session, he would instruct the meditator to place the tongue-tip at the back of the upper row of teeth. Then focus the mind on the nose-tip. After that, he gently guides us with brief instructions on how to keep our focus on the breath. As the meditation progresses, I can feel a sense of growing radiance that flickers and glows. Then I feel as if I am leaning against a solid wall and feeling comfortably cool. Then, I feel as if my skull was being pulled out from the left side of my face. (My mother tells me that in her case, it was her leg that seems to be pulling away.)

Looking back, I recall that time passes by as I was in a state of deep "emptiness." My longest sitting was about 2 hours after which I emerged from the meditation. Then I notice that I have perspired profusely.

However, after this, I found that I could not get into such a state of emptiness by my own efforts. Despite not reaching the emptiness level by myself, says U Ko Lay, I will always be able to meditate on my own.

Phyo was then assigned to continue his meditation in the meditation hall area for **Sotapannas**. This was how he was "certified" as a Sotapanna. When I asked Phyo how he perceived things as a result of his being acknowledged as a Sotapanna by U Ko Lay, this was his feedback:

As an individual, I suppose I became more aware of the senses. Also, I have become less keen on forming any new social connections due to mental and emotional independence. I tend to just observe more and see things happen as they are, and do not identify with the thoughts that come about. In a sense, the body becomes an empty ship that is just floating in the ocean, and the mind just observes the events that occur.

6.6.2.3 Phyo stressed on the fact that there was <u>no formal certification</u> for his being a Sotapanna. "I was only asked to sit in the designated zone for Sotapanna, which was the 2nd last section from the back of the hall. U Ko Lay is already aware of the level of awakening for each individual and does not spell it out explicitly." Perhaps a better term for U Ko Lay's "guiding" the student was that he **acknowledged** the students' spiritual attainment as he felt it by his own practice, or that he "**assigned**" the student to sit in the appropriate "Path zone" in the meditation-hall.

Phyo informs me that his parents, too, meditated with U Ko Lay. His mother was acknowledged as a **Sakadagami** or Once-returner two years before Phyo was designated a Sotapanna, and Phyo's father was acknowledged as a Sakadagami around the same time as Phyo was acknowledged as a Sotapanna. That was about all that happened, since, due to the bad political situation in Myanmar, Phyo and his parents were unable to visit Myanmar. Nevertheless, they continue to practise as lay Buddhists in Singapore.

6.6.3 Discussion and significance

6.6.3.1 U Ko Lay's meditation probes and ability to know the Path levels of the meditators are very interesting. From our current knowledge, there is no way of explaining them except for a couple of possible guesses. The most obvious guess is that U Ko Lay was psychic in the sense that he was able to know the Path level of the meditator he probed. In an important way, his power was *limited* since he had to exert himself quite strenuously to do so, and it actually drained his mental energy [6.6.2.2].

Photo 6.6.3 Meditators sitting in designated areas by Path Attainment in the Naungram Meditation Centre, 2018 (Photo: Kerrie Wong)

Furthermore, U Ko Lay was only able to read Path levels up to Non-returning at the best; he was unable to know the Arhat. Clearly, it was unlikely there would be anyone amongst the lay who would have been able to attain such a high level anyway. Conversely, we may also guess that U Ko Lay himself must have attained the Path level of Non-returning to be able to know Non-returners amongst them.[1111]

6.6.3.2 U Ko Lay was a personal follower of **U Ba Khin** (1899-1931),[1112] and they belonged to the traditional Burmese Buddhism steeped in the beliefs in psychic communication and guardian deities. Danirel M Stuart mentions the following in his book, *S N Goenka: emissary of insight* (2020):

> Through a combination of his technique of "distant control" and the ritual sanctification of meditation spaces, U Ba Khin could provide his students with the means to teach his methods to others in the least hospitable of circumstances outside Burma. This was the model of teaching that Goenka, and the American and European students selected by U Ba Khin to teach abroad, came to enact from 1969 onward. In describing his unique method of distant control, U Ba Khin used the metaphor of radio waves.
> By way of experiment, he had discovered how to extend his psychic influence in a targeted way to his students anywhere around the globe. His students could likewise "tune in" to this influence at prescribed times and get the support of his "thought waves charged with Nibbana Dhatu" and his *mettā* (Sanskrit/Hindi: *maitrī*), or "loving-kindness."

[1111] On laity as Anagami, see SD 60.1d (3.3.3.5).
[1112] On U Ba Khin, see SD 60.1b (2.4.7).

Access to these psychic forces also entailed the support of powerful guardian deities karmically associated with U Ba Khin. In his authorization letter to his American and European students, he wrote:

Whenever you find it necessary to get over any difficulty, you will just transmit your thought to me at my seat in the Shrine room of the I. M. C. for a while and then take to a short or long session of Anicca [impermanence] meditation as may be necessary. [U Ba Khin, "My recent experiments," 2][1113]   (D M Stuart, 2020:ch 4)

6.6.3.3 Like the report by Full et al (2013) [6.2.4.1], we must question to what extent were U Ko Lay's abilities and predictions of the Path status of his students were genuinely canonical (sutta-based) or to what extent they were culturally conditioned [6.2.7.4]. In fact, we now need researchers to investigate whether there are other meditation teachers in Myanmar or anywhere else who are capable of similar probing and predictions of Path-status of meditators.

With our current knowledge, we may have to content ourselves that U Ko Lay's abilities may be an anomalous phenomenon. Even when we learn that there are similar phenomena amongst other meditation teachers and their students in Myanmar, we need to investigate whether this is a unique Myanmar phenomenon, or occurs elsewhere, and study the significance of such occurrences.

Such challenges make the study of Buddhism interesting and relevant as a living religion. It will also help us to better understand the psychology of meditation. Above all, it shows that Buddhist meditation is a vibrant field of religious studies and spiritual practice that brings us to the frontiers of the human mind.

6.7 WHEN THE MIND FAILS THE MEDITATOR

6.7.1 The supports for gaining streamwinnng

6.7.1.0 So long as our mind is subject to our senses, it is not free; it's like we have these amazing toys with different shapes and colours, gadgets that play beautiful sounds and music, bottles of sweet fragrance, nice sweet foods we can lick, suck, chew and eat, and soft objects to touch and squeeze. We simply collect them and refuse to give them up. These toys and things become soiled and even make us sick; they break and decay, or get lost, and we sadly miss them.

We are so attached to these objects that we fail to learn useful skills and to develop our body and mind as we grow older: so we age but never grow up. Suddenly, we fall sick and we are told we had failed to take good care of our body and mind. We forget things, time, and people, and imagine things that are not really there. Our mind has failed us: we are Peter Pan in an aging body.

The best way to prevent all these problems and disasters is to work right *now* for **streamwinning**, the very first stage of the path of awakening. We are told not to be selfish, superstitious or lacking in confidence, and we wish to have these qualities. But wishing and having them are very different things. We simply need to become selfless, self-reliant and confident (in good and truth): these are, in fact, the qualities of **a streamwinner**.

How then do we start practising now so that we will gain streamwinning, and be *selfless, self-reliant* and *confident*? The Buddha teaches us to cultivate **the 4 limbs or supports of streamwinning** (*sotāpatti-y-aṅga*):

(1)	associating with the true persons	*sappurisa,saṁseva*	[6.7.1.1]
(2)	listening to the true Dharma	*saddhamma,savana*	[6.7.1.2]
(3)	wise attention	*yoniso manasikāra*	[6.7.1.3]
(4)	practicing the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma	*dhammânudhamma,paṭipatti*	[6.7.1.4]

[1113] U Ba Khin, "'My Recent Experiments…,' Authorization Letter to John Coleman Dated April 23rd, 1969." Rangoon, Burma. 1969. www.momentum-vitae.it/biografiedarangoon/lettereautografe.

These 4 limbs for streamwinning are explained in the suttas of **the Sotāpatti Saṁyutta**.[1114] They are here briefly outlined for our reflection.

6.7.1.1 Associating with true individuals (*sappurisa,saṁseva*) is to associate with those who know and practise the true teachings, and are imbued with moral virtue, wisdom and compassion, who inspire us to emulate them. In this way, we begin to know and understand *the Buddha* as the ideal of self-awakening, *the Dharma* as the true path to that awakening, and *the sangha* as the holy community of noble saints of the path or those who live emulating these noble saints and the Buddha's teaching to seek the liberating truth and become self-awakened. In short, we have wise faith in the 3 jewels.[1115]

6.7.1.2 Listening to the true teaching (*saddhamma,savana*) means taking the time to listen to ideas, explanations and teachings that train or guide us towards mental well-being, towards peacefulness and clarity, and away from selfish drives and destructive conduct. There are many teachings about self-training and mindfulness. As we understand these good and useful teachings, we reflect on them, and put them into practice as appropriate.

Most of such writings today are based on the Buddha's teachings or teachings of Buddhist teachers. We may as well go straight to the source: the Buddhist texts themselves, available today in many good translations. The suttas are simple and clear, yet profound, in their teachings—we have the rest of our life to practise them, and we should do so daily and habitually.

Basically, the teachings train us to harmonize our actions and speech with the people around us and with our environment. Such a harmonious life is the basis for mental cultivation, of mindfulness and concentration, which in turn develop both our body and mind, so that we are physically and mentally healthy. With a healthy mind in a healthy body, we are more readily open to wisdom training.[1116] This is called the 3 trainings.[1117]

6.7.1.3 Wise attention (*yoniso,manasikāra*) refers to the habitual practice of directing the mind or attention to see directly down to the "roots" or true nature of things. We hear all sorts of advice from people and from social media, but the best teacher is our own experience. In fact, the only thing we can really know are our own experiences (which is all there is, really): this is what the Buddha says in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23) [6.4.1.3].

When we wisely attend to our experiences (our sensing and thinking), we will naturally notice that they are all **impermanent**: they rise and fall away: this is a universal truth. Since we know it for ourself and it is a repeatable truth, we can even call it "scientific." The important thing is that this is a characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) of true reality. This is true of everyone, everywhere, all the time.

When we mindfully (with mental focus) observe our actions and thoughts, we notice they are almost always attended by feelings of liking or disliking. When we look even more closely at why we like or dislike an experience or thought, we will often notice it is related to some memory of a past experience or some hope about the future. As we practise the 4th support of streamwinning [6.7.1.4] we better understand the true nature of these memories (the past) and hopes (the future), that they are all gone or will never happen!

In fact, we will notice that we feel **dissatisfied** (*dukkha*) with our experiences for so many reasons. When we investigate why we feel dissatisfied, we will learn that this has to do with not really understanding and accepting that all things change and pass away. We can only "have" them for a

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[1114] That is, in 20 suttas, S 55.55-74/5:410-413.

[1115] On the Buddha's virtues, see **Buddhânussati,** SD 15.7; on the virtues of the Dharma, see **Dhammânussati,** SD 15.9; on the virtue of the noble sangha, see **Aṭṭha,puggala S 1** (A 8.59), SD 15.10a(1).

[1116] For related suttas, see SD 3.3 (4.1.1+4.1.2).

[1117] See Sīla samādhi paññā, SD 21.6.

moment (right now) and then they are gone. Our real life is but a moment. This wisdom will help us adjust ourself so that we begin to enjoy this moment just as it comes and goes: *let it come, let it go*.

6.7.1.4 The 4th and last way to expedite our attaining streamwinning in this life itself is **practising the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma** (*dhammânudhamma,paṭipatti*), which means practising meditation and cultivating wholesome states in tune with reality. This means keeping ourselves free from self-view and self-centered attitudes. Ajahn Amaro reminds us:

> This is because we often practise meditation in tune with our egotistical drives ("Because I want to attain enlightenment and be the most impressive!") or with a sense of obligation, because we have been told to "do it this way" by an expert or a teacher. We can engage in meditation driven by obligation, by obedience, by ambition, by aggression: "I'm going to wipe out my defilements. I'm going to make my thinking mind shut up!" But this is practising Dhamma not in accordance with Dhamma, but in accordance with aggression, with self-view, and with aversion, ambition and greed, and so forth.
>
> (Amaro, "Unshakeable well-being," 2019:1955)[1118]

If Buddhist practice can be summarized in one word, it is **renunciation** (*nekkhamma*). The best way we can attain the path, even arhathood itself in this life, is as a renunciant keeping to the Dharma-Vinaya: *monastic life* provides us with the ideal conditions for full renunciation. Whether monastic or lay, we must practise renunciation at our own pace, that is, renouncing what is negative in our body, speech and mind (the 3 karmic doors that always lead back to samsara).[1119]

Bodily renunciation refers to the mindful habit of letting go of whatever is unwholesome and unhelpful to our physical health. Ethically, this means respecting life (ours and others), the happiness of others, and their personal space and freedom (these qualities are, in fact, embodied in the first 3 of the 5 precepts).[1120]

Verbal renunciation is the habit of refraining from speech that is false, divisive, harsh or unbeneficial, and the practice of right speech, that is, speech that is true, unifying, pleasant, and beneficial. In short, this is communication that is helpful and healing.

Mental renunciation is training ourselves to let go of negative ideas and views, and cultivating wholesome ones. This is best done through meditation. Even when we have difficulties meditating, we can cultivate mindfulness and awareness.[1121] Through meditation or mindfulness, we learn to let go of negative thoughts, even all thoughts, so that our mind is calm and clear, healing us and helping us to see people in a positive way, and see the true nature of life and the world so that we live truly happily and beneficially, evolving on the path of personal growth and spiritual liberation.[1122]

6.7.2 Unshakeable well-being

6.7.2.1 In summary, those 4 factors supporting streamwinning are associating with *good* people, listening to teachings on *good*, attending with *good* attention, and practising the *good* Dharma in accordance with Dharma: these are the "4 goods" for easier remembering. Ajahn Amaro closes his paper by giving us this sobering advice:

> Another small but significant aspect to mention is that[,] sometimes, we mistake awareness or knowing, as understood from the Buddhist perspective, to mean a sort of mental agility.

[1118] Ajahn Amaro, "Unshakeable well-being: is the Buddhist concept of enlightenment a meaningful possibility in the current age?" *Mindfulness* 10 2019:1952-1956.

[1119] These are the 3 doors of karma: see SD 5.7 (2.2.2).

[1120] On the 5 precepts, see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S,** SD 1.5 (2); *Sīlānussati*, SD 15.11 (2.2); SD 21.6 (1.2); SD 37.8 (2.2).

[1121] See *Bhāvanā,* SD 15.1.

[1122] On renunciation (*nekkhamma*) as spiritual practice (esp meditation), see **Hāliddakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2); *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1 (14.7).

The quality of streamwinning is not dependent on being able to articulate or even to think clearly. This is an important principle. It is not dependent on clarity of thought. You do not have to remember your lines. True insight can be established without a dependence on memory, conceptual thought or language. True insight is rather a quality of vision, a quality of attitude, and attitude is not a concept. It is a way of seeing, a way of being. It is an awakened knowing, awareness itself, rather than knowing *about* things.

(Amaro 2019:1955)

We must feel how Amaro wrote this passage with great respect and love for his teacher, Ajahn Chah (as we will see below). This same sentiment applies to other meditation teachers who, in their advanced age, had diminished faculties, even dementia.[1123] Phyo Hein Zaw, for example, informs me that **U Ko Lay** [6.6.1], beginning 2 years before his death, had symptoms of diminished faculties. He was not officially diagnosed with dementia, and seemed to be "in constant state of meditation" (Phyo); in other words, he was mostly incommunicado. His family did not allow him to drive as he was unable to sense his ambience accurately. He was "not operating in our usual frequency any more." His family worried about his safety and did not allow him to step outside the house or to drive the car. U Ko Lay died at 88 in 2021.

6.7.2.2 Amaro movingly described **Ajahn Chah** in his advanced age thus:

Ajahn Chah had a stroke when he was in his sixties. His brain function was quite heavily compromised. During the period of time when he could still speak, sometimes monks would come to visit and he might want to say, "Come here Sumedho" but what emerged was "Come here Ānando"; or he'd mean to say, "It's good to see you" while what would come out would be something like, "Blue dog happy Thursday."

And he would realize that was nonsense. He knew that the words of his choosing had not been spoken and that a different set of words had appeared instead, but he found this amusing instead of distressing. He understood that his thinking functions were misfiring, but he did not have any suffering about it. He was at ease with it even though it was not under his control. He described it by saying, "The monkeys are playing about in the telephone exchange."

This shows that unshakeable well-being, as discussed here, does not depend on a healthy body or even on a capacity for orderly thinking. Rather it is a matter of attitude. It is a steadiness of the inner vision, of apperception. It is the ability to appreciate the ever-changing field of experience, regardless of its contents, with openness, easefulness, and impartiality. Our happiness then does not depend on any single "thing" or object as it is grounded in a commodious awareness of <u>the process</u> of experiencing, rather than in *the contents* of those experiences.   (Amaro 2019:1955)

It's not the point here whether Ajahn Chah was, after all, an arhat or not. We do not know, unless we are one, too. When we sanctimoniously canonize some illustrious teacher we look up to—"So and so *must* be an arhat!" or " … *is* an arhat" —we are priding that "I know an arhat," maybe hinting that

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[1123] APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015: "**Dementia,** a generalized, pervasive deterioration of memory and at least one other cognitive function, such as language and an executive function [2.6.3.2], due to a variety of causes. The loss of intellectual abilities is severe enough to interfere with an individual's daily functioning and social and occupational activity. In *DSM–IV–TR*, dementias are categorized according to the cause, which may be Alzheimer's disease, cerebrovascular disease (see vascular dementia), Lewy body dementia, Pick's disease, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, HIV infection (see AIDS dementia complex), Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, head injury, alcoholism (see alcohol-induced persisting dementia), or substance abuse (see substance-induced persisting dementia)." [6.7.2.2 n]

we are an arhat, too (when we are not). The life, teachings and fruit of Ajahn Chah's work testify to a great monk who had lived by the Dharma-Vinaya and who taught his students well.[1124]

6.8 A MODERN ARAHANT REVISES BUDDHISM

6.8.1 Revising the stages of insight

6.8.1.1 The German scholar-meditator monk Analayo wrote at least 2 learned papers on the Buddhist guru, **Dr Daniel M Ingram, MD**.[1125] The 2020 paper criticized specifically Ingram's "maps" [6.8.1.2] and ideology of Buddhism. The 2021 paper criticizes Ingram more broadly but specifically to rebut Ingram's claim that mindfulness was "dangerous" (which appears 52 times in his book). The abstract of his 2021 paper read thus:
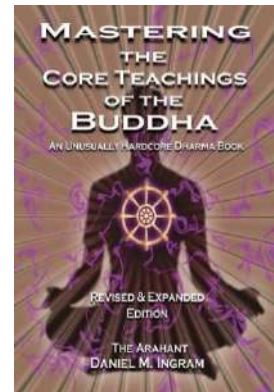
> Criticism of potential drawbacks of mindfulness is crucial for the field to move forward and remain grounded in reality rather than become carried away by the mindfulness hype.[1126] At the same time, however, such criticism needs to be reasonable and based on actual facts rather than subjective imagination. The allegation that mindfulness is intrinsically dangerous appears to have been influenced by unreasonable claims made by Daniel Ingram, which have been taken seriously due to an apparent lack of acquaintance of some scholars with Buddhist doctrine and with genuine forms of insight meditation.
> (Analayo, "The dangers of mindfulness: another myth?" _Mindfulness_ 12 2021:2890)

Analayo's paper is interesting because he is both a contemplative monk as well as a renowned scholar, and he is the only one, I think, who has written to effectively debunk the claims of a self-declared "Arahant" [6.8.3.1] named Dr Daniel Ingram, MD, well known in social media. He has also published a book entitled _Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha_ (2018)[1127] on his revisionist Buddhism.

Ingram uses the very terminology of insight knowledge to promote his own substantial revisions of **the stages of insight** [6.5.2.2]. He cavalierly used his own experiences as the authority by which he reinterpreted traditional Buddhist teachings, adjusting them to his map of meditative progress. He even went to the extent of identifying childhood experiences and dreams as conforming to certain insights (eg pp 441-446, 472, passim).

Analayo especially disapproved of the licence that Ingram took with Buddhist teachings:

> With all due allowance for personal freedom, it needs to be clearly recognized that such ideas no longer do justice to the intended meaning of the stages of insight in the Theravāda model (Anālayo 2020a), which are about profoundly transformative experience resulting from prolonged and intensive cultivation of insight meditation in a retreat setting. [6.4.7.1]
> (Analayo 2021:2891)

[1124] For basic information of dementia: [Early warning signs] [Types] [NTUC Health] [dementiaUK] [6.7.2.1 n]

[1125] Analayo, "Meditation maps, attainment claims, and the adversities of mindfulness," _Mindfulness_ 11,9 2020a:2102-2112 [doi]; 2021:2891.

[1126] N T Van Dam, M K van Vugt, D R Vago, L Schmalzl, C D Saron, A Olendzki, T Meissner, S W Lazar, C E Kerr, J Gorchov, K C R Fox, B A Field, W B Britton, J A Brefczynski-Lewis, & D E Meyer, "Mind the hype: a critical evaluation and prescriptive agenda for research on mindfulness and meditation," _Perspectives on Psychological Science_ 13,1 2018:36-61. [doi]

[1127] D M Ingram, _Mastering the core teachings of the Buddha: an unusually hardcore Dharma book,_ rev & exp. London: Aeon, 2008, 2018. References to Ingram's 2018 book follow as (parenthesized pages) after the quotes from Ingram's 2018 book.

6.8.1.2 Both Buddhist teachers and academic scholars were confused and concerned with Dr Ingram's claim to be an "Arahant" (Ingram's term), and his ideas about Buddhism, especially those in his book, *Mastering the Hardcore Teachings of the Buddha* (2008, 2018), wherein he reinterprets **the insight knowledges** (*vipassana,ñāṇa*) [6.5.2.2], using his own experiences. As a rule, his views are a massive and cavalier revision of the traditional teachings and a "map" of his private truths (*pacceka,-sacca*)[1128] of Buddhism.

Ingram, in his section on "Mind and Body" discusses the "first vipassana jhana," technically known as "the definition of name and form" (*nāma,rūpa,pariccheda*), which he claims to be "a pleasant, clear, and unitive-feeling state" (p 198). However, as Analayo explains it, the key purpose of this insight knowledge is just the opposite: it is "to prepare the ground for the growth of insight by dismantling any notion of a substantial self or soul."[1129]

The goal or ultimacy of "dismantling any notion of a substantial self or soul" highlights the point of our self-view (that of a fixed notion of things, especially Buddhism). One then Procrustes-like impose one's views on Buddhist teachings to suit one's bias and fancy. Buddhism then becomes merely one's voice of authority to control or exploit others instead of being a tool for self-change as it is intended in the first place.

6.8.1.3 The concept of **Vipassanā Jhāna**, "insight absorption," referring to the stages of insight is a modern ethnic Buddhist idea. Analayo explains:[1130]

> The basic idea behind this usage appears to have had its origin in the last century in a polemic move by Mahāsi Sayādaw, a chief proponent of insight meditation. This usage seems to have been intended to counter criticism of the Mahāsi tradition's approach to insight meditation for not according importance to the cultivation of concentrative absorption (Anālayo 2020).[1131] The success of this polemic move appears to have triggered a widespread redefinition of the very notion of absorption in a such way that the term can be applied to states of relatively shallow concentration.   (Analayo 2020:2103)

6.8.2 Vipassanā jhāna

6.8.2.1 Ingram claims in his book (2018:279) that the basic idea of insight absorptions is evident in the suttas, a notion relying in particular on a popular misinterpretation of **the Anupada Sutta** (M 111).[1132] Briefly, the Sutta describes "contemplating the emerging, persisting, and disappearing of mental factors characteristic of an absorption. The popular interpretation holds that this reflects insight meditation, in the sense of contemplating the impermanent nature of mental factors while being immersed in a state of absorption." (Analayo 2020:2104).

Dhyana teachers will tell us that it is not possible for these to emerge during dhyana. Hence, contemplation of the emergence or disappearance of these factors can only occur either just before entering dhyana or having just emerged.[1133] This was already clarified long ago by Vetter who pointed

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[1128] On *pacceka,sacca,* see SD 40a.8 (5.2); SD 48.1 (6.1.3.5-6.1.3.10); SD 50.7 (1.4.2.4).

[1129] Analayo 2020:2103. `

[1130] Analayo outlines the 4 post-Buddha developments in Abhidhamma as (1) mindfulness as "How mindfulness came to plunge into its objects" (*Mindfulness* 10,6 2019:1181-1185); (2) the theory of momentariness (A von Rospatt, *The Buddhist Doctrine of Momentariness*, Stuttgart, 1995); (3) the insight knowledges (Analayo, "The dynamics of Theravāda insight meditation," in (ed) K Chuang 佛教禪坐傳統國際學術研討會論文集 [Buddhist meditation traditions: an international symposium] 2012:23-56; and (4) Vipassanā jhanas (Analayo 2020).

[1131] Analayo, "A brief history of Buddhist absorption," *Mindfulness* 11,3 2020:571-586. [Draft] [Springer]

[1132] M 111/3:25-29 (SD 56.4). Scholar monk H Gunaratana was similarly misled into believing that thinking is possible during dhyana by this idea: **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b (6.2.3).

[1133] Analayo, "Early Buddhist meditation studies," Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, 2017.

out that "it is certainly not possible to observe ... the disappearance of these qualities in any of these states [ie, the dhyanas], because they are constituted by these qualities."[1134]

Amongst other claims, Ingram believes that we can attain the 11th of the 16 insight knowledges, "equanimity towards formations," even while watching the TV (pp 245, 193 f).[1135] Furthermore, by his own admission, Ingram "care[s] incredibly for the maps" that were models he worked out for his revised ideas about his own brand of Buddhism (p 272). With these "maps," he gradually concocted a scheme of the insight knowledges that morphed into a script to be executed in meditation and applied retrospectively to previous experiences.[1136]

6.8.2.2 Ingram claims that he teaches **Mahasi Vipassana** and often mentions taking lessons from Sayadaw U Pandita Jr. He hints in his book (2018): "I have been authorized and encouraged to teach by a legitimate lineage, this is a mere formality ... " (p 433). However, according to Bhikkhu Vivekananda: "Neither Ven Sayadaw U Pandita Jr nor Ven Sayadaw U Panditabhivamsa Sr of Myanmar have ever authorized Mr Daniel Ingram to teach meditation in the Mahasi tradition."[1137]

In his book, Ingram further claims that in "an interview" with Vipassana teacher, Joseph Goldstein,[1138] the teacher gave him the advice: "Nail down what you've got" (to legitimize his "private truths"). In a personal communication with Analayo (9 Oct 2020), Goldstein said that he did not recall any such meeting, and was confident that he would never give such advice, simply because this was not how he taught his meditation students. Ingram's wish for authentication, reports Analayo, appears to have led him to have "distorted memories."[1139]

6.8.3 Self-declared Arahant

6.8.3.1 Ingram's most audacious display of hubris is to openly declare himself **an arahant**, despite engaging in a married family life, writing about his own professional qualifications and insinuating for donations by "a brief disclosure of finances, in case anyone cares" on his personal Wiki page.[1140] Analayo explains the significance of Ingram's <u>self-declaration to be an arahant</u> such as stating this claim on the front cover of his book (2008, 2018):

> Note that this employs the Pāli term "arahant" and thereby lays claim to having reached the acme of spiritual perfection as understood in the Theravāda tradition, which employs Pāli as its doctrinal and religious language. As explained by Gombrich [*Theravāda Buddhism,* 1988: 3], "hallmarks of Theravāda Buddhism are the use of Pali as its main sacred language and dependence on the Pali version of the Buddhist Canon as its sacred scripture."
>
> Due to the employment of Pāli terminology, the claim made by Daniel Ingram is firmly situated within the Theravāda context and needs to be evaluated from the viewpoint of the Theravāda definition of what makes someone an arahant.
>
> Other Buddhist traditions are not of relevance for evaluating his claim. For example, the usage of the Sanskrit counterpart arhat in the context of descriptions in other Buddhist traditions of the non-*bodhisattva* or non-Mahāyāna path and the respective (often polemical) taxonomies of the paths and stages of awakening is neither text-historically nor doctrinally comparable to Ingram's procedure and does not represent a precedent to it.
>
> (Analayo 2021:2891)

[1134] T Vetter, The Idea and Meditative Practices of Early Buddhism, Leiden: Brill, 1988:69.

[1135] See also Analayo 2021:2891.

[1136] Analayo, 2020a; 2021:2891.

[1137] Vivekananda to Analayo, <u>Letter</u> of 1 Sep 2020.

[1138] See SD 60.1c (1.7.2.3).

[1139] Analayo 2021:2894.

[1140] https://www.dharmaoverground.org/dharma-wiki/-/wiki/Main/Daniel+Ingram.

Ingram had revised the definitions of the 4 stages of the path of awakening to fit his own views, reasoning that "using the original terminology and revising its definitions allows a lot of the most universally applicable and least culturally conditioned information from the Pāli canon to be used today" (2018:335). The idea of revising the definitions of key teachings to make them more universally applicable, can be compared to the medical professions, rebuts Analayo. "Someone could claim to be a medical doctor without ever having studied or practiced medicine, a contention justified so as to make personal attempts at contributing to healthcare more universally applicable than they would be without such claims." (2021:2892)

Although in ancient India, the non-Buddhist term *arahata* could apply to saints or worthy practitioners in any religion, the term **arahant** as used by Ingram is a Theravāda one. This Pali term as used in the languages of the Theravāda communities of South and Southeast Asia, and Theravāda Buddhists worldwide "can move people to tears and motivate them to engage in various traditional forms of expressing respect. Such respect is motivated precisely by the chief connotation of total liberation from defilements." (Analayo id).

6.8.3.2 Ingram's revision of traditional Buddhism clearly smacks of **cultural appropriation**, not to say a narcissistic sense of self-entitlement. A Western Buddhist seeker and one of my proofreaders, **Matt Jenkins**, insightful observes that "Obviously, there is a tradition of Buddhism in the West, which Ingram will see himself as part of—which is why he's putting weight on discussions with Goldstein, for example. Equally, there is no ownership of terms—you do not have to come from somewhere with a long history of Buddhism to achieve the Path."

> At the same time though, there is something very uncomfortable about redefining the language of a non-Western faith tradition, sifting the bits you've decided are "most universally applicable and least culturally conditioned."
>
> I'd go as far as saying that this sort of behaviour feels a little colonial—the "white saviour" coming in to "correct" "ethnic" "misunderstandings" and "rescue" the truth on behalf of "all humanity."
>
> Part of the issue, I think, is a blindness to his own cultural conditioning—which is built around the idea of individuals. As an individual he has a "right" and an "obligation" to "correct" or "clarify," so that others can access a "truth" and so, individually, gain the Path. There's a whole gem though, the Sangha, which exists because that's not possible. We might walk the Path on our own, but we do so only with the help of others—Buddhism is a communal effort.
>
> It's one thing to translate Buddhism into Western terms—but the aim there is to correct the terms in light of Buddhism, not the other way around. The point at which you're "correcting" Buddhism to match the West, that's a conquest not an explication."[1141]

6.8.3.3 Cultural appropriation aside, the claim of the title *arahant* by one who has not actually attained that noble state is an unwholesome (karmically potent) and antisocial act (bound to mislead others), condemned by the Buddha himself (whom all true arahants would respect) **The Vasala Sutta**, the discourse on the outcaste (Sn 1.7) records the Buddha as saying:

> Someone who, not being an arahant, claims to be an arahant, in this world with its gods is a thief. (*yo ve anarahā santo, arahaṁ paṭijānati, coro sabrahmake loke.*)
>
> (Sn 135)

It's interesting that Ingram should write: "That the enlightened lineage holders of the modern Theravada and their ex-monk and ex-nun Western counterparts don't have the guts to stand up and say, 'We are deeply sorry that for 2,500 years, many of our predecessors perpetuated this craziness

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[1141] Matt Jenkins's feedback, 7 Nov 2023.

to put food in their bowls and fool ignorant peasants so that they might be supported in their other useful work, and we vow to do better!' is a crying shame. Surely this is an ego-defence of **reaction formation** on a grand narcissistic scale? [2.5.3.2]

From the way Dr Ingram works, we can see that he is a man of great cunning genius, very much like Rishi Sativihari (Richard Wright) of Canada.[1142] They both used (and use) Buddhism as a professional crutch. Sativihari, however, finding that, as he aged, Buddhism does not provide a "good retirement plan," gave up his Buddhist robes and switched to being trained as an Anglican priest. After serving that Church for some years, he retired comfortably and lived with his husband. We can see both persons as those who put themselves above everything and everyone else; nothing is sacred beyond the self. They are classic cases of grandiose narcissism who have a great sense of self-entitlement [5.3.7]. At least the latter did not declare himself an arahant.

6.8.3.4 Thus far, we have examined narcissism [5.3] and how people with narcissistic tendencies [5.4] are often drawn to religion since it is an easy source of power when we are able to define holiness or salvation convincingly, and act in a charismatic manner [2]. We have also seen how Asian Buddhists [6.2] and Dutch Buddhists [6.3] meditate to reach the path [6.2], such as by embodying the 3 characteristics [6.4]; how meditation can be used to domesticate a whole nation or large sections of it with meditation [6.5], and how individuals are allegedly able to guide and certify others to the Buddha's path [6.6]. We have now come to the last part of SD 60.1f, where we will be looking at some of the challenges and adversities of Theravada meditation, especially Vipassana.

6.8.3.5 In the next chapter [7], the closing of the whole SD 60.1f series, we will be looking at the methods and findings of 2 remarkable psychology projects:

The ReSource project (2015) and   [7.1]
The Varieties of Contemplative Experience project (VCE) (2017)   [7.2]

The ReSource project proposes the "twin meditation" (contemplative dyads) method for social connectedness, while **the VCE project** researched on meditation-related challenges and adversities in Western Buddhists.

[1142] SD 60.1c (17.5.3).

7 Meditation and adverse experiences

7.1 THE RESOURCE PROJECT

7.1.1 Pair meditation for social bonding

7.1.1.1 The ReSource Project[1143] originated with work of the principal investigator, **Tania Singer**, in London and later in Zurich on the neural bases of empathy, compassion, and cognitive perspective-taking.[1144] After discovering the neural basis of empathy in the brain, Singer aimed at investigating whether these social capacities could also be trained in healthy adult participants.[1145]

Singer's early work in London and Zurich inspired the conceptual design of the training protocol for the *ReSource Project*. This research particularly showed evidence of different neuronal pathways underlying a more affective understanding of others through empathy and compassion on the one hand, and a broader understanding through cognitive perspective-taking and mentalizing on the other.[1146]

At the same time, she started meeting and partly working with long-term meditation practitioners such as Buddhist monks Matthieu Ricard and Barry Kerzin, and Benedictine monk Brother David Steindl-Rast, as well as meditation teachers such as Sharon Salzberg and Fred von Allmen with whom she was able to continuously discuss relevant concepts related to compassion and contemplative practice that contributed to the development of the theoretical backbone of the present training protocol.

Most importantly, Singer attended several meditation retreats over the last decade including, among others, the well-known retreat center Meditation Center Beatenberg in Switzerland and retreats of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, MA, USA. These retreat participations were also an inspiration for several core exercises of her own training modules, for example, the Breath Meditation, the Lovingkindness Meditation, and the Observing-thoughts Meditation.[1147]

7.1.1.2 Singer went on to develop the final version of the training concept which she based on 3 thematically different modules called Presence, Affect, and Perspective, each lasting for about 3 months. **The Presence Module** was strongly influenced by the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and his 8-week MBSR programme.[1148] **The Affect Module** was inspired by previous research carried out in the

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[1143] T Singer, B E Kok, B Bornemann, S Zuborg, M Bolz & C A Bochow, *The ReSource Project: Background, Design, Samples, and Measurements* [2015], 2nd ed, Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences; **2016**. [ResearchGate]

[1144] N A **Harrison**, T Singer, P Rotshtein, R J Dolan, & H D Critchley, "Pupillary contagion: central mechanisms engaged in sadness processing," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 1,1 **2006**:5-17; O M **Klimecki**, S Leiberg, C Lamm, & T Singer, "Functional neural plasticity and associated changes in positive affect after compassion training," *Cerebral Cortex* 23,7 **2013**:1552-1561; O M **Klimecki**, S Leiberg, M Ricard, & T Singer, "Differential pattern of functional brain plasticity after compassion and empathy training," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 9,6 **2014**:873-879; C **Lamm**, J Decety, & T Singer, "Meta-analytic evidence for common and distinct neural networks associated with directly experienced pain and empathy for pain," *NeuroImage* 54,3 **2011**:2492-2502; T **Singer**, "The neuronal basis and ontogeny of empathy and mind reading: Review of literature and implications for future research," *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* 30,6 **2006**:855-863; T **Singer**, "The past, present and future of social neuroscience: a European perspective," *NeuroImage* 61,2 **2012**: 437-449; T **Singer**, B Seymour, J O'Doherty, H Kaube, R J Dolan, & C D Frith, "Empathy for pain involves the affective but not sensory components of pain," *Science* 303 5661 **2004**:1157-1162.

[1145] T Singer et al, B Seymour, J P O'DohertyK E Stephan, R J Dolan, & C D Frith, "Empathic neural responses are modulated by the perceived fairness of others," *Nature* 439 7075 2006:466-469.

[1146] T Singer et al 2006, 2012; T Singer et al, 2004; T Singer et al, 2006

[1147] See Singer et al 2016:ch 3 for details.

[1148] On the Mindfulness-based Stress Relief programme, see SD 60.1e (1.1.6).

Max Planck Institute laboratory (Munich) on the effects of lovingkindness, empathy, and compassion on subjective well-being and the brain

Finally, **the Perspective Module** was designed on the basis of:
(a) previous research on cognitive perspective-taking;
(b) self-work rooted in the Internal Family Systems concepts[1149] and with help from Tom Holmes;[1150]
(c) traditional contemplative meditation exercises.[1151]

Training for each module was executed by means of 2 core exercises.[1152] The *Satori* Process[1153] was especially helpful in the development of the "**contemplative dyads**" in the Perspective and the Affect Modules, as it focuses on contemplative dialogues that were, in an altered form, also incorporated as core exercises in the present training protocol.

Further, dyadic exercises of the Affect Module were inspired by practices of gratefulness that are common in contemplative traditions.[1154] These dyads help to cultivate inter-subjective facilities and social cognition via real personal contacts in a more direct way than via imaginary interactions that are common in single meditation practices.[1155]

7.1.1.3 Many disorders (including autism, schizophrenia, depression, and borderline and narcissistic personality disorders) are marked by deficiencies in social cognitive processes such as empathy and Theory of Mind (ToM).[1156] These deficiencies make it difficult to form and maintain social connections; in simple terms, they give rise to loneliness.

Loneliness, then, is a perceived lack of social connectedness, and is a long-term risk factor for pain and fatigue, clinical depression, and dementia, as well as heart attack and high blood pressure,

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[1149] R C Schwartz, *Internal family systems therapy*, NY: Guilford, 1997.

[1150] T Holmes, Parts work: An illustrated guide to your inner life, Kalamazoo: Winged Heart Press, 2007.

[1151] R Y Mingyur & E Swanson, *Joyful wisdom: Embracing change and finding freedom* NY: Three Rivers Press, 2010. The theoretical concept and the overall neurological basis of these 3 modules are described in detail in Singer 2016 ch 2.3.

[1152] See Singer et al 2016 ch 3.

[1153] In the 1960s, Americans Charles Berner (1927-2007), later known as Yogeshwar Muni, and his wife, Ava Berner, devised the **Enlightenment Intensive**, a New Age group retreat for enabling a spiritual enlightenment experience within a relatively short time. The format combines the self-enquiry meditation method popularized by Hindu holy man Ramana Maharshi with interpersonal communication processes such as the dyad structure of co-counselling (Chapman 1989) in a structure that resembles both a traditional Zen *sesshin* (meditation retreat) and group psychotherapy. As a secular self-help method, it avoids religious teachings and philosophical concepts. In 1971, British psychotherapist and facilitator Clare Soloway, a student of Berner, used the name **Satori** (Jap, "enlightenment") for her own brand of dyadic therapy. In 1972, she became a Sannyas, Ma Ananda Poonam, and stayed with cult Guru Osho Rajneesh in India. In 1984, she gave up Sannyas and left the cult. Soloway trained as a Gestalt and Bio-Energetics Psychotherapist and as a Group Therapist; her teachers being amongst the pioneers of the early days of Humanistic Psychology. See J **Chapman**, *Tell me who you are*, Hanslope (UK): J & E Chapman & The SPA Ltd, 1988; L **Noyes**, *Enlightenment intensive: Dyad communication as a tool for self-realization*. Berkeley, CA: Frog Books, 1998.

[1154] D Steindl-Rast, Gratefulness, the heart of prayer—an approach to life in fullness, Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1984.

[1155] Singer et al 2016: ch 2.5.

[1156] F **Hoffmann**, C Banzhaf, P Kanske, M Gärtner, F Bermpohl, T Singer, "Empathy in depression: egocentric and altercentric biases and the role of alexithymia," *J of Affect Disorders* 199 2016:23-29. K **Ritter**, I Dziobek, S Preissler, "Lack of empathy in patients with narcissistic personality disorder," *Psychiatry Reearch* 187,1-2 2010: 241-247. S **Roepke** S, A Vater, S Preißler, H R Heekeren, I Dziobek, "Social cognition in borderline personality disorder," *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 6 2013:195. M **Sprong**, P Schothorst, F Vos, I Hox, H van Engeland, "Theory of mind in schizophrenia: meta-analysis," *British J of Psychiatry* 191 2007:5-13. M **Brüne**, U Brüne-Cohrs, "Theory of mind—evolution, ontogeny, brain mechanisms and psychopathology," *Neuroscience Biobehavioral Review* 30,4 2006:437-455. T **Singer**, "The past, present and future of social neuroscience: a European perspective," *Neuroimage* 61,2 2012:437-449. G **Bird**, G Silani, R Brindley, S White, U Frith, T Singer, "Empathic brain responses in insula are modulated by levels of alexithymia but not autism," *Brain* 133,5 2010:1515-1525.

culminating in premature mortality.[1157] Interventions to increase social connectedness are few in number and only weakly effective.[1158] For fostering social connectedness, the ReSource project proposed directly targeting deficiencies in social cognition.[1159]

The ReSource Project relied heavily on classical Buddhist meditation methods for their secularized training programmes to address social cognition, but classical meditation practice is typically done alone. Little is known about the effectiveness of meditation practice done in **pairs** (dyads). This is the innovation introduced by the Project: the pair meditation or **contemplative dyad**.

7.1.1.4 The ReSource Project was a 9-month open-label[1160] efficacy trial of three 3-month (13 weeks) secularized mental training modules involving 332 healthy participants in Leipzig and Berlin, Germany (2012-2014).[1161] They were grouped, with 80 in training cohort 1 (TC1), 81 in training cohort 2 (TC2), 81 in training cohort 3 (TC3), and 90 assigned to a retest control condition. Because the control participants did not engage in the dyads or meditations, they did not contribute data for discussion.

Training cohorts 1 and 2 attended a 3-day retreat to begin the Presence Module.[1162] After 3 months of presence training, participants in TC1 began the Affect Module, and participants in TC2 began 3 months of the Perspective Module [Fig 7.1.1]. After completing the second module, participants in TC1 were assigned to the Perspective Module, and participants in TC2 were assigned the Affect Module. Training cohort 3 completed only the Affect Module.

Participants were asked to do each practice 5 times a week at home, using guided recordings for the meditation. Participants completed questions about their subjective state before and after each daily practice. For the dyads [7.1.1.3], participants met with a randomly assigned partner using a custom designed website or smartphone app.

One participant was randomly assigned to speak first for 5 minutes. During this time, the listener was asked to silently focus and not to respond. After 5 minutes, both participants completed some questions and then switched roles. The dyad ended after both participants had spoken and listened. In short, participants were instructed to answer the dyadic prompt [working in pairs, 7.1.1.3,] at once, without any preconceived goals. In addition to daily practice, participants attended 2-hour weekly training sessions with meditation teachers.

[1157] L M **Jaremka**, R R Andridge, C P Fagundes, et al, "Pain, depression, and fatigue: loneliness as a longitudinal risk factor," *Health Psychology* 33,9 **2014**:948-957. J T **Cacioppo**, L C Hawkley, R A Thisted, "Perceived social isolation makes me sad: 5-year cross-lagged analyses of loneliness and depressive symptomatology in the Chicago Health, Aging, and Social Relations Study," *Psychology & Aging* 25,2 2010:453-463. T J **Holwerda**, D J H Deeg, A T F Beekman, "Feelings of loneliness, but not social isolation, predict dementia onset: results from the Amsterdam Study of the Elderly (AMSTEL)," *J of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry* 85,2 2014:135-142; E D **Eaker**, J Pinsky, W P Castelli, "Myocardial infarction and coronary death among women: psychosocial predictors from a 20-year follow-up of women in the Framingham Study," *American J of Epidemiology* 135,8 1992:854-864. L C **Hawkley**, R A Thisted, C M Masi, J T Cacioppo, "Loneliness predicts increased blood pressure: 5-year cross-lagged analyses in middle-aged and older adults," *Psychology & Aging* 25,1 2010:132-141. J **Holt**-**Lunstad**, T B Smith, M Baker, T Harris, D Stephenson, "Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: ameta-analytic review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10,2 2015:227-237. C M **Masi**, H Y Chen, L C Hawkley, J T Cacioppo, "A meta-analysis of interventions to reduce loneliness," *Personality & Social Psychology Review* 15,3 2011:219-266.

[1158] C M Masi et al, 2011.

[1159] S Cacioppo, A J Grippo, S London, L Goossens, J T Cacioppo, "Loneliness: clinical import and interventions," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10,2 2015:238-249.

[1160] "Open-label trial" or "open trial" is a type of clinical trial in which information is not withheld from trial participants. In particular, both the researchers and participants know which treatment or method is being used. [NCI]

[1161] **Singer** et al **2016**. M **Farias,** E Maraldi, K C Wallenkampf, and G Luccheti, "Adverse events in meditation practices and meditation-based therapies: a systematic review," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 142 **2020**:374-393. [Wiley] [Coventry]
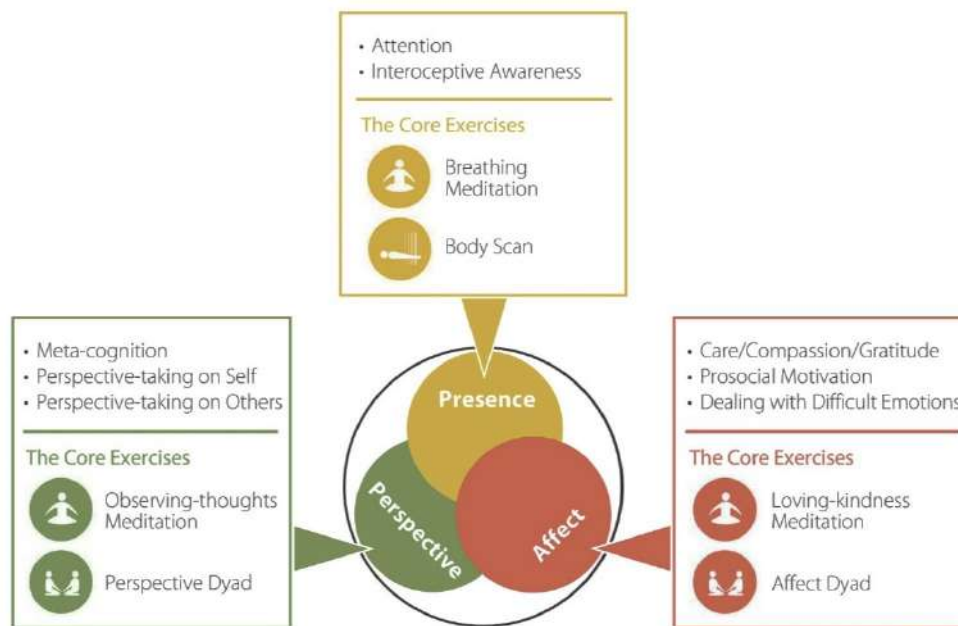
[1162] Singer et al 2016: ch 3.2.

Fig 7.1.1 The 3 modules and core exercises (ReSource Project)
Source: T Singer, *The ReSource Project,* 2nd ed, 2016:27 (Fig 3.1.1)

The Resource Project included a special session with selected meditations teachers (March & August 2012),[1163] and involved a wide range of technical assessments.[1164] We will here only present or comment on the meditations and related ideas of the ReSource Project that are connected with the theme of this SD volume.

7.1.2 The Presence Module[1165]

7.1.2.1 The Presence Retreat and Weekly Training Sessions
In the ReSource Project retreat, participants mainly practise the 2 core exercises, Breath Meditation and Body Scan, as well as some complementary exercises such as walking meditation, or meditations on sound or vision (the Vipassana noting on "hearing … hearing," and "seeing … seeing") all aimed at facilitating mindfulness of the present moment.

As this was the first retreat that participants attended, they were also familiarized with the concept and rules of a silent retreat and how the structure might help them in their practice. They received guidance for fundamental aspects of meditation, such as the sitting posture and how to deal with distractions.

Motivational talks addressed typical pitfalls and misunderstandings about meditation as well as the importance and challenges of maintaining regular practice. The 13-week course deepened and extended participants' practice and helped them to integrate it both formally and informally into everyday life.

Besides the core exercises, which were practised in every session, specific sessions revisited attention to sounds and visual objects as other means of becoming aware of the present moment. Participants also learned a more holistic, less single-pointed meditation practice called Open Presence (or "open monitoring") [3.3.4.2].

[1163] Singer et al 2016: ch 2.6.
[1164] Singer et al 2016: ch 3 The ReSource protocol; ch 4 Design, timeline, and training setting.
[1165] Singer et al 2016: chs 3.2 & 2.3.1.

A specific session addressed the experience of <u>stress</u> that might arise from the multiple scientific testing procedures that participants underwent from week 9 onwards, discussing how the acquired skills might help in these situations and how the testing situations were themselves an opportunity for practice.

7.1.2.2 The overarching goal of the Presence Module is to raise participants' mindfulness of the present moment and to prepare their minds for meditative exercises. This involves stabilizing the mind (attention) and heightening their awareness of the present bodily state (interoceptive awareness). Both processes are simultaneously trained in the two core exercises: Breathing Meditation and Body Scan.

7.1.2.3 Breath Meditation

The Breath Meditation is practised, with variations, in all the Buddhist meditative traditions.[1166] The basic instruction is to focus attention on the awareness of breathing (*ānâpāna,sati*) [1.2.1]. Whenever the mind wanders, we should simply bring it back to the breath. The exercise requires us to stay alert, to hold the attention for some duration, and to resolve conflicts between upcoming mind activity and the designated focus (attention component). It also trains the further development of interoception[1167] through focusing on breath awareness.

When it is difficult to gain breath-awareness, we may resort to some sensation (touch) of the breath (at the nose-tip, just above the navel or a sense of rising and falling of the breathing body) until we are able to have breath-awareness. The idea is to transform the body-based breath to a mental experience of it when the breathing becomes profoundly subtle and peaceful.[1168]

7.1.2.4 Body Scan

Body Scan goes back to **the Satipatthana Sutta** (M 10), the discourse of the establishment of mindfulness, taught by the Buddha himself [1.2.1]. The Body Scan is part of Vipassana Meditation [6.3.1.1], the core practice of Burmese Theravada Buddhism. In this practice, meditators mentally scan their bodies, that is, they successively pay attention to the feelings occurring in various parts of their body.

Typically, this scanning will be done in a systematic fashion, for instance, starting at the tip of the toes, and gradually moving attention upwards to the top of the head. The exercise can be done in any position, but for beginners of this exercise it is easiest to do it in the supine position, where relaxation facilitates access to body feelings. The exercise trains interoceptive awareness through continuous body focus as well as the deliberate direction of attention.

7.1.2.5 Presence Module overview

Many contemplative traditions—such as the Buddhist tradition—contend that the capacity to be fully aware of **the present moment** is an essential prerequisite to a fulfilled and compassionate life.[1169] Psychological studies have recently found support for this traditional notion. For instance, a recent study used a smartphone application to contact participants and asked them about their cur-

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[1166] B A Wallace, *The attention revolution*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2006:13-76.

[1167] APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015: "**Interoception,** sensitivity to stimuli inside the body, resulting from the response of specialized sensory cells called **interoceptors** to occurrences within the body (eg, from the viscera)." Simply: it refers to the totality of sensory receptors and nerves that gather information from within the body; the total feeling of the body.

[1168] Analayo, *Mindfulness of Breathing: a practice guide and translations,* Windhorse, 2021. [Windhorse]

[1169] THICH Nhat Hanh, *Our appointment with life: the Buddha's teaching on living in the present*, Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, **1990**; J **Kabat-Zinn**, Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life, NY: Hyperion, **2009**; P A Maas, *Samādhipāda: Das erste Kapitel des Pātanjalayogaśāstra zum ersten Mal kritisch ediert*, Aachen: Shaker, **2006**; **Analayo**: "Present moment," **2018**, "Attention and mindfulness," **2020**.

rent thoughts, feelings, and activities.[1170] Unsurprisingly, subjects were happier when thinking about positive rather than about negative events.

Intriguingly, though, subjects were happiest when their minds were not occupied by thoughts at all, that is, when they were fully immersed in the present moment. Clearly, thoughts unrelated to the present moment (mind-wandering) may be helpful or even necessary, such as when planning for the future.[1171] However, mind-wandering may be detrimental to happiness or safety.

Excessive levels of mind-wandering, also termed **rumination**, are considered a hallmark of depression.[1172] Mind-wandering also reduces our capacity to simultaneously process stimuli from the outer world (the "here and now"),[1173] which is crucial for effective lovingkindness (for self) or compassionate action (for others).

Thus, it is clear that the ability to choose whether or not to keep the attention on the present moment is beneficial. This ability of attending to the present moment, be it focused on breathing, environmental sounds, or other sensations, is the training focus of the first module of the ReSource Project called **Presence**.

The core psychological processes cultivated in this module are attention and interoceptive awareness [Figure 7.1.1]. In the following, we describe their roles in the Presence Module, as well as their underlying psychological functions. The ReSource Project also discusses the neural correlates of the activities mentioned, but they will mostly be omitted from this report since our focus is on the significance that the Project has for Buddhism today, especially those following early Buddhism.

7.1.2.6 Attention
Attention stability is fundamental for meditation. The cultivation of any mental quality requires that the subject be able to direct attention to a mind-object, such as a feeling, thought, emotion, or memory, and to maintain focus on this object. This is the reason why most contemplative traditions focus on stabilizing the mind as a first step of mental training.[1174]

In the Presence Module, it is also this faculty of attention that allows a subject to recognize when the mind has wandered and redirect it back to the present moment, such as the meditation object. Studies in psychology and neuroscience have differentiated several components of attention, and identified the neural correlates of the latter.[1175]

Of primary importance for the ReSource training are wakefulness/alertness, conflict monitoring and resolution, reorienting, and sustained attention. Alertness or basic wakefulness refers to a state of mental preparedness and sensitivity to incoming stimuli. It is reflected in the global level of neuronal activity and glucose consumption throughout the brain.[1176] Specifically, the brainstem and thalamic regions are involved in the excitation of the cortex[1177] and the locus coeruleus regulates nor-

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[1170] M A Killingsworth & D T Gilbert, "A wandering mind is an unhappy mind," *Science,* 330 6006 2010:932.

[1171] B Baird, J Smallwood, & J W Schooler, "Back to the future: Autobiographical planning and the functionality of mind-wandering,"*Consciousness and Cognition* 20,4 2011:1604-1611.

[1172] C Papageorgiou & A Wells, *Depressive rumination: Nature, theory and treatment*. Chichester: Wiley, 2008.

[1173] K Christoff, A M Gordon, J Smallwood, R Smith, & J W Schooler, "Experience sampling during fMRI reveals default network and executive system contributions to mind wandering," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA* 106,21 2009:8719-8724.

[1174] Eg, S Mipham, *Turning the mind into an ally*, New York: Riverhead Books, 2003.

[1175] For overviews, see M I **Posner**, "Imaging attention networks," *NeuroImage* 61,2 **2012**:450-456; A **Raz** & & J Buhle, "Typologies of attentional networks," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 7,5 **2006**:367-379; P **Malinowski**, "Neural mechanisms of attentional control in mindfulness meditation," *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 7 art 8 4 Feb 2013:1-11.

[1176] M Thomas, H Sing, G Belenky, H Holcomb, H Mayberg, R Dannals, "Neural basis of alertness and cognitive performance impairments during sleepiness. I. Effects of 24 h of sleep deprivation on waking human regional brain activity," *J of Sleep Research,* 9,4 2000:335-352.

[1177] T J **Balkin**, A R Braun, N J Wesensten, K Jeffries, M Varga, P Baldwin, G Belenky, & P Herscovitch, (2002). "The process of awakening: a PET study of regional brain activity patterns mediating the re-establishment of

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epinephrine levels throughout many cortical areas, serving as a neuromodulator which influences neural excitability.[1178]

A well balanced alertness, that is, one that avoids the two extremes of hypo-arousal (tiredness) and hyper-arousal (agitation), is seen as being essential in contemplative practice,[1179] with evidence suggesting that even this most basic aspect of attention may be malleable through contemplative training.[1180] It is also self-evident that such basic wakefulness is indispensable for being available to the present moment.

Furthermore, both during practice and for staying present in everyday life, it is important that we notice when the mind has wandered and can guide it back to currently present inner or outer stimuli. This detection and resolution of a conflict between an intended or present-focused mental activity and competing mental processes ("distraction") can be conceptualized as *conflict monitoring and resolution*, and *reorienting*.[1181] This function is subserved by a network of predominantly frontal brain regions, crucially involving the anterior cingulate cortex and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex,[1182] as well as temporal-parietal brain regions involved in *reorienting*.[1183]

Finally, for formal contemplative practice, vigilant or *sustained attention* is needed. This is the ability to remain focused on a task and meet its demands over longer stretches of time (more than several seconds), particularly when the task is repetitive or monotonous.[1184] As many contemplative practices require sustained focus on objects that are neither intellectually nor emotionally stimulating, such as breathing, this type of stabilized focus is indispensable. Naturally, such prolonged attention has the previously described aspects of attention, alertness, conflict resolution, and reorienting, as prerequisites.

Some researches have also conceptualized it as a specific type of alertness, namely tonic alertness.[1185] Accordingly, the brain correlations of sustained attention are vast, with a recent meta-analysis identifying the most consistently activated brain regions in sustained attention tasks to be pre-

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alertness and consciousness," *Brain* 125 2002:2308-2319; J **Fan**, B D McCandliss, J Fossella, J I Flombaum, & M I Posner, "The activation of attentional networks," *NeuroImage* 26,2 2005:471-479.

[1178] G Aston-Jones & J D Cohen, "An integrative theory of locus coeruleus-norepinephrine function: Adaptive gain and optimal performance," *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 28,1 2005:403-450.

[1179] Eg, Wallace 2006.

[1180] Reviewed in W B Britton, J R Lindahl, B R Cahn, J H Davis, & R E Goldman, "Awakening is not a metaphor: the effects of Buddhist meditation practices on basic wakefulness," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1307 <u>2014</u>:64-81.

[1181] W **Hasenkamp**, C D Wilson-Mendenhall, E Duncan, & L W Barsalou, "Mind wandering and attention during focused meditation: A fine-grained temporal analysis of fluctuating cognitive states," *NeuroImage* 59,1 **2012**: 750-760; B K **Hölzel**, S W Lazar, T Gard, Z Schuman-Olivier, D R Vago, & U Ott, "How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6,6 <u>2011</u>:537-559; P **Malinowski**, "Neural mechanisms of attentional control in mindfulness meditation," *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 7,8 <u>2013</u>:1-11.

[1182] J **Fan**, B D McCandliss, J Fossella, J I Flombaum, & M I Posner, "The activation of attentional networks," *NeuroImage,* 26,2 **2005**:471-479; K **Konrad**, S Neufang, C M Thiel, K Specht, C Hanisch, J Fan, B Herpertz-Dahlmann, & G R Fink, "Development of attentional networks: An fMRI study with children and adults," *NeuroImage* 28,2 **2005**:429-439; **Raz** & Buhle 2006; K R **Ridderinkhof**, W P M van den Wildenberg, S J Segalowitz, & C S Carter, "Neurocognitive mechanisms of cognitive control: The role of prefrontal cortex in action selection, response inhibition, performance monitoring, and reward-based learning," *Brain and Cognition* 56,2 2004:129-140.

[1183] M **Corbetta**, J M Kincade, J M Ollinger, M P McAvoy, & G L Shulman, "Voluntary orienting is dissociated from target detection in human posterior parietal cortex. *Nature Neuroscience,* 3,3 **2000**:292-297; C **Giessing**, T Neber, & C M Thiel, "Genetic variation in nicotinic receptors affects brain networks involved in reorienting attention," *NeuroImage* 59,1 **2012**:831-839.

[1184] R Langner & S B Eickhoff, "Sustaining attention to simple tasks: A meta-analytic review of the neural mechanisms of vigilant attention," *Psychological Bulletin* 139,4 2013:870-900.

[1185] Eg, S Sadaghiani, R Scheeringa, K Lehongre, B Morillon, A L Giraud, & A Kleinschmidt, "Intrinsic connectivity networks, alpha oscillations, and tonic alertness: a simultaneous electroencephalography/functional magnetic resonance imaging study," *J of Neuroscience* 30,30 2010:10243-10250.

dominantly right-lateralized and including the dorsomedial-, mid,- and ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, as well as the anterior insula, parietal regions, and subcortical structures, such as the thalamus and the putamen.[1186]

7.1.2.7 Interoceptive Awareness

Interoceptive Awareness is the awareness of signals from within the body, such as visceral, heart-beat, or breathing sensations as well as the top-down processes involved in the perception of these signals, including biases, beliefs, and emotional or cognitive reactions.[1187] Contemplative traditions have widely recognized the importance of interoceptive awareness. While thoughts may relate to the past, or the future, as well as to absent or abstract entities, body sensations are always experienced in the present moment. They are thus an excellent vehicle for returning to living reality.[1188]

Furthermore, traditions such as Buddhism teach that the body offers a space for learning about reality and gaining insight into the workings of the mind, particularly emotions.[1189] In line with this notion, research has demonstrated that interoceptive awareness plays an important role in emotional awareness and emotion regulation,[1190] as well as empathy.[1191] It has also been related to self-awareness,[1192] and self-control of behaviour.[1193]

To summarize, interoceptive awareness is fundamental for self-awareness and serves as a vehicle for being in the present moment. It is also pivotal for awareness of emotions in one's self and others, as well as self-control of behaviour, all of which are important capacities for the consecutive training modules.

[1186] Langner & Eickhoff, 2013.

[1187] O G **Cameron**, "Interoception: The inside story – A model for psychosomatic processes," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 63,5 2001:697-710. A D **Craig**, "How do you feel—now? The anterior insula and human awareness," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 10,1 2002:59-70; W E **Mehling**, V Gopisetty, J Daubenmier, C J Price, F M Hecht, & A Stewart, "Body awareness: construct and self-report measures," *Plos One* 4,5, e5614 2009.

[1188] See also Thich N H, 1990; Kabat-Zinn, 2009.

[1189] **Hart**, 1987; **Hölzel** et al, 2011; **Kabat-Zinn**, 1990; C E **Kerr**, M D Sacchet, S W Lazar, C I Moore, & S Jones, "Mindfulness starts with the body: Somatosensory attention and top-down modulation of cortical alpha rhythms in mindfulness meditation," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience,* 7,12 **2013**.

[1190] J **Fustos**, K Gramann, B M Herbert, & O Pollatos, "On the embodiment of emotion regulation: interoceptive awareness facilitates reappraisal," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 8,8 2013:911-917; B M **Herbert**, C Herbert, & O Pollatos, (2011). On the relationship between interoceptive awareness and alexithymia: Is interoceptive awareness related to emotional awareness? *Journal of Personality* 79,5 2011:1149-1175. **Terasawa** et al, **2013**.

[1191] **Lamm** & Singer, 2010; Singer et al, 2009; Y Terasawa, H Fukushima, & S Umeda, "How does interoceptive awareness interact with the subjective experience of emotion? An fMRI study," *Human Brain Mapping,* 34,3 2013:598-612.

[1192] **Craig**, **2009**; H D **Critchley**, S Wiens, P Rotshtein, A Ohman, & R J Dolan, "Neural systems supporting Interoceptive awareness," *Nature Neuroscience* 7,2 2004:189-195; H D **Park** & C Tallon-Baudry, "The neural subjective frame: From bodily signals to perceptual consciousness," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London—Biological Sciences* 369 1641 2013.0208 **2014**.

[1193] B M **Herbert**, P Ulbrich, & R Schandry, "Interoceptive sensitivity and physical effort: implications for the self-control of physical load in everyday life," *Psychophysiology,* 44,2 **2007**:194-202; B M **Herbert**, C Herbert, O Pollatos, K Weimer, P Enck, H Sauer, & S Zipfel, "Effects of short term food deprivation on interoceptive awareness, feelings and autonomic cardiac activity," *Biological Psychology* 89,1 **2012**:71-79. B M **Herbert**, J Blechert, M Hautzinger, E Matthias, & C Herbert, "Intuitive eating is associated with interoceptive sensitivity. Effects on body mass index," *Appetite* 70 **2013**:22-30. For refs to neural correlates of interoception, see Singer 2016:20.

7.1.3 The Affect Module[1194]

7.1.3.1 The Affect Retreat and Weekly Training Sessions

In the Affect retreat, participants are introduced to the 2 core exercises. They also learn to work with emotions by simply being present with them and exploring their nature with curiosity and care. An important exercise for clarifying the difference between compassion and seemingly similar states is the guided meditation which contrasts empathy to compassion (Empathy vs Compassion Meditation, ECM).[1195] In this exercise, participants are able to experience the difference between empathy (defined as pure emotional resonance with the suffering of another) and compassion (defined as the recognition of the suffering in the other combined with the strong wish that this suffering might be alleviated).

In the weekly sessions, participants gradually expand their practice of Lovingkindness Meditation, by successively including oneself, one who is liked, the neutral, the disliked, and finally everyone, in their meditation. During the first weeks, there is a focus on self-compassion,[1196] which means turning towards oneself with an attitude of love and care. This also implies working with difficult emotions, such as anger, resentment, and fear, which may be obstacles to developing compassion. Letting go of resentments and negative judgment about self and others is also the focus of the Forgiveness. This practice incidentally facilitates the Affect Dyad, by making it easier for participants to turn towards difficult situations of the day and to rejoice in the positive aspects of their lives.

7.1.3.2 In the Affect Module, participants cultivated the emotional and motivational aspects of a loving, compassionate and balanced way of living. They familiarized themselves with an attitude of care, gratitude, and compassion. They also learned to accept difficult emotions and approach them with such an attitude. The sincere contemplation of these attitudes might lead to their endorsement for everyday behaviour and ultimately to prosocial motivation. The two core exercises of the module were Lovingkindness Meditation and a dyadic, contemplative exercise (a contemplative dialogue), called the Affect Dyad or "feeling pair."

7.1.3.3 Lovingkindness Meditation

Lovingkindness Meditation is derived from the early Buddhist practice known as "cultivation of lovingkindness" (*mettā,bhāvanā*). *Mettā* is a Pali word meaning lovingkindness, friendship, good will or benevolence. A classic Buddhist meditation, it is a very popular and easy meditation. The meditator sat in a relaxed posture and cultivated intentions of love, warmth, benevolence and care.

Lovingkindness can be cultivated in various ways. In the retreat, participants were familiarized with methods to mentally connect to these intentions, for instance by bringing to mind the image of a baby, a cute animal, a person that made them smile, places that evoke feelings of safety and comfort, or by concentrating on feelings of warmth in the body.

Participants were given the opportunity to explore which of the methods worked best to help them open up towards loving intentions. Participants then mentally turned towards others and extended the intention towards them. They usually started with themselves, and then turned towards a benefactor or a good friend, that is, people for whom feelings of love, benevolence, and care occur naturally or were evoked easily.

[1194] Singer et al, 2016: chs 3.3 & 2.3.2.

[1195] See O **Klimecki** & T Singer, "Empathic distress fatigue rather than compassion fatigue? Integrating findings from empathy research in psychology and social neuroscience," in (edd) B Oakley, A Knafo, G Madhavan, & D S Wilson, *Pathological Altruism,* NY: Oxford Univ Press, **2012**:368-383; **Klimecki** et al, **2014**, for the scientific backgrounds of this practice.

[1196] S **Gilbert**, S Spengler, J Simons, J Steele, S Lawrie, C Frith, & P Burgess, "Functional specialization within rostral prefrontal cortex (area 10): a meta-analysis," *J of Cognitive Neuroscience* 18,6 **2009**:932-948; K **Neff**, *Self-compassion*, NY: HarperCollins, **2011**.

They might then turn towards people to whom they felt neutral; then to people they had difficulties with; and lastly all humanity or all living things. To stabilize the mind and focus on their intentions, participants mentally repeated phrases expressing these intentions, such as "May you be happy," "May you be healthy," "May you be safe," and "May you live with ease."

7.1.3.4 AFFECT DYAD

In the second core exercise—called the "Affect Dyad" (feeling pair) [7.1.1.2]—speaker and listener took turns describing their feelings and bodily sensations. Participants were paired and sat facing each other. The speaker asked a question, which the listener then contemplated aloud for a given time interval. The listener kept his eyes on the speaker and, although listening attentively, did not respond, neither verbally nor non-verbally, to what was being said. Importantly, the speaker answered the question from the moment, without any preconceived goals, while being in touch with whatever might be triggered by the question or the words he said. He tried to focus on his immediate experience rather than on intellectual understanding or abstract thoughts.

The dyad or contemplative dialogue can thus be understood as a "loud meditation" in which the partner voiced whatever came to mind regarding the question, and the listener provided his presence for the other's contemplation, helping him/her to remain focused. In the Affect Module, participants contemplate situations that they found difficult and situations that they are grateful for. As described, they mainly focus on their own inner experience, that is, the feelings and body sensations that accompanied the situations.

In the weekly sessions, the exercise is done face to face. Participants also practise the dyadic exercise during the week. They are assigned different partners on a weekly basis and then have the choice to use a computer-based or smartphone-based application in which they can connect with their partners. The applications guide them through the dyad by supplying the instructions for the different phases on the screen and signal the beginning and end through electronic bell sounds.

The exercise is based on findings about the positive effects of social sharing of difficult situations[1197] as well as Vipassana traditions that emphasize acceptance of whatever arises, including difficult sensations or emotions. The practice of gratefulness, which is also embedded in the exercise, is common in contemplative traditions[1198] and has been shown to be effective in improving well-being and psychological health.[1199]

7.1.3.5 Affect Module overview

The Affect Module of the ReSource project aims at the cultivation of 3 emotional-motivational capacities: care, compassion, and gratitude; dealing with difficult emotions; and the generation of prosocial motivation and behaviour [Fig 7.1.1].

7.1.3.6 CARE, COMPASSION, AND GRATITUDE

An important aspect of a balanced and compassionate way of living is our ability to generate or be receptive to feelings of *love, care, warmth*, and *benevolence* towards ourself and others. This abil-

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[1197] J **Frattaroli**, "Experimental disclosure and its moderators: A meta-analysis," *Psychological Bulletin* 132,6 **2006**:823-865; M **Pasupathi**, "Emotion regulation during social remembering: differences between emotions elicited during an event and emotions elicited when talking about it," *Memory* 11,2 **2003**:151-163; B **Rimé**, "Interpersonal emotion regulation," in (ed) J J Gross, *Handbook of Emotion Regulation,* NY: Guilford, **2007**: 466-485.

[1198] Steindl-Rast, 1984.

[1199] M Y **Bartlett** & D DeSteno, "Gratitude and prosocial behavior," *Psychological Science* 17,4 2006:319-325; R A **Emmons** & M E McCullough, "Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84,2 2003:377-389; S **Lyubomirsky**, K M Sheldon, & D Schkade, "Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change," *Review of General Psychology,* 9,2 2005:111-131.

ity is probably rooted in biological systems that phylogenetically[1200] evolved for the care of off-spring.[1201] Mechanisms in these systems assure that caring for the offspring is intrinsically rewarding. The neurochemical basis of these affiliative and caring systems is associated with the release of dop-amine, oxytocin, and endogenous opiates that induce feelings of reward but also of quiescence.[1202]

The neuropeptide oxytocin, for instance, is released during childbirth and lactation[1203] and in-duces care-giving behaviour in mothers (such as intensified attention, offering physical proximity) in humans and other mammals.[1204] Oxytocin is also crucial for pair bonding in human adults.[1205] It me-diates the calming and anxiolytic[1206] effects induced by the presence of close friends,[1207] and pro-motes trust and generosity towards strangers.[1208]

In parallel to this biologically oriented concept of a care system, many psychological theories of human behaviour have identified care or nurturance as a basic motive.[1209] The authors differentiate

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[1200] APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd 2015: **Phylogeny** or phylogenesis**,** the evolutionary origin and development of a particular group of organisms. Cf **ontogeny** or ontogenesis, the biological origin and development of an indivi-dual organism from fertilization of the egg cell until death.

[1201] See "affiliative system," R A **Depue** & J V Morrone-Strupinsky, "A neurobehavioral model of affiliative bonding: implications for conceptualizing a human trait of affiliation," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 28,3 **2005**: 313-395; "care system"; J **Panksepp**, "Cross-species affective neuroscience decoding of the primal affective experiences of humans and related animals," *Plos One* 6,9 e21236, **2011**.

[1202] C S **Carter**, "Neuroendocrine perspectives on social attachment and love," *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 23,8 **1998**:779-818.; **Depue** & Morrone-Strupinsky, **2005**; M **Heinrichs**, B von Dawans, & G Domes, "Oxytocin, vaso-pressin, and human social behavior," *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology* 30,4 **2009**:548-557; C **McCall** & T Singer, "The animal and human neuroendocrinology of social cognition, motivation and behavior," *Nature Neuroscience* 15,5 **2012**:681-688.

[1203] L **Handlin**, W Jonas, M Petersson, M Ejdeback, A B Ransjo-Arvidson, E Nissen, & K Uvnas-Moberg, "Effects of sucking and skin-to-skin contact on maternal ACTH and cortisol levels during the second day postpartum-in-fluence of epidural analgesia and oxytocin in the perinatal period," *Breastfeed Medicine,* 4,4 2009:207-220; T **Higuchi**, K Honda, T Fukuoka, H Negoro, & K Wakabayashi, "Release of oxytocin during suckling and parturition in the rat," *J of Endocrinology* 105,3 19885:339-346.

[1204] R **Feldman**, A Weller, O Zagoory-Sharon, & A Levine, "Evidence for a neuroendocrinological foundation of human affiliation," *Psychological Science* 18,11 **2007**:965-970; H J **Lee**, A H Macbeth, J H Pagani, & W S Young 3rd, "Oxytocin: the great facilitator of life," *Progress in Neurobiology* 88,2 **2009**:127-151; A **Levine**, O Zagoory-Sharon, R Feldman, & A Weller, "Oxytocin during pregnancy and early postpartum: Individual patterns and maternal-fetal attachment," *Peptides* 28,6 **2007**:1162-1169; C A **Pedersen** & A J Prange, Jr, "Induction of maternal behav-ior in virgin rats after intracerebroventricular administration of oxytocin," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA* 76,12 **1979**:6661-6665.

[1205] B **Ditzen**, M Schaer, B Gabriel, G Bodenmann, U Ehlert, & M Heinrichs, "Intranasal oxytocin increases posi-tive communication and reduces cortisol levels during couple conflict," *Biological Psychiatry* 65,9 **2009**: 728-731; H **Walum**, P Lichtenstein, J M Neiderhiser, D Reiss, J M Ganiban, E L Spotts, "Variation in the oxytocin receptor gene is associated with pair-bonding and social behavior," *Biological Psychiatry* 71,5 **2012**:419-426.

[1206] APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015: **anxiolytic** *n,* a drug used in the treatment of anxiety, mild behavioural agitation, and insomnia. Formerly called **minor tranquilizers**, anxiolytics can also be used as adjunctive agents in the treatment of depression, panic disorder, and several other disorders. The most widely used are the benzo-diazepines. Other drugs, such as certain SSRIs (qv), have also been shown to have anxiolytic effects.

[1207] M Heinrichs, T Baumgartner, C Kirschbaum, & U Ehlert, "Social support and oxytocin interact to suppress cortisol and subjective responses to psychosocial stress," *Biological Psychiatry* 54.12 2003:1389-1398.

[1208] M **Kosfeld**, M Heinrichs, P J Zak, U Fischbacher, & E Fehr, "Oxytocin increases trust in humans," *Nature* 435 7042 2005:673-676; P J **Zak**, A A Stanton & S Ahmadi, "Oxytocin increases generosity in humans," *Plos One* 2,11 e1128, 2007; P J **Zak**, "The neurobiology of trust," *Scientific American* 298 2008:88-92.

[1209] H **Heckhausen**, *Motivation und Handlung*, Berlin: Springer, 1989; D N **Jackson**, *Personality research form manual*, London, Canada: Research Psychologists Press, 1974; W **McDougall**, *The Energies of Men*, London: Methuen, 1932; H A **Murray**, *Explorations in Personality: a clinical and experimental study of 50 men of college age*, NY: Oxford Univ Press, 1938.

between **care** as the motive to give comfort, nurturance, and support from the superficially similar motive to affiliate, that is, to be accepted by others and belong to a social group.[1210]

An important difference between those motives is that **affiliation** is pursued in self-interest (the interest to profit from the connection in some way);[1211] whereas the motivation to care is by definition altruistic, as it is inextricably linked to the intention of profiting somebody else.

These systems of care and affiliation form the basis of what has been called "**attachment**" in developmental psychology,[1212] that is, a social bond between the caregiver and the infant including specific cognitive structures regarding the relationship ("inner working models") and affective programmes. These cognitive-affective structures and programs that develop early in life in the relationship between caregiver and infant have been shown to later generalize to romantic relationships[1213] and the degree of trust and prosociality towards other people.[1214]

Together with the findings on oxytocin discussed above, this pattern of generalization suggests that the human care system has its evolutionary origins in the care for the offspring, but may generalize from there to romantic partners, other types of pair bonds, and the attitude to fellow humans in general.[1215]

When we speak of the cultivation of *care, gratitude*, and *compassion* we mean tapping into these innate systems that dispose individuals to care for others, which is often accompanied by a feeling of *warmth, love,* and *connectivity* that is in itself rewarding.[1216] The Buddhist tradition differentiates **lovingkindness** and **compassion**[1217] and this distinction is followed in the ReSource Model and training programme.

Whereas **lovingkindness** implies a wish that others may be well and happy, **compassion** implies the will that they may be free from suffering. Although phenomenologically slightly different, neuroscientific results suggest that these two social emotions sprout from the same motivational-biological system.[1218] This would be in line with the contemplative conceptualization which holds that compassion arises from loving-kindness in the face of suffering; or that compassion is active lovingkindness.[1219]

[1210] See also S **Reiss**, "Multifaceted nature of intrinsic motivation: the theory of 16 basic desires," *Review of General Psychology* 8 2004:179-193; J **Weinberger**, T Cotler & D Fishman, "The duality of affiliative motivation," in (edd) O Schultheiss & J Brunstein, *Implicit Motives,* NY: Oxford Univ Press, 2010:71-88.

[1211] See also J W Atkinson, R W Heyns, & J Veroff, "The effect of experimental arousal of the affiliation motive on thematic apperception," *J of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 49,3 1954:405-410.

[1212] J Bowlby, "Attachment theory and its therapeutic implications," *Adolescent Psychiatry* 6 1978:5-33.

[1213] J A **Feeney** & P Noller, "Attachment style as a predictor of adult romantic relationships," *J of Personality and Social Psychology* 58,2 1990:281-291; C Hazan & P Shaver, "Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process," *J of Personality and Social* Psychology 52,3 1987:511-524.

[1214] W **Mikulincer**, "Mindfulness: significant common confusions," *Mindfulness* 2,1 1998:1-7; M **Mikulincer** O Gillath, Y Sapir-Lavid, E Yaakobi, K Arias, L Tal-Aloni, & G Bor, "Attachment theory and concern for others' welfare: evidence that activation of the sense of secure base promotes endorsement of self-transcendence values," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 25,4 2003:299-312.

[1215] See also F B M **de Waal**, *Good natured: the origin of right and wrong in humans and other animals*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ Press, 1996; W D **Hamilton**, "The genetical evolution of social behaviour," *J of Theoretical Biology* 7,1 1964:1-16.

[1216] C D **Batson**, J Fultz, & P A Schoenrade, "Distress and empathy: two qualitatively distinct vicarious emotions with different motivational consequences," *J of Personality* 55,1 **1987**:19-39; H **Fisher**, A Aron, & L L Brown, "Romantic love: an fMRI study of a neural mechanism for mate choice," *J of Comparative Neurology,* 493,1 **2005**: 58-62; **Klimecki** et al, **2013**; J B **Nitschke**, E E Nelson, B D Rusch, A S Fox, T R Oakes, & R J Davidson, " Orbitofrontal cortex tracks positive mood in mothers viewing pictures of their newborn infants," *NeuroImage* 21,2 **2004b**:583-592; P **Vrticka** & P Vuilleumier, "Neuroscience of human social interactions and adult attachment style," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 6 212 **2012**.

[1217] Eg, S Salzberg, *Loving-kindness—the revolutionary art of happiness*, Boston, MA: Shambala, J B 1995.

[1218] Eg, **Klimecki** et al, 2013; J B **Nitschke**, W Heller, M A Etienne, & G A Miller, "Prefrontal cortex activity differentiates processes affecting memory in depression," *Biological Psychology* 67,1-2 2004a:125-143.

[1219] Ricard, 2008b:105.

Recent imaging studies show that training of lovingkindness and compassion induces functional plasticity in a brain area now referred to as the "compassion-network,"[1220] encompassing the medial orbitofrontal cortex, the nucleus accumbens, the ventral striatum, the ventral tegmental area/substantia nigra, the globus pallidus, and the anterior cingulate cortex, areas which have been implicated in *affiliation, positive affect*, and *reward*.[1221]

7.1.3.7 Dealing with difficult emotions

Classical psychological and neuroscientific literature on emotion regulation[1222] describes various strategies for regulating negative affect, prominently suppression (reducing the emotions on an expressive and physiological level), distraction (thinking of something else or looking away), and reappraisal (cognitively reframing of the event to make it less distressing). When confronted with suffering, these strategies may seem unethical, as they deny the reality of the encountered suffering. They may also have adverse effects on health and cognitive processing,[1223] because functional bodily signals related to the encountered suffering are deliberately blocked, ignored, or misinterpreted. They may also lead to a subtle rebound of negative affect after the active regulation, as demonstrated by increased amygdala activity in the post-regulation phase.[1224]

A compassionate treatment of difficult emotions, that is, one that is considerate towards oneself and others, instead involves fully accepting the emotions and turning towards them with an attitude of curiosity and care. The effects of negative emotions on thoughts, feelings, and behaviour may be buffered when the processing of the emotion co-activates the above mentioned compassion-network or care system [7.1.3.5].

Activation of the care system while turning towards distressing stimuli and internal processes may serve as a safety cue which, in the long run, may facilitate dissolution of past conditionings that maintain the chain from inner or outer stimuli to dysfunctional thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.[1225]

Naturally, we expect this type of emotion regulation to activate the above-mentioned compassion-network, without leading to the prefrontal activity that is typically observed in "classical" emotion regulation strategies linked to suppression or deliberate down-regulation of affect.[1226] Similar to

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[1220] **Klimecki** et al, 2013; **Klimecki** et al, 2014; **Singer** & Klimecki, 2014; L **Bovak**, K Malinakova, P Mikoska, J P van Dijk, P Tavel, "Neural correlates of compassion—an integrative system review," 2022:46-59.

[1221] S N **Haber** & B Knutson, "The reward circuit: linking primate anatomy and human imaging," *Neuropsychopharmacology* 35,1 **2009**:4-26; M L **Kringelbach** & K C Berridge, "Towards a functional neuroanatomy of pleasure and happiness," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 13,11 **2009**:479-487; L **Strathearn**, P Fonagy, J Amico, & P R Montague, "Adult attachment predicts maternal brain and oxytocin response to infant cues," *Neuropsychopharmacology* 34,13 **2009**:2655-2666.

[1222] Eg, K **McRae**, B Hughes, S Chopra, J D E Gabrieli, J J Gross, & K N Ochsner, "The neural bases of distraction and reappraisal," *J of Cognitive Neuroscience* 22,2, **2009**:248-262; K N **Ochsner** & J J Gross, "Cognitive emotion regulation: Insights from social cognitive and affective neuroscience," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 17,2 **2008**:153-158; J M **Richards** & J J Gross, "Composure at any cost? The cognitive consequences of emotion suppression," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 25,8 **1999**:1033-1044.

[1223] Richards & Gross, 1999.

[1224] J P **Lamke**, J K Daniels, D Dorfel, M Gaebler, R Abdel Rahman, F Hummel, S Erk, & H Walter, "The impact of stimulus valence and emotion regulation on sustained brain activation: Task-rest switching in emotion," *Plos One* 9,3 e93098 **2014**; H **Walter**, A von Kalckreuth, D Schardt, A Stephan, T Goschke, & S Erk, "The temporal dynamics of voluntary emotion regulation," *Plos One,*4,8 e6726, **2009**.

[1225] Cf M E **Bouton**, "Context, ambiguity, and unlearning: Sources of relapse after behavioral extinction," *Biological Psychiatry* 52,10 **2002**:976-986; J P **Christianson**, A B Fernando, A M Kazama, T Jovanovic, L E Ostroff, & S Sangha, "Inhibition of fear by learned safety signals: a mini-symposium review,"*J of Neuroscience* 32,41 **2012**: 14118-14124; K A **Corcoran**, T J Desmond, K A Frey, & S Maren, "Hippocampal inactivation disrupts the acquisition and contextual encoding of fear extinction," *J of Neuroscience* 25,39 **2005**:8978-8987.

[1226] Eg, S J **Banks**, K T Eddy, M Angstadt, P J Nathan, & K L Phan, "Amygdala-frontal connectivity during emotion regulation,"*Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 2,4 **2007**:303-312; D W **Frank**, M Dewitt, M Hudgens-Haney, D J Schaeffer, B H Ball, N F Schwarz, A A Hussein, L M Smart, & D Sabatinelli, "Emotion regulation: quantitative meta-analysis of functional activation and deactivation," *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*

emotion regulation, we expect shorter or less pronounced activation in the amygdala.[1227] We do not, however, expect to observe a subsequent rebound of amygdala activity as sometimes reported for strategies like distraction or suppression.[1228]

7.1.3.8 Prosocial motivation and behaviour

Compassion has been defined as a feeling of concern and a motivation to alleviate the suffering of others.[1229] Thus, it does not only refer to a feeling but crucially entails a motivation to act. Such a coupling of emotional concern and readiness to act has long been demonstrated for "empathic concern," a construct that is closely related to compassion.[1230] Subjects who were empathically concerned with another person's well-being were more cooperative,[1231] less vengeful (Rumble et al., 2010), and more willing to take an electric shock on the other person's behalf.[1232] Short-term training programmes of lovingkindness and compassion have been found to increase helping behaviour in an ecologically valid computer game,[1233] as well as in a real life setting,[1234] and also prompted subjects to take costly action to reestablish violated fairness norms.[1235]

The integral role of action for compassion is also evident in the neurochemistry of the mammalian care system: Besides opioids, the care system also uses the neurotransmitter dopamine, which is tightly coupled to goal-directed behaviour.[1236] Through the ventral tegmental area, the care system interacts with the seeking system,[1237] which Panksepp has conceptualized as a "basic, positively motivated action system."[1238]

Taken together, the evidence underscores that the states of compassion and lovingkindness are inextricably linked to a motivation or a readiness to act, aimed at promoting the well-being and releasing the suffering of others.

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45 Sep **2014**:202-211; P R **Goldin**, K McRae, W Ramel, & J J Gross, "The neural bases of emotion regulation: reappraisal and suppression of negative emotion," *Biological Psychiatry* 63,6 **2008**:577-586.

[1227] Eg, Frank et al, 2014.

[1228] Lamke et al, 2014.

[1229] Eg, J L **Goetz**, D Keltner, & E Simon-Thomas, "Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review," *Psychological Bulletin* 136,3 **2010**:351-374; T **Singer** & O M Klimecki, "Empathy and compassion," *Current Biology* 24,18 R875-878, **2014**; T **Singer** & Steinbeis, "Differential roles of fairness- and compassion-based motivations for cooperation, defection, and punishment, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1167 2009:41-50.

[1230] C D Batson, "These things called empathy: eight related but distinct phenomena," in (edd) J Decety & W Ickes, *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009:3-15.

[1231] C D **Batson** & N Ahmad, "Empathy-induced altruism in a prisoner's dilemma II: What if the target of empathy has defected?" *European J of Social Psychology* 31,1 **2001**:25-36; C D **Batson** & T Moran, "Empathy-induced altruism in a prisoner's dilemma," *European J of Social Psychology* 29,7 1999:909-924.

[1232] C D Batson & J Coke, "Empathy: a source of altruistic motivation for helping," in (edd) J Rushton & R Sorrentino, *Altruism and Helping Behavior,* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1981:167-187.

[1233] S Leiberg, O Klimecki, & T Singer, "Short-term compassion training increases prosocial behavior in a newly developed prosocial game," *Plos One* 6,3 e17798, 2011.

[1234] P Condon, G Desbordes, W B Miller, & D DeSteno, "Meditation increases compassionate responses to suffering." *Psychological Science,* 24,10 2013:2125-2127.

[1235] H Y Weng, A S Fox, A J Shackman, D E Stodola, J Z Caldwell, M C Olson, R M Rogers, & R J Davidson, "Compassion training alters altruism and neural responses to suffering," *Psychological Science* 24,7 2013:1171-1180.

[1236] R A Depue & P F Collins, "Neurobiology of the structure of personality: Dopamine, facilitation of incentive motivation, and extraversion," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 22,3 1999:491-517.

[1237] M **Numan** & & T R Insel, *The Neurobiology of Parental Behavior,* NY: Springer, **2003**; J **Panksepp**, "Brain emotional systems and qualities of mental life," in (edd) D Fosha, D J Siegel & M F Solomon, *The Healing Power of Emotions,* NY: W W Norton, **2009**:13.

[1238] J Panksepp, "The core emotional systems of the mammalian brain: the fundamental substrates of human emotions," in (edd) J Corrigall, H Payne & H Wilkinson, *About a Body: working with the embodied mind in psychotherapy,* Hove, UK: Routledge, 2006:25.

7.1.4 The Perspective Module[1239]

7.1.4.1 THE PERSPECTIVE RETREAT AND WEEKLY TRAINING SESSIONS
Both core exercises are introduced and repeatedly practised throughout the retreat. A large portion of the retreat is dedicated to familiarizing participants with the concept of inner parts [7.1.4.5]. Through several talks, guided meditations, pen and paper exercises, and personal consultations, participants are supported in identifying inner parts that are characteristic of them.

Participants are encouraged to identify both positive inner parts, that is, parts in which they usually feel happy or strong, and difficult inner parts, that is, parts they typically evaluate as negative, distressing, or disruptive. The teacher team relies on their clinical psychological experience to discourage the work with very difficult parts, which may flood the participant with negative emotion, thereby hindering the exercise's purpose, which is cognitive in nature.

An additional dyadic exercise is used to further familiarize participants with the process of perspective-taking on other people (Inner Perspective Dyad). A group exercise is used to help participants explore the nature of the state we call "centre" or "self," which is characterized by non-judgmental meta-awareness of the inner parts.

Over the weekly sessions, participants gradually refine their practice of the Observing Thoughts Meditation. They may successively drop the practice of labeling the content of thoughts as they can more easily assume a meta-perspective on thoughts and their dynamics.

Motivation talks, discussions, and exercises focus on the central role that thoughts play in our lives. Participants reflect on the ways in which beliefs and convictions shape their lives, and how a different set of beliefs and convictions has to be taken into account when trying to understand other people.

Each week, participants have the chance to modify or exchange the *inner parts* they work with, and the updates are fed into the databases used by the computer- and smartphone-based applications. Separate sessions discuss the process of perspective-taking on others, why it is important, how it is done, and how understanding others' beliefs, thoughts, and motivation differs from approving of their behaviour. Through additional exercises, talks, and experience sharing, participants deepen their contact to the "centre" or "self."

7.1.4.2 The Perspective Module comprises the cultivation of meta-cognitive[1240] and socio-cognitive abilities. Participants learn to take a meta-perspective on their thoughts and on their own personality dynamics as well as mentally taking the perspective of others. Overall, the module is designed to add "fluidity" to the cognitive system, that is, allowing participants to understand the self-fabricated or constructed nature of their mental contents. This allows participants to question these contents, to de-identify from them and adopt alternative perspectives.[1241]

The 2 core exercises of the module are the Observing-thoughts Meditation and a contemplative dialogue to facilitate perspective-taking, called the Perspective Dyad.

[1239] Singer et al 2016: chs 3.4 & 2.3.3.

[1240] The prefix "meta-" (eg metaphysics) is usually used with the name of a discipline to designate a new but related discipline designed to deal critically with the original one. Thus, **metacognitive** means being aware of one's own cognitive processes, often involving a conscious attempt to control them. The "tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon," in which one struggles to retrieve something that one knows one knows, provides an interesting and common example of metacognition. A **meta-perspective** is a perspective regarding one's perspective on things.

[1241] On "de-identifying" with a mental state or condition, see eg C W Huntington, Jr, "The triumph of narcissism: Theravāda Buddhist meditation in the marketplace," *J of the American Academy of Religion* 83,3 2015: 629 f.

7.1.4.3 Observing-thoughts Meditation

The practice of meditative observation of one's thoughts is common to many contemplative traditions.[1242] The participants sit with their eyes closed or an unfocused gaze, and begin by becoming aware of their posture and breathing. They then pay special attention to their thinking. In the initial phases of the practice, they use labels to classify the content of their thoughts.

Labels may classify the thoughts along the dimensions of me/other, past/future, or positive/-negative, but may also denote specific processes such as *judging* or may be generic such as *thinking*. Labeling thoughts helps participants to remain focused and to quickly detach from the thoughts rather than getting involved in them. The objective is to observe thoughts as mental events or natural phenomena, that is, as events that happen from within, rather than taking them for accurate depictions of reality.

Later in the program, participants abstain from using labels and just observe the coming and going of thoughts without getting involved in them. Whenever the mind becomes blank or tense, participants may return the focus to their breathing. The practice is designed to help participants to de-identify from thoughts and to get a meta-perspective on them, thereby gaining insight into the workings of the mind and gaining greater flexibility with regard to successive thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

7.1.4.4 Perspective Dyad

The Perspective Dyad is a partner-based exercise that was designed specifically for the *ReSource Project*. It is a playful and experiential investigation of the nature of the self and at the same time trains cognitive perspective-taking or **Theory of Mind** (ToM)[1243] [7.1.4.9] abilities in the listener.

Buddhists and other contemplatives have long contended that *the self* does not exist as an independent, unitary, and permanent entity.[1244] Several systems of psychotherapy have been developed which are based on the assumption that an experiential understanding of *the self* as non-unitary, interdependent, and changing may be more in line with reality and contributes to psychological health.[1245]

7.1.4.5 The basis of the self work that participants engage in during the Perspective Dyad is **the Inner Family System** (IFS).[1246] The IFS conceptualizes individuals as comprised of a multitude of "inner parts." *Inner parts* are aspects of the personality or inner schemas. Examples of *inner parts* are

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[1242] Eg: **Krishnamurti**, *On mind and thought.* San Francisco: Harper, **1993**; M **Ricard**, *Meditation*, Munich: Nymphenburger, **2008b**; **Analayo**, "Attention and mindfulness," op cit, **2020**.

[1243] APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015: **theory of mind** (ToM) is "the understanding that others have intentions, desires, beliefs, perceptions, and emotions different from one's own and that such intentions, desires, and so forth affect people's actions and behaviors. Children show the rudiments of theory of mind as toddlers, have a limited understanding of the relation between belief and action by age 3, and can begin to infer false beliefs in others by around age 4 (see false-belief task). There has been considerable controversy about whether nonhuman animals have this ability. The basis for ToM is **belief-desire reasoning**, that is, the process by which one explains and predicts another's behavior on the basis of one's understanding of the other's desires and beliefs. **Mindblindness** is a deficit in ToM that is characteristic of people with autism. A person with mindblindness cannot "read the minds" of others—that is, understand their behavior in terms of belief-desire reasoning. It was described by British psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen (1958-): *Mindblindness: An essay on autism and theory of mind,* MIT, 1995.

[1244] J **Foster**, An Extraordinary Absence, Salisbury: Non-Duality Press, **2009**; J L **Garfield**, The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika, NY: Oxford Univ Press **1995**; T **Gyatso**, How to See Yourself as You Really Are. London: Rider, **2008**; J **Hopkins**, Meditation on Emptiness, Somerville. MA: Wisdom, 1983; K J **Tegchok**, Insight Into Emptiness, Somerville, MA: Wisdom, **2012**.

[1245] For the psychological and neuroscientific background of this assumption [ch 2.3.3]. See E Berne, 2006; Holmes, 2007; Schwartz, 1997; J E Young, J S Klosko, & M E Weishaar, *Schema Therapy: a practitioner's guide*. NY: Guilford, 2003.

[1246] Holmes, 2007; Schwartz, 1997.

the inner judge, manager, warmhearted mother, adventurous explorer, helpless puppy, or the rebel. There is no fixed set or number of inner parts; what counts is the idea of the person as a system of fluctuating mindsets, of inner setups including goals, typical cognitions, emotions, and behavioural tendencies associated with these parts. The participants receive support in identifying and updating inner parts throughout the course.

In the dyad, participants sit facing each other. One participant is the speaker and the other is the listener and the one asking the questions. As described for the Affect Dyad [7.1.3.4], the listener opens the space for the speaker to unfold his/her contemplation by listening attentively and not responding in any verbal or non-verbal way. The speaker describes a recent situation from the perspective of one of his/her inner parts. He/she may thus descend in her narration from the way he/she has actually experienced the situation and instead described the experience as it might have been if a certain inner part had been dominant in him/her. The listener tries to find out which part the speaker has inwardly assumed.

For the speaker, the exercise trains inner perspective-taking, that is, the ability to de-identify from a certain inner perspective and assume an alternative one. Through constant practice, participants may also become more aware of the multi-faceted, ever-changing nature of their personality and realize that there is a *self* beneath all inner parts that is not touched by those and has the non-judgmental quality of compassion.

For the listener, the exercise trains perspective-taking of others, as the guess as to which inner part was voiced requires inferences from the uttered thoughts and perceptions to the underlying mental state and beliefs of the speaker. As described for the Affect Dyad, the Perspective Dyad can be practiced by using custom-made computer-based or smartphone-based applications.

7.1.4.6 Perspective module
The Perspective Module complements the socio-emotional Affect Module by targeting socio-cognitive abilities. In this module, participants are taught to take perspectives within their own minds and of other people. The 3 core processes of this module are meta-cognition (perspective-taking on one's own mental processes), perspective-taking on one's self, and perspective-taking on others.

All these processes require participants to assume a certain distance from and bird's-eye perspective of events and thoughts, their identity, and sense of self. Previous research has conceptually and empirically linked all processes by showing that they foster each other or go back to similar cognitive abilities.[1247]

Taken together, the Perspective Module aims at adding fluidity to the cognitive systems of participants by allowing them to see through the processes of identification with thoughts and notions of self and others. It enables them to play with these notions by detaching or de-identifying from what seems to be reality and adopting alternative perspectives [Fig 7.1.1].

7.1.4.7 Meta-cognition
In cognitive psychology, **meta-cognition** means "knowing about knowing" or "thinking about thinking" or, more generally, being aware of our own cognitive processes: how we sense, think and

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[1247] P **Carruthers**, "How we know our own minds: The relationship between mindreading and metacognition," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 32,2 **2009**:121-138; F **Dimaggio**, P H Lysaker, A Carcione, G Nicolo, & A Semerari, "Know yourself and you shall know the other... to a certain extent: Multiple paths of influence of self-reflection on mindreading," *Consciousness and Cognition* 17,3 **2008**:778-789; A **Koriat** & R Ackerman, "Metacognition and mindreading: judgments of learning for Self and Other during self-paced study," *Consciousness and Cognition* 19,1 **2010**:251-264; K **Lockl** & W Schneider, "Knowledge about the mind: links between theory of mind and later metamemory," *Child Development* 78,1 **2007**:148-167; B **Sodian** & U Frith, "Metacognition, Theory of Mind, and self-Control: the relevance of high-level cognitive processes in development, neuroscience, and education." *Mind, Brain, and Education* 2.3 **2008**:111-113.

know things.[1248] Such an awareness is a pre-condition for evaluating and possibly adjusting our mental states, which makes the training of meta-cognition a well-established strategy in cognitively oriented therapies,[1249] in educational contexts,[1250] and in terms of meditation.[1251] Our conception of meta-cognition within the context of the ReSource Model goes somewhat beyond the aforementioned definitions.[1252]

By meta-cognition, we mean the ability to observe thoughts as mental events, just as we would observe a passing cloud or any other natural event, that is, observing thinking itself in a *disidentified* or "nonself" manner.[1253] This process of "creating space" around thoughts or "giving space" to them has been termed "**cognitive de-fusion**,"[1254] because it involves breaking up the fusion or coupling between an arising thought and its immediate consequences within the person, whom we see as a successive flow of thoughts, an arising and passing of emotion, or preparation for an action.

De-fusion has been shown to lead to marked symptom reductions in a variety of psychological disorders, because it reduces the subjective believability of, for instance, depressive or compulsive thoughts.[1255] In general, such a "decentered relationship with thoughts"[1256] allows greater flexibility in response to arising thoughts and greater attention to signals that lie beyond them, such as perceptions or emotions.

As mentioned earlier, meta-cognition as trained in the Perspective Module goes beyond the cognitive processes investigated in the aforementioned imaging studies by particularly emphasizing the momentum of disidentification from thoughts, and becoming more generally aware of inner mental states. In simple Buddhist terms, this means "defusing" (putting out the fuse of) a negative thought (or any thought in meditation) before it transforms into a negative effect. This is a case of "**holding the thought**."

Finally, we should note that all studies reviewed here relate to retrospective meta-cognition (eg, evaluation of current thoughts or how accurately a task was performed), not to prospective meta-cognition (eg, how well I am going to perform a task). Prospective meta-cognition could also be de-

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[1248] A O **Akturk** & I Sahin, "Literature review on metacognition and its measurement." *Procedia–Social and Behavioral Sciences* 15 **2011**:3731-3736; J H **Flavell**, "Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: a new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry," *American Psychologist* 34,10, **1979**:906-911; S M **Fleming**, R J Dolan, & C D Frith, "Metacognition: computation, biology and function," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B–Biological Sciences* 367 1594 **2012**:1280-1286; S M **Fleming** & C D Frith, *The cognitive neuroscience of metacognition*, NY: Springer, 2014.

[1249] A Wells, "Detached mindfulness in cognitive therapy: a metacognitive analysis and ten techniques," *J of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy* 23,4 2000:337-355.

[1250] C **Dimmitt** & C B McCormick, "Metacognition in education," in (edd) K R Harris, S Graham, T Urdan, C B McCormick, G M Sinatra, & J Sweller, *APA Educational Psychology Handbook, Vol 1: Theories, constructs, and critical issues,* Washington: American Psychological Assoc **2012**:157-187; D J **Hacker**, J Dunlosky, & A C Graesser, *Handbook of Metacognition in Education*. NY: Routledge, 2009; **Sodian** & Frith, 2008.

[1251] R **Marciniak**, K Sheardova, P Čermakova, D Hudeček, Ratislav Sumec & Jakub Hort, "Effect of meditation on cognitive functions in context of aging and neurodegenerative diseases," *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience* 8 27 Jan 2014. C **Crescentini**, F Fabbro, B Tomasini, "Enhancing brain and cognition through meditation," *J of Cognitive Enhancement* 1 June 2017:81-83.

[1252] Cf the distinction between "second wave" and "third wave" in cognitive therapy; L-G Öst, "Efficacy of the Third Wave of Behavioral Therapies: a systematic review and meta-analysis," *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 46,3 2008:296-321.

[1253] See also A Wells, "Detached mindfulness in cognitive therapy: a metacognitive analysis and 10 techniques," *J of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy,* 23,4 2006:337-355.

[1254] J Luoma & S C Hayes, "Cognitive defusion," in (edd) W T O'Donohue, J E Fisher, & S C Hayes, *Empirically Supported Techniques of Cognitive Behavior Therapy: a step by step guide for clinicians*, NY: Wiley, 2002.

[1255] P **Bach** & S C Hayes, "The use of acceptance and commitment therapy to prevent the rehospitalization of psychotic patients: a randomized controlled trial," *J of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 70,5 2002:1129-1139; **Luoma** & Hayes, 2002.

[1256] Wells, 2006.

scribed as "beliefs about the self." Technically, it is conceptualized under a different sub-process of the Perspective Module, described in the following section.

7.1.4.8 Perspective-taking on Self

Many contemplative traditions have questioned the way in which **the self** exists and have held that it does not exist as an independent, unified, and enduring entity.[1257] Modern neuroscience and philosophy are equally skeptical of the concept of self. Imaging research has shown that there is no "self centre" in the brain, but that our subjective experience of selfhood is related to an interplay of several widely distributed regions of the brain.[1258]

Although the idea of such a distributed self is theoretically easy to grasp, it may be quite difficult to comprehend in an experiential way, particularly in Western societies where the notion of *an independent self* has a strong cultural fundament. Psychotherapists have, however, recognized the importance of building a realistic understanding of the self and developed methods to foster it, such as Transactional Analysis,[1259] Schema Therapy,[1260] and the Internal Family System Therapy.[1261] Continually observing *the inner dynamics of oneself* through the concept of inner parts or roles may yield an embodied understanding of the change and interdependence that the experience of selfhood, or better, **selfness**, is subject to.

An important thinking strategy regarding selfness not mentioned in the ReSource project is a key early Buddhist teaching called **conditionality** (*paccaya*). Where de-fusion weakens a negative idea before it can gather strength, seeing conditionality of a thought is to observe how a thought builds itself up, fed by greed, hate or delusion. By acknowledging this process, we cut off that unwholesome root feeding the thought, and so weaken, even stop it.

Then, there is the strategy of **reverse conditionality** or thought reduction, which **the Vitakka Saṇṭhāna Sutta** (M 20) calls "thought-stilling" (*vitakka saṇṭhāna*). Here, we hold the negative thought and ask ourself, "Why am I thinking this?" or "Why am I angry?" With a calm mind, we let the answer arise on its own, "It is because … ". Then, we note this response and ask again "Why do I think this way?" and so on until we come to a point when we resolve that thought: it is something not worth holding on to. Hence, we can also call this "thought resolution."[1262]

People who have such an interdependent view on *the self* ("interdependent self-construal")[1263] have been found to have closer and more committed relationships and show more prosocial behav-

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[1257] Eg, T Gyatso, 2008,

[1258] I I **Gallagher**, "Philosophical conceptions of the self: Implications for cognitive science," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4,1 2000:14-21; S J Gillihan & M J Farah, "Is self special? A critical review of evidence from experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience," *Psychological Bulletin* 131,1 **2005**:76-97; R **Hanson** & R Mendius, *Buddha's brain,* Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, **2009**; S B **Klein**, K Rozendal, & L Cosmides, "A social-cognitive neuroscience analysis of the self," *Social Cognition* 20,2 **2002**:105-135; W **Singer**, *Der Beobachter im Gehirn—Essays zur Hirnforschung,* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, **2002**; D J **Turk**, T F Heatherton, C N Macrae, W M Kelley & M S Gazzaniga, "Out of contact, out of mind: the distributed nature of the self," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1001 2003:65-78. On the "distributed mind," see SD 60.1e (12.7.1).

[1259] E Berne, 2006.

[1260] Young et al, 2003.

[1261] **Holmes**, 2007; A G **Mones** & R C Schwartz, "The functional hypothesis: A family systems contribution toward an understanding of the healing process of the common factors," *J of Psychotherapy Integration* 17,4 **2007**:314-329; R **Schwartz**, *IFS Das System der inneren Familie: Ein Weg zu mehr Selbstfuhrung*, Norderstedt: Books on Demand, **2008**; **Schwartz**, 1997.

[1262] **Vitakka Saṇṭhāna S** (M 20,6/1:120), SD 1.6.

[1263] W L Gardner, S Gabriel, & A Y Lee, "'I' value freedom, but 'we' value relationships: Selfconstrual priming mirrors cultural differences in judgment," *Psychological Science, 10*(4), 1999:321-326.

iour.[1264] The awareness of our inner diversity has also been termed "self-complexity."[1265] Self-complexity has been found to serve as a buffer against stress-related diseases and depression[1266] and reduces affective reactions and withdrawal tendencies resulting from defeat.[1267]

Finally, breaking up a strong identification with the self, or certain self-aspects of it, may reduce peoples' reactivity to self-directed threat, and help them view themselves with less rigidity, more humour, more space. On a societal level, this may serve to counteract increasing rates of narcissism[1268] and reduce the rates of "burnout-syndrome" and depression.[1269]

7.1.4.9 Perspective-taking on Others

Perspective-taking on others refers to our ability to understand other people's mental states, such as thoughts, beliefs, intentions, or views. It has also been called **Theory of Mind** (ToM) [7.1.4.4], mentalizing, or cognitive perspective-taking.[1270] This cognitive manner of relating to others can be both conceptually and neuroanatomically distinguished from affective ways, such as emotion contagion, empathy, and compassion.[1271] Whereas affective ways of relating imply the presence of a vicarious feeling state, perspective-taking, or mentalizing, which uses cognitive representations to model and understand the mental states of others.

Application of perspective-taking in social situations can help to overcome a cognitive distortion that has been termed "**egocentricity bias**." This term refers to the ubiquitous tendency of humans to overestimate their own salience or prominence relative to others, and to resort to their own experience or views when trying to infer what others feel, think, or value even though the other may be quite different from themselves.[1272]

In summary, perspective-taking on others helps to overcome misunderstandings and to avoid conflicts, egocentricity, and resulting selfishness, and is an important precondition for successful communication and cooperation bringing on social harmony and happiness.[1273]

[1264] S E Cross, P L Bacon, & M L Morris, "The relational-interdependent self-construal and relationships," *J of Personality and Social Psychology* 78,4 2000:791-808.

[1265] P W **Linville**, "Self-complexity and affective extremity: don't put all of your eggs in one cognitive basket," *Social Cognition* 3,1 **1985**:94-120.

[1266] P W **Linville**, 1985; P W **Linville**, Self-complexity as a cognitive buffer against stress-related illness and depression, *J of Personality and Social Psychology* 52,4 **1987**:663-676.; E **Rafaeli** & A Hiller, "Self-complexity–a source of resilience?" in (edd) J W Reich, A J Zautra, & J S Hall, *Handbook of Adult Resilience,* NY: Guilford 2010:171-192.

[1267] T M Dixon & R F Baumeister, "Escaping the Self–the moderating effect of self-complexity," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 17,4 1991:363-368.

[1268] J M Twenge & W K Campbell, The Narcissism Epidemic: living in the age of entitlement, NY: Free Press, 2009.

[1269] D S Hasin, M C Fenton, & M M Weissman, "Epidemiology of depressive disorders," in *Textbook in Psychiatric Epidemiology,* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011:289-309.

[1270] U **Frith** & C D Frith, "Development and neurophysiology of mentalizing," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B–Biological Sciences* 358 1431 **2003**:459-473; H L **Gallagher** & C D Frith, "Functional imaging of 'theory of mind'," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7,2 **2003**:77-83; J P **Mitchell**, "Inferences about mental states," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B–Biological Sciences* 364 1521, 2009: 1309-1316; R **Saxe**, "Theory of mind (neural basis)," in (ed) W P Banks, *Encyclopedia of Consciousness,* San Diego: Elsevier, **2009**:401-410; R **Saxe** & N Kanwisher, "People thinking about thinking people. The role of the temporo-parietal junction in 'theory of mind,' *NeuroImage* 19,4 **2003**:1835-1842.

[1271] See T Singer, 2012 for a review.

[1272] B **Mullen**, "Egocentric bias in estimates of consensus," *J of Social Psychology* 121,1 **1983**:31-38; J K **Beggan**, D M Messick, & S T Allison, "Social values and egocentric bias: Two tests of the might over morality hypothesis," *J of Personality and Social Psychology* 55,4 **1988**:606-611; T **Gilovich**, V H Medvec, & K Savitsky, "The spotlight effect in social judgment: An egocentric bias in estimates of the salience of one's own actions and appearance," *J of Personality and Social Psychology* 78,2 **2000**:211-222.

[1273] A D **Galinsky**, "Creating and reducing intergroup conflict: The role of perspective-taking in affecting outgroup evaluations," in (ed) H Sondak, *Toward Phenomenology of Groups and Group Membership,* Bingley:

7.1.4.10 We can thus see that the ReSource Project used a wider range of Buddhist meditative practices along with modern contemplative and counselling techniques used by followers of early Buddhism as well as other groups, Buddhist and non-Buddhist. The key methods the Project used were clearly rooted in early Buddhism, and went well beyond those of MBSR[1274] or any "Mindfulness-based Interventions" (MBIs).[1275] Yet, the ReSource Project belongs to the very same modern psychological evolution that is popularizing Buddhist meditation and secularizing it. As evident from the Resource Project, they are getting better at it. We will see this **secularizing of meditation** building up, and frankly, I think, Buddhists today have much to learn and benefit from it. As Buddhists, our task is, of course, how to adopt these new approaches, putting the baby back into the wash-tub, taking good care of it, and seeing it grow into a compassionate and wise adult.

In the next section, we will examine the work of the Varieties of Contemplative Experience (VCE), a US-initiated project, running around the same time as the ReSource Project. It contributed to an interesting and valuable study and taxonomy of meditation by identifying over 50 types of meditation-related experiences across 7 domains: somatic, affective, cognitive, perceptual, conative, sense of self, and social.

7.2 VARIETIES OF CONTEMPLATIVE EXPERIENCES

7.2.1 Significance of the VCE study

7.2.1.1 Current psychological literature on Buddhist meditation often deals with its theory, practice and benefits, and tends to emphasize the process of self-transformation that culminates in changes in consciousness, modes of psychological and physical well-being, and perhaps a better understanding of how the mind works. These are often described in positive terms. It is well known by now, however, that in both Buddhism and science, challenging and adverse experiences, or at least difficult situations, do arise during or as a result of meditation.

Although many such challenges and adversities in connection with meditation have been downplayed, even ignored, there is a growing amount of learned literature that gives greater attention to such issues.

> Challenging experiences include perceptual changes such as hypersensitivity to stimuli or hallucinations, and cognitive changes such as impairments in executive functioning [2.6.3.2] or delusions. Affective changes include increased emotional lability and emotional blunting, re-experiencing of traumatic memories, and a wide range of specific emotions such as fear, anxiety, and depression. Somatic or physiological changes also occur, including intense pain, involuntary movements, and disrupted sleep. Changes in motivation and sense of self can also lead to challenges, especially when there is impairment or loss of ordinary functioning. Many of these and other challenging experiences also have deleterious impacts on social and occupational functioning.
>
>   (J R Lindahl et al, "Challenging and adverse meditation experiences," 2021:841 f)[1276]

[1274] On MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction), started by J Kabat-Zinn, see SD 60.1d (4.2.2.2).

[1275] On MBIs, see SD 60.1e (1.1.6 f).

[1276] J R Lindahl, W B Britton, D J Cooper, L J Kirmayer, "Challenging and adverse meditation experiences: toward a person-centered approach," in (edd) Farias, Brazier and Lalljee, *The Oxford Handbook of Meditation,* Oxford Univ Press, **2021**:841-864.

Our study will introduce the topic of meditation-related challenges, and focus on how certain experiences are appraised in Buddhist ideas of self-transformation, in clinical psychology and psychiatry, and their intersections. It is based on early Buddhist textual tradition, scientific and psychological research, and qualitative data from studies of Buddhist meditators within cultural contexts. Our purpose is to inform ourselves of the adverse effects that can arise in Buddhist meditation, so that we are better prepared to deal with them when needed.

7.2.1.2 Of special significance is **the Varieties of Contemplative Experience** (VCE) study in the US, conducted by Drs Willoughby Britton, Jared Lindahl and collaborators, which was the most comprehensive research study on meditation-related challenges and adverse effects to date. VCE investigates meditation-related experiences that were typically underreported, particularly experiences that are described as challenging, difficult, distressing, functionally impairing, requiring additional support.

VCE aimed to improve our understanding of the range of experiences associated with meditation, the way such experiences are interpreted by meditation practitioners and meditation teachers, and responses to experiences that are reported as other than expected, habitual and beneficial. The study (2007-2017)[1277] was conducted using a mixed-method approach featuring qualitative semi-structured interviews. More than 100 extensive semi-structured interviews were conducted with over 60 Western Buddhist meditators and teachers of the Theravāda, Zen, and Tibetan traditions, and more than 30 Buddhist meditation experts (teachers and clinicians) to create a taxonomy of phenomenology, influencing factors and remedies.

Practitioner interviews were organized around the following questions:

- Have you had any unexpected, challenging, difficult, distressing, or functionally impairing experiences that you associate with meditation?
- How did you interpret your experiences? What interpretations were offered to you by others?
- How did you respond to these experiences? What responses have you found particularly helpful or unhelpful?

7.2.1.3 A VCE follow-up survey provided quantitative assessments of causality, impairment and other demographic and practice-related variables. The 10-year study generated more than 3000 pages of interview transcripts, with at least 8 peer-reviewed articles, and links to further studies.[1278] By identifying a broader range of experiences associated with meditation, along with the factors that contribute to the nature and management of experiences reported as challenging, difficult, distressing or functionally impairing, VCE aimed to increase our understanding of the effects of contemplative practices and to provide resources for meditators, clinicians, meditation researchers, and meditation teachers.

The content-driven thematic analysis of interviews yielded a taxonomy of **59 types of experiences** across 7 domains: somatic, affective, cognitive, perceptual, conative, sense of self, and social—these are the headings that we will summarize and discuss below. The study has also led to the identification of more than 20 influencing factors—comprised of risk factors, remedies, and interpretations—that can impact the nature, duration, and trajectory of meditation experiences.

Even in cases where the phenomenology was similar across participants, interpretations of and responses to the experiences differed considerably. The associated valence ranged from very positive to very negative, and the associated level of distress and functional impairment ranged from minimal and transient to severe and enduring. In order to determine what factors may influence the valence, impact, and response to any given experience, the study also identified **26 categories of**

[1277] Calculated backwards from publication of Lindahl et al 2017.
[1278] https://www.cheetahhouse.org/vce.

influencing factors grouped into 4 higher-order domains: practitioner-level factors, practice-level factors, relationships, and health behaviours.[1279]

7.2.2 Influencing factors (in meditation)

7.2.2.0 The following summary lists and explains the key factors that are likely to influence the whole project. They were data received from the practitioners or from expert interviews. They should not be taken as a theory or hypothesis about risk factors and remedies for meditation-related difficulties put forth by the authors. They merely reflect the views and experiences of the practitioners and experts who were subjects in the study.

Further analysis is necessary, and also more research in controlled conditions is needed to ascertain whether these influencing factors are in fact correlated with a category of experience, the duration of challenging or difficult experiences, or the associated degree of distress or impairment. In short, these are the human conditions that are present during the study whose significance have yet to be determined for certain.[1280]

7.2.2.1 Practitioner Influential factors

These factors relate to the practitioner as individuals. The **identities** category refers to demographic variables such as *gender, age, ethnicity, religion*, and so forth when these were reported as having an impact on a practitioner's meditation experience or degree of social support received by a meditation community.

Medical history, psychological history, and **trauma history** were reported as significant conditions for particular meditation experiences in *somatic, cognitive,* and *affective* domains, respectively, as well as on the duration of meditation-related difficulties. The interaction between meditation and pre-existing psychiatric or trauma history was a common interpretation and causal preconditions suggested by experts for certain meditation-related challenges.

Personality characteristics and temperaments were identified as being potentially either a risk factor or a remedy, depending on the particular characteristics. Experts often explained certain difficulties as being due to the way meditation practices are thought to affect personality.

Similarly, certain **intentions, motivations, or goals**, as well as certain **worldviews or explanatory frameworks** were characterized as helpful and supportive of participants' contemplative development, whereas others were attributed as being harmful and as connected with other risk factors related to the practice.

Worldviews and explanatory frameworks were often influential in how the meditators viewed their meditation-related difficulties—which could lead to further difficulties or to the alleviation of certain aspects of difficulties. Practitioners who reported holding or being offered multiple, conflicting worldviews were particularly likely to report on the influential, often confusing, role of interpretive frameworks.

7.2.2.2 Practice Influential factors

Practice-level influencing factors pertain to *how* a practitioner meditates, especially in a particular meditation. The **amount, intensity and consistency of practice** can be risk factors during intensive sittings compounded by the practitioner's personality or type of practice or some other practice-level factor. However, experts believed that consistency of practice was often a remedy for meditation difficulties.

[1279] J R **Lindahl** (Brown U), N E Fisher (U of California, Santa Barbara), D J Cooper (Brown U), R K Rosen (Brown U) & W B Britton (Brown U), "The varieties of contemplative experience: a mixed-methods study of meditation-related challenges in Western Buddhists," *PLoS ONE* 12,5 **2017**:22-25; for related publications: [Brown.edu]. R J **Davidson** & J D Cortland, "Varieties of contemplative practice," editorial, *JAMA Pschiatry* **2016**.

[1280] For a comprehensive description of each category, including descriptions, inclusion criteria, and exclusion criteria, see S5 File (Lindahl et al 2017:30).

Practice approach may refer to incorrect ways of practising meditation, especially those that were characterized as risk factors, and also the use of correct methods as remedies. A related category called **response to experience** referred to how practitioners either did or should respond to meditation-related changes that went on beyond the formal practice session.

Type of practice could be a risk factor for particular meditation experiences simply due to the nature of the practice, or due to a mismatch between type of practice and practitioner dispositions. Changing type of practice or complementing one practice with another was offered as a potential remedy for the latter type of difficulties.

Certain difficulties were interpreted, especially by experts, as a necessary **stage of practice**, only to be resolved by passing through the stage signified by specific meditation-related experiences or by integrating stage-related changes into one's experience. An assumption articulated in this context was that subsequent stages of practice could or would resolve challenging or difficult meditation-related experiences.

7.2.2.3 Relationship Influential factors

The lives and conditions of practitioners were deeply influenced by **relationships**, ranging from the impact of their early life family relationships, to the quality of relationships with meditation teachers and communities, to the amount of social support outside of the context of meditation. Some **early-life relationships** were associated with practitioner-level psychiatric or trauma history. Supportive early life relationships might have an impact on personality traits.

Relationships within meditation communities and especially **relationships to teachers** were reported as being risk factors for difficulties when teachers and communities were absent, unhelpful, or not sympathetic. They were also reported as being remedies when teachers and communities were supportive, helpful and understanding. Experts often commented on the importance of healthy dynamics in the student-teacher relationship for the student's dealing with meditation-related difficulties.

Relationships beyond the meditation community might also have an impact as risk factor or as remedy depending on whether or not those relationships were stable or supportive. The practice **surroundings or environment**, especially in a retreat context of silence and social isolation, was often described as a risk factor. Participants not used to such retreat ambience might need to be removed to a more suitable ambience. So too, changes from a retreat context to certain destabilizing or challenging environments were also reported as risk factors for social and occupational difficulties in particular.

Another prevalent condition was practitioners' perceived degree of compatibility between the *worldviews, values, and goals* shaped by meditation experiences and meditation teachings, and their broader **sociocultural context**. Experts and practitioners alike suggested that certain sociocultural contexts could be risk factors, particularly when there was a mismatch between a practitioner's and a teacher's cultural background and social customs.

Another interpretation offered was that mismatches between practitioners' meditation experiences and worldviews and values of their sociocultural contexts could create a tension that would lead to or compounded difficulties. When these were compatible, sociocultural contexts could be part of a remedy.

7.2.2.4 Health behaviour Influential factors

Health behaviours were regarded as potential risk factors when they were absent or out of balance, and as remedies when present or balanced. For example, lack of sleep, inadequate diet, and lack of exercise tended to be associated with (or preceded) destabilizing experiences, and could be corrected as remedies by increasing *sleep* time, making *dietary* changes, or doing *exercise*, as well as by engaging in other activities described as **grounding**, calming, or embodying. **Recreational drugs** were sometimes cited as risk factors for certain experiences, although prior drug-related experiences were also reported as a helpful foundation to have for dealing with certain types of destabilizing

meditation-related experiences. Drug use was also occasionally reported as an attempt to alleviate meditation difficulties, with mixed results. More commonly cited as helpful was a regimen of <u>medication</u>, especially for severe meditation-related difficulties requiring other intensive treatments and hospitalization. All this is to be properly administered by qualified therapists.

Other remedies included **psychotherapy or medical treatment**, and experts in particular viewed that certain meditation difficulties required the temporary suspension of meditation practice to address them psychotherapeutically. For certain symptoms in the somatic domain, **body-based healing** regimens (such as massage, acupuncture, or healing techniques that manipulate the subtle "energy" of the body) were also used and reported as helpful by some but not others.

As with phenomenology, the degree to which certain influencing factors or remedies were appraised as helpful or harmful was highly variable and case-specific. While some remedies were enthusiastically endorsed, many of the remedies that were attempted or prescribed by others were described by practitioners as ineffective, even harmful.

7.2.2.5 Discussion

Based upon qualitative interviews of Western Buddhist meditators and experts, the VCE study developed a taxonomy of meditation-related experiences, with a special effort to capture underreported experiences characterized as challenging, difficult, distressing, or adverse, and which might need specific kinds of support. Thematic content analysis yielded <u>59 categories of experiences</u> across <u>7 domains</u>, including *cognitive, perceptual, affective, somatic, conative, sense of self*, and *social* [7.3.0 n]. Each category was reported by an average of 20 meditators and 5 experts, indicating high consistency across participants.

The valence and level of impact ranged from very positive to very negative, with the associated level of distress and functional impairment ranging from minimal and transient to severe and lasting. This range of experiences and impacts suggests that very few of the experiences were regarded as adverse. Instead, the valence and impact of any category of experience was dependent on a complex interaction with these 26 categories of influencing factors across 4 domains, including factors related to *the meditator, the practice, relationships*, and *health behaviours*.

7.3 MEDITATION CHALLENGES

7.3.0 A special article by the key VCE researchers summarizes the methods and findings of this ground-breaking effort.[1281] We will now examine each of **the 7 domains**—somatic, affective, cognitive, perceptual, conative, sense of self, and social[1282]—of the meditative experiences noticed by VCE researchers, focusing mainly on the experiences of the meditators of classical Buddhism.[1283] The details and links for the **59 categories** of meditation-related experiences are found on **the Cheetah House** (Providence, RI) website.[1284]

7.3.1 Somatic challenges

7.3.1.1 "Somatic challenges" refers to physical difficulties and discomfort on account of changes in bodily functioning. The VCE study documented a large number of physiological changes, many of which were infrequently reported in the meditators. Similar experiences have been documented in

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[1281] Lindahl et al, 2017.

[1282] Lindahl et al, 2021.

[1283] See **Lindahl** et al, **2017**:17-20; type of meditation-related challenges, J R **Lindahl**. W B Britton, D J Cooper, L J Kirmayer, "Challenges and adverse meditation experiences," in (edd M Farias, D Brazier, M Lalljee, *The Oxford Handbook of Meditation* (ch 38) **2020**:843-851.

[1284] https://www.cheetahhouse.org/symptoms.

other studies.[1285] Many somatic changes were described by Buddhist teachers as expected effects of practice, in particular more intensive or long-term practice.

Practitioners also reported that somatic energy—"a type of sensation moving throughout the body or throughout a body area described with language of vibration, energy, current, or other re-lated metaphors"—was often distressing and impairing, especially when prolonged and when man-agement strategies were unknown.[1286]

Less than 20 meditators reported **dizziness or syncope, gastrointestinal distress, cardiac irregu-larity, breathing irregularity, fatigue, headaches** and **sexuality-related changes**. More meditators tend to report **needing less sleep**, or **insomnia.[1287]** Other sleep-related changes included *parasomnia* such as nightmares and vivid or lucid dreams. Sleep-related changes frequently occurred along with **appetitive changes**, especially a decrease in appetite or eating less.

Thermal changes included both feeling warmer and colder throughout the body, and more local-ized sensations of heat and cold. What Buddhist psychology classes as "feelings" (*vedanā*) is thus in-cluded here. *Vedanā* however does not exactly refer to "feeling" hot and cold (which are classed un-der body as the 4 elements) [5.3.5.2], but refers to the hedonic reaction to them, that is, liking or dis-liking the feeling.

7.3.1.2 One principal set of changes in the somatic category included reports of **pressure and tension** in the body, or sometimes intense **pain**, which would become more acute or release in the course of contemplative practice. The release of pressure or tension was sometimes associated with positive feeling and surges in energy. However, it was also associated with the recurrence of traum-atic memories and other forms of negative feeling.

In some cases, the release of tension was associated with reports of electricity-like "voltage" or "currents" of **somatic energy** surging through the body. Somatic energy could be under meditators' control or beyond their control. This was the most commonly reported experience in the somatic domain and was associated with a wide range of other somatic changes as well as changes in other domains. For instance, when surges in somatic energy were particularly strong, **involuntary body movements** sometimes followed.

7.3.1.3 In many cases, Vipassana meditators looked beyond their tradition to teachers familiar with *kuṇḍalini*—a key concept associated with psychic energy in yogic and tantric traditions from South Asia. *Kuṇḍalini* experiences are also paradigmatic examples of "spiritual emergencies" and, according to Grof and Grof (1989), must be worked with carefully in order to lead to positive trans-formation. This understanding has been influential in Western conceptions of meditation-related experiences of somatic energy and has thus likely influenced (indirectly or directly) some Buddhist meditation teachers and meditators as well, especially in cases where pre-existing ("emic") frame-works for somatic energy are absent.[1288]

[1285] **Kornfield**, 1979; **Shapiro**, 1992; J J **Miller**, "The unveiling of traumatic memories and emotions through mindfulness and concentration meditation: Clinical implications and three case reports," *J of Transpersonal Psychology* 25 **1993**:169-180; L **VanderKooi**, "Buddhist teachers' experience with extreme mental states in Western meditators," *J of Transpersonal Psychology* 29,1 **1997**:31-46; T **Chan-Ob** & V Boonyanaruthee, "Medita-tion in association with psychosis," *J of the Medical Association of Thailand* 82 *1999:*925-929; G A **Yorston**, "Mania precipitated by meditation: a case report and literature review," *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture* 42 **2001**:209-213; Z **Chen**, W Qi, R W Hood, Jr, & P J Watson, "Qualitative and quantitative analysis of mysticism in Chinese Buddhist monks and nuns." *J for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50,4 **2011**:654-670; T **Lomas**, T Cart-wright, T Edington, & D Ridge, "A qualitative analysis of experiential challenges associated with meditation prac-tice," *Mindfulness* 6 **2015**:848-860.

[1286] Lindahl et al, 2017: Appendix S4, phenomenology codebook.

[1287] W B Britton et al, 2014.

[1288] (Eds) C **Grof**, & S Grof, *Spiritual emergency: when personal transformation becomes a crisis,* Los Angeles: Jeremy P Tarcher, **1989**; **Lindahl** et al, **2021**:848 f. For a detailed summary of the Somatic Domain: https://www.cheetahhouse.org/somatic-domain.

7.3.2 Affective challenges

7.3.2.1 <u>Affective changes</u> refer to changes in the type, frequency, or intensity of **emotions** (*saṅ-khārā*). A wide range of emotional changes were reported, capturing both discrete (primary) experiences and also responses to changes in other domains (secondary). Meditators reported having both increased as well as decreased emotionality.

In terms of **increased emotions**, *fear*, *anxiety*, *panic* and *paranoia* were the most frequently reported, not only in the affective domain, but across all domains, with 82% of meditators reporting one or more of them. Often the fear or the anxiety was an additional response of negative affect that coincided with other unexpected or undesired changes, but in some cases fear was non-referential and was reported as a phenomenological change unto itself.

Increased emotion also took the form of increased **affective lability**, sensitivity, or reactivity in response either to people or to other environmental stimuli. Emotional sensitivity to others often manifested as **empathic and affiliative changes** (increased feelings of empathy, or sharing others' emotions) between the meditator and other human beings. In contrast to increased emotion, some meditators reported having fewer or less intense emotions or **affective flattening**, sometimes even the complete absence of emotions.

7.3.2.2 Positive affect, including bliss and euphoria were also often reported, but sometimes were followed by subsequent depression or agitation, either within the context of a practice or in the transition from formal practice to daily life. In some cases, **depression** became sufficiently severe to result in **suicidal ideation**.

In other cases, intense positive affect did not alternate with low arousal states, but instead escalated into destabilizing conditions resembling <u>mania</u> and <u>psychosis</u>, which often required hospitalization. It should be noted that neither "mania" nor "psychosis" were phenomenological categories in the study's coding structure, even if meditators or, more commonly, experts used such terms to describe an experience.

Rather, because the study's categories aimed to capture distinguishable components of experience, what meditators referred to as "mania" was found to be typically composed of a combination of positive affect and increased processing speed and, in some cases, delusions.

7.3.2.3 Changes in doubt and faith as well as **self-conscious emotions** (guilt, shame, pride, etc.) were often secondary responses to other meditation experiences and typically had an impact in the social domain as well. Although typically a secondary response, <u>shame</u> in particular was a factor that brought on distress.

For meditators with a trauma history, it was not uncommon for them to report a *reexperiencing of* **traumatic memories**, and even meditators without a trauma history similarly reported an upwelling of emotionally-charged psychological states. Meditators reported involuntary **crying or laughter** in response to positive affective states such as bliss or joy, in response to negative affective content like grief or sadness, or in some cases without content altogether. Other states of negative affect included **increased agitation or irritability**, which could become intensified to either transient outbursts or long-term expressions of **anger and aggression**.

7.3.2.4 Experiences of **fear or terror** were among the more commonly reported intense affective experiences in the VCE and other studies.[1289] The VCE study documented both <u>primary fear</u>, in which fear arose on its own, as well as <u>secondary fear</u>, in which fear was a response to another change such as a hallucination or a loss of sense of self. Both types of experiences can also be found in Buddhist

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[1289] **Kornfield**, **1979**; **Shapiro**, **1992**; L **Kutz**, L Leserman, C Dorrington, C H Morrison, J Borysenko, & H Benson, "Meditation as an adjunct to psychotherapy: an outcome study," *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics 43,* **1985**:209-218; **VanderKooi**, **1997**; Chan-Ob & Boonyanaruthee, **1999**.

literary sources, which identify fear, terror, panic, and related affective states as possible conse-
quences of meditation practice, although determinations of their cause, importance, and need for
intervention vary.

In the Theravada traditions, certain experiences of fear and terror are also viewed as normative.
Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhi,magga* (5th century), for example, includes as part of the path various "in-
sight knowledges" (*vipassanā,ñāṇa*) [6.5.2.2], two of which are described as "knowledge of appear-
ance as terror" (*bhayat'upaṭṭhāna,ñāṇa*) and "knowledge of danger" (*bhaya,ñāṇa*).[1290] [7.4.1.1]

According to modern commentators and teachers of the Burmese Vipassana tradition, medita-
tors progress through the various Insight Knowledges in sequence, and these two Knowledges are
framed as particularly challenging and difficult stages. In contrast to Buddhaghosa (Vism 21.29-
34/645) and other earlier sources, for whom these stages are a way of characterizing insights into
the impermanence and unreliability of phenomena, the Mahasi tradition has tended to place more
emphasis on their affective character.[1291]

7.3.2.5 Another significant and commonly reported affective challenge is the recurrence of
traumatic memories.[1292] Miller (1993) reports a case of a woman engaged in a 3-month mindfulness
meditation retreat who began experiencing pain and pressure in her head and back. Encouraged by
her teacher to direct her attention to the sensation of pressure, she experienced strong negative
emotions of terror and hatred and began having recurring images of ongoing sexual abuse during
early childhood. While for this woman the response was to discontinue meditation and consult a
psychiatrist, another woman in Miller's study was able to continue mindfulness meditation in con-
junction with psychotherapy and medication.[1293]

7.3.3 Cognitive challenges

7.3.3.1 Changes reported in the cognitive domain, pertaining to <u>mental functioning</u>, include the
frequency, quality and content of thoughts, as well as <u>other cognitive processes</u>, such as planning,
decision-making and memory. Three key cognitive changes associated with concentration—**mental
stillness** (*samatha* or *samādhi*) (periods of few or no thoughts), **clarity** (*vipassana* or *paññā*) (whether
of cognitive processing or of awareness more generally), and **meta-cognition** (*sati,sampajañña*)
(monitoring of cognitive processes)—were given various positive associations and negative associa-
tions depending upon their intensity and how they intersected with other changes in perceptual,
somatic, affective, or sense of self domains.

7.3.3.2 Scrupulosity or obsessive and repetitive thoughts about ethical behaviour (*uddhacca*,
"restlessness"), includes a concern for monastic meditators for whom keeping to ethical norms and
regulations was considered integral to meditation practice. This however is seen as one of the "higher
fetters" [5.3.1.2] hindering attaining nirvana, and as such is a natural tendency in religious
meditators. In meditation, this arises as the 4th of the "5 mental hindrances," that of "restlessness and
worry" (*uddhacca,k*]

[1290] These are knowledges 6 and 7 of the 11 Vipassana Knowledges: SD 60.1b (15.8).

[1291] **Mahasi** Sayadaw, *The Progress of Insight: a treatise on satipatthana meditation,* tr Nyanaponika Thera,
Kandy: Buddhist Publication Soc, **1965**:20 f; *Manual of insight,* Somerville, MA: Wisdom, **2016**. A S S Namto, *In-
sight Meditation: practical steps to ultimate truth,* Fawnskin, CA: Vipassana Dhura Meditation Soc, 1989.

[1292] I **Kutz**, J Leserman, C Dorrington, C H Morrison, J Z, Borysenko, & H Benson, "Meditation as an adjunct to
psychotherapy: an outcome study," *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 43 **1985**:209-218; L **VanderKooi**, "Bud-
dhist teachers' experience with extreme mental states in Western meditators," *J of Transpersonal Psychology*
29,1 **1997**:31-46; **Lomas** et al, **2015**; **Lindahl** et al, **2017**; J **Kaselionyte** & A Gumley, "'It's like a charge—either
fuses you or burns you out': an interpretative phenomenological analysis of extreme mental states in meditation
context," *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture,* 2018:986-1001.

[1293] J J **Miller**, 1993; **Lindahl** et al, 2021:846 f. For a detailed summary of the Affective Domain:
https://www.cheetahhouse.org/affective-domain.

The principal impairments in the cognitive domain were problems with **executive functioning** (inability to concentrate for extended periods, or problems with memory) [2.6.3.2] and **the disintegration of conceptual meaning-structures**, where percepts (*saññā*) and concepts (*maññana*) became disconnected. In other words, we may be able to sense things (the sense-experiences work), but we are not able to make full sense of what is going on.

During the early years of Vipassana meditation in Malaysia (1980s-90s), there were often reports of what Malaysian monk, Kumāra Bhikkhu calls "**one beat slow**."[1294] This would be regarded as impairments in executive functioning.[1295] The meditator has effectively *stopped* thinking. This condition was known to have arisen with meditations taught by teachers who encouraged their students to "stop thinking," which is tantamount to avoiding being mindful and aware! This is clearly ill advised.

The opposite of this negative effect of a *cognitively harmful* Vipassana teaching is **increased cognitive processing** speed, colloquially described as "mind racing," which also tended to be reported as unpleasant. **Unpleasant vivid imagery** was given positive or negative valence depending on their content or intensity.

Changes in worldview pertained to shifts in ways of thinking about the nature of self or of reality, including confusion about such views. Buddhist meditation, properly taught and practised, as a rule brings wholesome change in us. Yet for the insightful meditator who has benefitted from such a practice, they may begin to discern "teachings" (dogma, ideology) and "truth" (nature of reality). For some this realization can be so liberating that the person is able to distance themselves from the dogmatic or ideological aspects of meditation.[1296]

7.3.3.3 The category that the research team had the greatest difficulty dealing with was that of **delusional, irrational, or paranormal beliefs**, partly because a particular belief could be appraised in multiple ways depending on the meditator and their social context. In addition to beliefs described by the meditator in retrospect as delusional or irrational in nature (eg, debunked by objective evidence), this category included beliefs that seemed unusual or concerning either to an authority in their culture or subculture, such as a meditation teacher, or to a family member. When transient, delusional beliefs tended to have little impact; however, when enduring and coupled with a loss of reality testing, delusional beliefs had a much greater impact and tended to lead to functional impairment and changes in the social domain.[1297]

7.3.3.4 Qualitative studies of intensive meditations were often confronted with ambiguity between delusional beliefs that might be concerning to a meditation teacher and paranormal beliefs that could be appraised as normative. **VanderKooi** (1997) reported experiences where "everything seemed symbolic and had cosmological dimensions" to the extent that one participant believed her teacher "was God" (p 36), and **Lomas** and colleagues (2015) described a meditator who believed he "was going to be the next Buddha," a belief he thought "contributed to his breakdown" (p 855).

Teachers in the VCE and other studies acknowledged that extreme cognitive changes were sometimes difficult to distinguish from religiously normative experiences. Two Buddhist teachers interviewed by **Kaselionyte and Gumley** (2018) described "powers of the mind" such as supernormal

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[1294] The meditation-related condition has been called (Singlish) "**blur**" or (Chin) "**one-beat slow**" (慢一拍 *màn yī pāi*): Kumara Bhikkhu, "'Why one beat slow'?: the phenomenon of post-retreat slow-wittedness disorder," Malaysia, 2013. Technically, it is not a "disorder" (APA 2015: "a group of symptoms involving abnormal behaviors or physiological conditions, persistent or intense distress, or a disruption of physiological functioning"), but rather a temporary adverse effect or condition; perhaps, "'one beat slow' syndrome."

[1295] Shapiro, 1992; Yorston, 2001.

[1296] Kornfield, 1979; Pagis, 2010; Z Chen et al, 2011. For Prof M S Rahmani's experience and her "Leaving Vipassana," see SD 60.1e (12.4).

[1297] R **Walsh** & L Roche, "Precipitation of acute psychotic episodes by intensive meditation in individuals with a history of schizophrenia," *American J of Psychiatry* 136,8 **1979**:1085-1086; **Miller**, 1993; **VanderKooi**, 1997; **Chan-Ob** & Boonyanaruthee, **1999**; **Lomas** et al, 2015; **Kaselionyte** & Gumley, **2018**.

hearing or vision, mind-reading, and seeing past lives (p 6), as experiences recognized as normative in the suttas.[1298]

One of the teachers indicated that there was danger in meditators getting "caught up" in such experiences due to the risk of developing "delusions about themselves and the nature of things" or believing they had become enlightened (Kaselionyte & Gumley, 2018:8)—a concern also identified in Buddhist literature.[1299] The issue here is not with these states—they are truly worthwhile if we are able to properly attain them with meditation—but with the delusion of taking them as **status** to feed our narcissistic tendencies, as we have seen, for example, in the case of Dr Daniel Ingram who self-declared that he was "an arahant." [6.8]

Two separate serious cases of manic episodes arising from intense meditation in the yoga and the Zen traditions were reported by Graeme Yorston (2001), who noted that no such cases were known in connection with other Buddhist meditations.[1300] For a detailed summary of the Cognitive Domain: https://www.cheetahhouse.org/cognitive-domain.

7.3.4 Perceptual challenges

7.3.4.1 The perceptual domain captures changes to any of the 5 senses: vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch (somatosensory processing, including interoception [7.1.2.7] and proprioception[1301]). One common change in this domain was **hypersensitivity** to light, sound, or body sensation. Visual hypersensitivity often began with increased colour vividness (hyperchromia). Related phenomena included a general brightening of the visual field, which was sometimes associated with simple hallu-cinations in the form of **mind-made lights** (they are not "visual" lights since we only "see" them in the mind—a good case of conception, not *perception*).[1302] [7.4.2.1]

Perceptual hypersensitivity was also commonly associated with increased cognitive processing, and tended to be reported as distressing during transitions from intensive practice into daily life. Within practice traditions where concentration on the fleeting nature of percepts is a common ap-proach, meditators reported the **dissolution of perceptual objects**; in some cases, the cessation of all visual perception was reported.

7.3.4.2 Other perceptual distortions included **distortions in time and space**, and **derealization** —where phenomena appear dream-like, unreal, two-dimensional or as if in a fog.[1303] **Illusions** (dis-tortions of perceptual objects) and **hallucinations** (percept-like experiences in the absence of a sen-sory stimulus)[1304] were reported both in isolation from and in conjunction with delusional beliefs.

[1298] The suttas list these 6 superknowledges (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*) (attained through deep meditation): 1. psychic powers (*iddhi,vidha*); 2. divine ear (*dibba,sota*); 3. mind-reading (*ceto,pariya,ñāṇa*); 5. karmic recollection (or divine eye) (*cutûpapāta,ñāṇa*); 6. knowledge of the destruction of influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*, the arhat's "direct knowledge"): **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,89-99), SD 8.10; **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,55-66), SD 1.7; SD 27.5a (5).

[1299] Mahasi, 1965 eg 16 f.

[1300] G A Yorston, "Mania precipitates by meditation: a case report and literature review," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 4,2 2001:209-213. [ResearchGate]

[1301] APA *Dict of Psychology* 2nd ed 2015: **proprioception** *n.* the sense of body movement and position, resulting from stimulation of proprioceptors located in the muscles, tendons, and joints and of vestibular receptors in the labyrinth of the inner ear. Proprioception enables the body to determine its spatial orientation without visual clues and to maintain postural stability. Also called **proprioceptive sense**.

[1302] These 2 phenomena have been discussed in detail in an analysis of preliminary data from this study: J Lin-dahl, C Kaplan, E Winget, W Britton, "A phenomenology of meditation-induced light experiences: traditional Buddhist and neurobiological perspectives," *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 973 2014.

[1303] D Simeon, "Depersonalization disorder," in P F Dell & J A O'Neill, *Dissociation and the Dissociative Dis-orders: DSM-V and Beyond,* NY: Routledge; 2009.

[1304] J D Blom, "Hallucinations and other sensory deceptions in psychiatric disorders," in (edd) R Jardri, A Ca-chia, D P Thomas, *The Neuroscience of Hallucinations*, NY: Spinger; 2013:43-58.

Some meditators also reported phenomena that were technically **hallucinations**—in the sense that they were percepts in the absence of an external stimulus—but were interpreted as visions and attributed to an external agent or force. Unlike some other hallucinations, visions tended to be transient and did not appear outside of a formal meditation session. **Somatosensory changes** included changes in body schema, whether heightened interoception or distorted perceptions of body parts, which could also take on a quality similar to illusions.

Theravada meditation teachers tended to express skepticism or concern over reports of **visions or visual hallucinations**. Theravada Abhidhamma and commentaries texts (which are post-canonical) explain visual experiences such as lights (*obhāsa*) and Buddha visions as "imperfections (or corruptions) of insight" (*vipassanûpakkilesa*), occurring only in meditators who have not reached the path.[1305]

7.3.4.3 A qualitative study of advanced Burmese meditators documented **increased perceptual sensitivity and clarity**, which were framed in terms of a valued insight into impermanence (Full et al, 2013) [6.2.4]. Yet, even a commonly reported change such as perceptual hypersensitivity can be appealing in one context, such as during a retreat, but considered a challenge or unwanted effect in another context, such as when a practitioner leaves the retreat and resumes ordinary life. **Shapiro** (1992) described how following an intensive Vipassana retreat, some meditators experienced "societal adverse effects, including feelings of increased alienation from society; more uncomfortable in the real world; hypersensitive in the city environment."[1306]

7.3.4.4 Kornfield (1979) reported a wide range of perceptual changes, including alterations in body image and visual phenomena, described alternately as visions and hallucinations. Kornfield concluded that "unusual experiences, visual or auditory aberrations, 'hallucinations,' unusual somatic experiences and so on, are the norm among practiced meditation students."[1307]

While isolated and short-lived perceptual changes might be easily negotiated as a part of the path, such experiences tend to be more concerning when they are associated with additional features such as agitation, strong negative emotions, mania, delusions, or disruptive behaviours. For example, **VanderKooi** (1997) described 3 vignettes of meditation experiences.

In one case, a woman doing Zen who envisioned being inside an egg, and God was tapping on the outside to free her with His love. As she tried to make sense of all this, she felt "mind-racing." On account of subsequent mental difficulties, she was hospitalized and given antipsychotic medication. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia. For her, this was like a karmic episode as her mind unravelled fears, desires and "skeletons from the past." After the "unravelling," she was able to continue with her meditation, doing breath meditation for an hour a day.[1308]

According to a Theravada Buddhist teacher interviewed in the VCE study, if visual experiences are not interfering, the meditator might simply continue meditating. However, if they cause loss of appetite or trouble with sleeping, being "wound up in an ecstatic way," then the meditator would "need grounding." Thus, the appraisal of a perceptual experience depends on the context of practice (eg, in which Buddhist tradition and in which setting) and also, in some cases, on the occurrence of other changes in functioning that suggest a need for additional support or intervention.[1309]

[1305] Pm 2:100 f; Vism 20.105-130/622-638; AA 3:143; Mahasi Sayadaw, *The Progress of Insight* [1965; 3rd 1994]*, Kandy, 2016:13-17; SD 32.7 (2.1.3.2); SD 32.10 (2.5.3); SD 56.22 (8.2.5).

[1306] D H Shapiro, 1992:65. J R Lindahl et al, 2021:844 f.

[1307] J Kornfield, "Intensive insight meditation: A phenomenological study," *J of Transpersonal Psychology* 11,1 1979:51.

[1308] L VanderKooi, "Buddhist teachers' experience with extreme mental states in Western Meditators," *J of Transpersonal Psychology* 29,1 1997:35 f.

[1309] Lindahl et al 2021:845. For a detailed summary of the Perceptual Domain: https://www.cheetahhouse.org/perceptual-domain.

7.3.5 Conative challenges

7.3.5.1 The conative domain primarily refers to **changes in motivation** or goal-directed behaviours. Conative change frequently occurred along with changes in worldview and changes in the social domain. Another kind of conative change was the reported amount of **effort or striving** associated with meditation practice.

On the one hand, practices that previously required great effort sometimes became effortless, a change generally reported as being positive. On the other hand, increased levels of effort or "striving" were also described as corresponding with increased arousal with corresponding affective, perceptual, and somatic changes that could be associated with unpleasant or destabilizing conditions.

7.3.5.2 The two conditions that meditators reported as troubling in the conative domain were the lack of desire for activities one previously enjoyed (*anhedonia*) and the loss of motivation to pursue goals (*avolition*). These often occurred along with other functional impairments, such as changes in social or occupational behaviours.

When conative phenomena were described less as changes in and of themselves and more as causal factors for the onset or alleviation of difficulties, they were coded by the researchers as influencing factors.[1310] Possible causal conditions for conative changes in meditators is that they are less restrained by social concerns—their sense of "moral shame" (*hiri*)[1311] is significantly weakened or relaxed—and they were more suggestible by strong or habitual thoughts or imaginations. This can be the working of either past karma or present conditions, or more likely both.

7.3.6 Sense of self challenges

7.3.6.1 Our sense of self is supported through various conceptual, affective, and embodied processes, and meditation can have different impacts on one or more of these processes. Such changes can, for example, affect the narrative self [7.3.6.2] and extend to changes in the sense of ownership over thoughts, emotions, and body sensations, or to the sense of agency over actions. Furthermore, changes in one's sense of location relative to one's body and changes in the sense of boundaries between self and world have also been documented.

Given the centrality of Buddhist teachings around **nonself** (*anattā)* and the selflessness or emptiness of persons (*suññatā),* some of these changes are appraised in relation to normative Buddhist views, values, and conceptions of goals. However, changes in sense of self can also be distressing, destabilizing, involuntary, and enduring, resulting in meditators seeking or needing clinical diagnoses and support.

7.3.6.2 Given that **the sense of self** is construed in multiple ways—from fundamental embodied sensorimotor activity to more complex conceptual judgments—various changes in sense of self were differentiated according to data-based reports and theory-based perspectives from phenomenology and cognitive science.[1312]

Changes in the narrative self refer to shifts in how a meditator conceives of himself or herself over time, often in relation to the identities, worldviews, values, goals or behaviours both within and outside their Buddhist tradition. Other changes in sense of self occurred at more fundamental levels that had a corresponding impact on cognitive, affective, somatic, or perceptual domains.

Studies of Vipassana meditators documented **changes in sense of embodiment**, that is, *a decreased sense of ownership* of bodily sensations [7.3.6.3] and the sense of agency over actions,

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[1310] See "Influencing factors: Domains and categories" (Lindahl et al 2017:21 f). For a detailed summary of the Conative Domain: https://www.cheetahhouse.org/conative-domain.

[1311] On moral shame and moral fear, see SD 60.1e (9.5.2; 9.8.8).

[1312] Eg, (ed) S Gallagher, *The Oxford Handbook of the Self*, Oxford Univ Press, 2013.

changes in <u>location of </u>self relative to the body, and diminishment of <u>the sense of boundaries</u> between the body and the world.[1313] [7.3.6.4]

The meditators in these studies were long-term meditators who could induce these changes at will or were familiar with them from prior meditation experience. However, the research did not comment on the psychological or behavioural impact of these experiences or appraisals of their meaning or value.

7.3.6.3 Loss of sense of ownership was often reported in relation to thoughts, emotions, and body sensations. Meditators also reported *a loss of sense of agency*—or the loss of a "doer" of actions—in relation to automatic actions such as crying, to habitual actions such as walking, and to typically intentional actions such as speaking.

Some meditators reported even more fundamental changes in their sense of self akin to *a loss of the sense of basic self*[1314] or <u>the minimal self</u>[1315] such that they felt like they no longer existed at all or that they would disappear or be invisible to others.

7.3.6.4 The most common change in sense of self reported by meditators was **a change in self-other or self-world boundaries,** which took many related forms. Some meditators reported boundaries dissolving and general permeability with the environment or with other people; others felt like their self had expanded out from their body and merged with the world; still others used the inverse language, reporting that the world had become merged with their sense of self.

A range of different <u>affective responses</u> were associated with this change, from neutral curiosity, to bliss and joy, to fear and terror. Such experiences more often occurred when the meditator had sat for long hours, and had attained some deep level of focus, but was inexperienced in how to navigate themselves with regards to such experiences, or were not well informed of their nature.

Chen and colleagues (2011) reported "**out-of-body**" **experiences**, a sense of merging with "beings" or becoming "one with the universe" or the natural world. Although some meditators "rejected the legitimacy" of these experiences, none were reported as challenging, distressing, or impairing.[1316]

7.3.6.5 A different picture emerges from research specifically aimed at investigating challenging, distressing, or adverse effects of meditation. In a study of long-term Vipassana practitioners, **Shapiro** (1992) included the report of a meditator who experienced a "brief but powerful experience of **egolessness** which brought deep terror and insecurity" (p 65); the meditator related to the experience as transitory and did not experience persistent distress.

Lomas and others (2015) found that 6 of 30 male Buddhist meditators in their study reported "**depersonalization**;' which they described in "highly negative terms" (p 857). Summarizing one case study of an "out-of-body" experience reported as "alienating and disturbing," Lomas and colleagues noted that "without guidance from a teacher or a *sangha* to help him interpret his experiences, the deconstruction of the self (which is the goal of the practice) was experienced as a frightening dissolution of identity, rather than as a sense of liberation (which the practice is arguably designed to invoke)" (p 855).

[1313] Y **Dor-Ziderman**, A Berkovich-Ghana, J Glicksohn, & A Goldstein, "Mindfulness-induced selflessness: a MEG neurophenomenological study," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 7 582 **2013**:1-17; A **Berkovich-Ohana**, Y Dor-Ziderman, J Glicksohn, & A Goldstein, "Alterations in the sense of time, space, and body in the mindfulness-trained brain: a neurophenomenologically-guided MEG study," *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 912 **2013**:1-19; Y **Ataria**, "Where do we end and where does the world begin? The case of insight meditation," *Philosophical Psychology* 28,8 **2015**:1128-1146.

[1314] J Parnas, P Moller, T Kircher, I Thalbitzer, L Jansson, P Handest, "EASE: Examination of Anomalous Self-Experience, *Psychopathology* 38,5 2005:236-358.

[1315] M Cermolacce, J Naudin, J Parnas, "The 'minimal self' in psychopathology: re-examining the self-disorders in the schizophrenia spectrum," *Consciousness and Cognition* 16,3 2007:703-714.

[1316] Chen et al, 2011: 659-662.

While this suggests that a "challenging" or "adverse" change in sense of self is simply one that is inadequately contextualized or understood, these might not be the only criteria that are important in considering whether or not an experience is deemed normative.

7.3.6.6 The VCE study documented a wide range of changes in sense of self among meditators, many of which were associated with significant distress, impairments in functioning, or both. Teachers in the VCE study acknowledged that because of their importance in Buddhist theory and practice, changes in the sense of self posed particular challenges for deciding whether to appraise an experience as a normal part of the path or as a potential problem in need of additional support.

Many teachers acknowledged that one of the fundamental components of meditation practice was to "destabilize" or "deconstruct" the sense of self, or to experience a "dissolution of self." However, others identified certain "dissociative experiences" which they differentiated from valid insights and attributed to improper practice.

Still others believed that anticipated, normative experiences from meditation practice were akin to the psychiatric understanding of dissociation and depersonalization. These perspectives are further complicated when one considers that, from a traditional Buddhist perspective, genuine insights into nonself can themselves be distressing.[1317] [7.3.4.2]

7.3.7 Social challenges

7.3.7.1 The social domain encompasses any changes in interpersonal activities or functioning, including level of engagement, quality of relationships, or periods of conflict, isolation or withdrawal. The social domain tends to involve either experiences that catalysed meditation difficulties or, conversely, were the consequence of meditation difficulties.

Social factors were described as catalysts for difficulties in **integration following retreat or intensive practice** where transitioning from a practice context (whether in daily life or on retreat) to a non-practice (and often social) context were experienced as destabilizing. For example, perceptual, affective, and cognitive changes that were not problems in the practice context became difficulties that were reported as negatively valenced or impairing of functioning at work or with family.

7.3.7.2 Social impairment includes both these instances [7.3.7.1] as well as instances where practice-related difficulties continued into daily life. This domain also includes **changes in occupational functioning**, which often requires social interactions. A generally positive but less commonly reported change was an **increased sociality**, defined as an increased extraversion or valuing of social connections.

Changes in relationship to meditation community (including both teachers and other meditators) included feelings of support and encouragement as well as feelings of estrangement or rejection, often occurring along with changes in worldview and changes in doubt or faith, especially when challenging meditation experiences resulted in significant distress or functional impairment.

Other aspects of social relationships described as contributing to the onset or resolution of challenging meditation experiences were coded as Influencing Factors under the *Relationship* domain.[1318]

[1317] Lindahl et al, 2021:849 f. For a detailed summary of the Sense of Self Domain: https://www.cheetahhouse.org/sense-of-self-domain.

[1318] See "Influencing factors: Domains and categories" (Lindahl et al 2017:21 f). For a detailed summary of the Social Domain: https://www.cheetahhouse.org/social-domain.

7.4 PROGRESS OR PATHOLOGY?[1319]

7.4.0 There are today a growing number of studies into the **psychopathology of meditation**, that is, the various issues regarding intensive or long-term meditation and its adverse effects on the meditators. These studies have incorporated early Buddhist texts, which helps express Buddhism more authentically and in a more practical way in terms of modern psychology, widening its horizon, and also deepening our insights into early Buddhism today. We will here address a few key issues on the adverse effects of intensive Buddhist meditation and related meditation practice. We thus conclude this 20th anniversary Sutta Discovery series, but with a reminder that this is only a beginning of bigger things to come in **meditation studies and practice.**

7.4.1 Mental visions and memories

7.4.1.1 In Buddhist meditation, experiences of **lights** are simply seen as a *nimitta*—a mental sign or image that naturally arises as the result of attaining some level of concentration—which we can either smile at so that it becomes fully stable and radiant filling the whole consciousness, or just smile at it and return to our meditation object. [7.3.4.1]
The unawakened mind is an endless loop of lively images, an on-going cinema replaying old movies, but which have been revised by the unconscious (*anusaya*) [5.1.7.3]. The unconscious projects a virtual world in our waking life and a dream-world when we sleep. What we call **memory** is often a random replay from this timeless library of our life's movie reels, but the replay is an ancient but edited flickering flimflam of unresolved issues and secret desires, or mercifully harmless echoes of fanciful images.

7.4.1.2 For example, a retreat meditator had a mental vision of a "**huge bell**," and thought that "the entire room is completely gone." Then, she saw "a blue Buddha, about 3 inches high … just came zooming in front of me." Interestingly, she reported thinking, "Oh great, I'm having hallucinations! This is totally not okay with me."[1320] Any kind of "interpretation" of her dream symbols are best done by she herself as she recalls where she actually saw those images in real-life and what events in her life they evoked. Such interpretations are likely to explain how the past still has a hold on her present mind. Thus, it is more strategic to let them settle down simply as "mind-made" images, and return to the meditation object or to real life.

7.4.1.3 As with the Goenka Vipassana, in the Tibetan tradition the re-experiencing of trauma could be seen as related to "karmic purification" [6.3.4.1]. Lindahl et al (2020) further reports how one meditator engaging in Tantric preliminary practices (Tib *sngon 'gro*) vividly uncovered a history of childhood sexual abuse. Drained by the flashbacks, she found it difficult to meditate. A meditator she spoke with said that her experiences were "just part of the purification," and that "if you've been keeping any secrets from yourself, they are going to come up now." She felt she was not "well supported" by her community, as their feeling was: "You should just be doing your practices and let this other stuff go." (Lindahl et al 2020:8)
The lesson is sobering: meditation is not just sitting. To run a proper retreat, we should ideally be able to support the meditators so that they are able to properly meditate. Teachers should be trained in counselling, or there should be trained counsellors present and ready in every retreat. A temporary remedial measure could be for the meditator to do a suitable meditation, so that she recovers her mental strength.

[1319] For a detailed discussion on various "meditation-related challenges," see J R Lindahl, D J Cooper, N E Fisher, L J Kirmayer & W B Britton, "Progressor pathology? Differential diagnosis and intervention criteria for meditation-related challenges: perspectives from Buddhist meditation teachers and practitioners," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 1905 July 2020:1-18.
[1320] Mentioned in Lindahl et al, 2020:8.

7.4.1.4 A great failing in "Buddhist" meditation (or any "religious" action") is ironically that it is projected as "Buddhist" or has a "religious" agenda, especially when that activity or action is more about Buddhism or a particular religion than about humanity or simply people-helping. On the other extreme, a religious programme can be ostentatiously projected as a magnanimous gesture to help others but the hidden agenda is really to "help" itself in converting others or actually hiding a self-promoting agenda for its own worldly profits.

In Dharma work (such as teaching meditation), we are not only presenting the Buddha's teaching, but more importantly, we are "re-enacting" the Buddha's own teachings and actions: we are applying the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha that we have learned and mastered to our best capability. It's like we have been properly trained as doctors, health providers and nurses, and we act to heal, help and befriend others for their benefit. Understandably, we need to learn, experience and master the Dharma to minister to others with wisdom and compassion. Even as we teach and help others, we learn even more about the Dharma and about ourselves. In this sense, we are prac-tising the Dharma.

7.4.1.5 Hence, we cannot just preach equanimity, such as telling others they *must* let go of their suffering [7.4.1.3]. The point is that they are suffering *because* they do not know how to let go of the conditions that bring about that suffering. Moreover, we, too, do not really know what those conditions really are and how they actually bring about the suffering. Our task then, is to educate the sufferer in knowing this: to "bring out" (*e ducere educere*) the goodness and wisdom in them so that they learn to heal themselves.

"**Letting go**" is a real part of our practice only when we know *what* to let go of and *how to do it.* We may even know about "true reality"—seeing things as they really are—and to see **pain** simply as pain, leaving it at the bodily level, not letting it affect or infect the mind. But our memories and habits often work against such wisdom so that we fail to see the memory as memory and the pain as pain. It is difficult to let go, or rather to not grasp, and that difficulty is painful. If it works every time we say, "I face this trauma with equanimity," there would have been no need for a Buddha and there would be no need for retreats, meditation or mindfulness practice.

Some people new to Buddhism often say something like, "Isn't it really depressing, it's all about suffering?" We should tell them that perhaps the most beautiful gift the Buddha has given us is **the 1st noble truth**. *Suffering exists*, beings suffer. The acknowledgement of that is compassion. That there is *an end to suffering* is a gift, but it is predicated on that first gift. This is what the Buddha teaches.[1321]

This liberating gift is present in the moment of acknowledging what we really are—suffering (we don't like pain)—which drives us to seek out the conditions causing that suffering. Natural wisdom moves us to want to end the suffering; and we then naturally follow the way to freedom from suffering.[1322]

7.4.2 *Kuṇḍalinī* **and energy issues**

7.4.2.1 One of the most common challenges reported by meditators in the VCE study [6.8.3.4] is that of **somatic energies**. Due to sheer ignorance or fascination with the exotic (something alien that attracts us), we may be tempted to connect this with the *kuṇḍalinī* notion of "serpent energies."[1323]

[1321] "I only declare suffering and the ending of suffering" (*dukkhañ c'eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṁ*): **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,38), SD 3.13; **Anurādha S** (S 22.86,21.2), SD 21.13.

[1322] Thanks Matt Jenkins for inspiring this section. 27 Nov 2023.

[1323] *Kuṇḍalinī* is the Hindu philosophy of somatic energies going back to the 9th cent (D G White, *The Alchemical Body,* Univ of Chicago Press 1996; G Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, Cambridge Univ Press, 2008). *Kuṇḍalinī* is a form of divine feminine energy said to be located at the base of the spine. An important concept in Śaiva Tantra, it is believed to be a power associated with the divine feminine or the formless aspect of the

For good reasons, the Buddha neither uses nor mentions *kuṇḍalinī* in the suttas. The main reason is that it is *body-based,* that is, at best, some kind of supersomatic quality or power. In a significant sense, the Buddha goes beyond *kuṇḍalinī* and speaks of the 6 superknowledges (*abhiññā*), that is, the 5 psychic powers and arhathood [7.3.3.4 n].

Cooper et al (2021) comprehensively analyses *kuṇḍalinī* in the context of Buddhist meditation for which they use the neutral term "energy-like somatic experiences" (ELSEs). The Chinese use the term 氣 *qì* (old style *ch'i*) (literally, "cloudy vapours," life-force, which is Skt *prāṇa* = P *pāna,* "breath"), and the Tibetan *rlung,* "winds."

There is a sutta passage that may point to what we would today interpret as *kuṇḍalinī* experience. **The Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36) describes the Buddha, when he is undergoing self-mortification, as doing "breathingless meditation" (*appānaka jhāna*), that is, stopping "my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth and nose" in growing degrees of intensity, so that there is:

(1) "a loud sound of winds coming out from the ear-holes, just like the loud sound of winds from a smith's bellows" (§21.2);

(2) "violent pains in my head, just as if a strong man were tightening a strong leather strap around my head as a headband" (§23.2);

(3) "violent winds carved up my belly, just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up an ox's belly with a sharp butcher's knife" (§24.2); and

(4) "a violent burning in my body, just as if two men were to seize a weaker man by both arms and roast him over a pit of burning coal." (§25.2).

This description of the breathingless meditation, along with these 4 stock passages on the nature of the pains that the Bodhisattva feels, forms **the breathingless meditation pericope.**[1324] Whether these passages have to do with *kuṇḍalinī* or not, I will leave to the specialist to comment.

7.4.2.2 In the VCE report, Lindahl et al (2021:847) described "somatic energy," especially experienced by intensive or long-term meditators as "a type of sensation moving throughout the body or throughout a body area described with language of vibration, energy, current, or other related metaphors." Such phenomena can be explained as the activities of **the 4 elements** as the meditator relinquishes the body-mind state to go into mental concentration.

During the VCE retreats, meditators often used metaphors to describe such surges of somatic energies, which can refer to **the 4 elements**, thus:[1325]

	Nature	**metaphors**
earth element	resistance	blockage
water element	cohesiveness	hydraulic ("flow" like a river without getting stuck)
fire element	heat	combustive
wind element	motion	energetic, electrical, vibratory, hydraulic/pneumatic, kinematic, mechanistic, spatial/movement, agentive ("wiggling" through the body)[1326]

7.4.2.3 Kornfield makes a rare allusion to *kuṇḍalinī* in his *The Path With Heart,* where he speaks of:

the profound process of healing that takes place in meditation: the inevitable hindrances, the skills needed to work with obsessive states, the powerful physical openings of **chakras and**

Goddess (*śakti*). The *kuṇḍalinī* ideas of energy channels (*nāḍī*) and nerve centres (*cakra*) are also found in Tantric Buddhism and Chinese acupuncture and acupressure.

[1324] M 36,21+23+25/1:243 f + SD 49.4 (5.2.1).

[1325] For details of the metaphors, see Cooper et al, op cit, 2021:6-8

[1326] The predominance of the "mind" metaphors prob explains why they are called "winds" in the ethnic versions of this tradition.

energy systems, the realms of the dark night and the death-rebirth experience, the many cy-
cles of spiritual life.   (1993:229)

This is perhaps the only place that he writes about the "chakras" (alluding to *kuṇḍalinī*): I read this as
alluding to the popular belief of *kuṇḍalinī* in relation to meditation. Otherwise, he would have elabo-
rated on it: it is just a passing comment. [7.4.4.2]

7.4.2.4 Although on some occasions such energies may give one a pleasurable feeling, in most
cases, they are distracting because of their transient and palpable nature: they can surge, rush, push,
squeeze, crush one—like the elements. As mental hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*), such manifestations are
regarded as "restlessness" (*uddhacca*), a "fetter" (*saṁyojana*) of which only the arhats are fully free
[5.3.1.2].
     Using a driving metaphor, we can say that these disrupting energies arise from one's driving in
the "wrong gear." A meditator troubled by an energy should mindfully back down at the first sign of
it, and nip it in the bud by switching to a more suitable meditation, or taking a "cleansing breath" to
settle or clear the energy.[1327]

7.4.3 Experiences of insight

7.4.3.1 Meditators and teachers in the Theravāda tradition used a range of emic, or tradition-
specific, "insider terms" to interpret experiences. One key hermeneutical tool or framework in this
tradition is the "insight knowledges" (*vipassana,ñāṇa*)—a sequence of stages and associated insights
suggesting the level of our progress in meditation and path-attainment. A number of meditators and
teachers described the stages of the "knowledge of arising and passing away" (*udaya-b-baya ñāṇa*)
and the "knowledge of dissolution [ceasing]" (*bhaṅga ñāṇa*) as deepening insights into imperma-
nence, which they frequently associated with positive affect ("everything was buzzing and every-
thing was amazing"), somatosensory changes ("my body just exploded into fragments"), and percep-
tual changes ("everything is dissolving in front of me").
     In the progress of insight, *the knowledge of dissolution* is expected to be followed by the "know-
ledge of appearance as being fearful (or as terror)" (*bhayatûpaṭṭhāna ñāṇa*) [7.3.2.4], and a number
of Theravāda teachers and meditators associated experiences of "fear" with this stage, which they
often took to be an "inevitable" or natural part of progress on the path. Some teachers indicated that
this is not an ordinary or unwholesome "fear," but is a realization of the true nature of the worldly
existence, that is, "the fear when you realize that the way you are perceiving the world is incorrect,
and that everything is changing, there is nothing substantial there."
     This is in fact the realization of the true reality of **impermanence**: we realize that in time our life,
too, will end. We are the proverbial burning candle: either the wax is exhausted, or the flame is blown
out by the wind or rain, which can be any time; the same will happen to our loved ones: a fearful
thought! This fear is further confirmed by our direct experience of **suffering**, and finally by the subtle
experience of **nonself**—that is when we gain the "knowledge that is revulsion" (*nibbidā ñāṇa*).[1328]

7.4.3.2 We create "virtual realities" or **formations** (*saṅkhārā*)—through seeing, hearing, smell-
ing, tasting, touching and thinking[1329]—by reacting to them with habitual greed or craving (*taṇhā*) or
with habitual hatred or aversion (*paṭigha*). **The body scan** is a key practice of the Vipassana retreats
and the VCE course's 2nd core exercise in the Presence Module [Fig 7.1.1]. This is a mindful and pro-
gressive scrutiny of the body from the head to the toes, or any part thereof.
     Vipassana teachers often explain that this exercise allows "karmic impurities" to arise, and we
peacefully note them as being *impermanent*, and so we let it go with equanimity. Such "impure"

[1327] On the "cleansing breath," see SD 38.5 (3.2.3.5).
[1328] See SD 60.1b (15.8.2).
[1329] See **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.1 [6.4.1.3].

sensations often arise as a result of past emotional trauma (some unresolved bad experience). We should note that all such experiences have emerged from memory so that they can be resolved. It is as if we return to the root of the crisis and nip it right there, resolving it forever.

7.4.4 The dark night

7.4.4.1 Western Buddhists have, in our times, adopted the term "**dark night**,"[1330] which originated in the writings of the Spanish Catholic mystic St John of the Cross (1542-91) and there refers to a period of absence from the presence of God [4.2.3.3]. In postmodern Buddhist discourse[1331] [7.4.7], the term "dark night" referred to "a range of media, including popular news articles, discussion forums, blogs, podcasts, and texts and meditation manuals written by well-known contemporary meditation teachers." (Lutkajtis 2019:1).

According to Lutkajtis, in postmodern Buddhist usage, **the "dark night"** has 3 dominant discourses: (1) the *dukkha ñāṇa* discourse [7.4.4.4]; (2) the "insight gone wrong" discourse [7.4.5]; and (3) the meditation "adverse effects" discourse [7.4.6]. These discourses may appear to be quite different, but they are all linked by a common Buddhist theme: Buddhist meditation in the West, Australia, New Zealand, and urbanized Asia).[1332]

7.4.4.2 As a Buddhist, I am deeply moved by the symbolism embodied in Salvador Dali's painting of "**Christ of St John of the Cross**," which is in the Kelvingrove Gallery in Glasgow.[1333] The cross, for me, is a western yet archetypal symbol of the 4 noble truths: the main pillar is sunk in the ground of *suffering* that holds the whole cross (body) and Christ (mind) together; the left beam is the *arising* of suffering; the right beam, the *ending* of suffering; and the heavenward beam, the path to the ending of suffering. Christ's presence is a reminder that suffering is omnipresent in the world. So long as we are ignorant of these truths we have to bear our own cross, and be crucified to it.

The triangle formed by Christ's arms represents the 3 jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma and the noble sangha); Christ's head is the circle representing the "unity" or oneness that is our own mind and heart, the wisdom with which we free ourselves into timeless nirvana. Christ is depicted on the cross in a darkened sky floating over a body of water with a boat and fishermen. I reflect on this as the Buddha arising as a human in this world to be amongst us so that we, too, may rise beyond our worldly state, and cross over the waters of rebirth into nirvana, beyond time and space.

This is a reflection of the spiritual relativity (*pariyāya*) of religious teachings and symbols. As modern man [human] struggles to free themself from religion, especially the God-religions into which they are born, instead of patching up pieces of their conditioned pasts onto their Buddhist insights, they should rather seek Buddhist insights in the religions they are familiar with. Everything is teaching us Dhamma when we seek it.

[1330] For a comprehensive overview of the "dark night" in Buddhist meditation and psychology, see A Lutkajtis, "Delineating the 'dark night' in Buddhist postmodernism,: *Literature & Aesthetics* 29,2 2019:1-14.

[1331] Ann Gleig speaks of *postmodern* Euro-Americans as "converts (who) are concerned with seeking enlightenment and focus heavily on meditation practice" (Gleig, *American Dharma*, Yale Univ Press, 2019:7). Lutkajtis too uses "postmodernism" (whose themes are globalism, adoption of technology, recognition of diversity, and renewed interest in tradition). See Lutkajtis 2019:1.

[1332] Before postmodern times, Stanislav & Christina **Grof** coined the term "spiritual emergence" reflecting their view that the "dark night" is actually an evolutionary process (*Spiritual Emergency: when personal transformation becomes a crisis* [**1989**], *International J of Transpersonal Studies* 36 2017, Roberto **Assagioli**, too, sees it as a stage of growth, dubbing it a "divine homesickness" ("Self-realization and psychological disturbances," in (edd) Grof & Grof, *Spiritual Emergency,* **1989**:39 f). Ken Wilber refers to it as an "abandonment depression" ("The spectrum of pathologies," in (edd) Walsh & Vaughan, *Paths Beyond Ego: the transpersonal vision,* NY: Tarcher, 1993:149).

[1333] [Scotland's favourite painting] [Wikipedia]. Thanks to Matt Jenkins for this beautiful vision, 27 Nov 2023.

7.4.4.3 According to **Ann Gleig**, the term "dark night" made its first appearance in postmodern Buddhism when it was used by US Theravāda meditation teacher **Jack Kornfield** in his attempts to integrate traditional Buddhism with the humanistic values of the European Enlightenment and Western psychology.[1334] Gleig argues that Kornfield's Western Buddhist approach "has revisioned the Buddhist goal of enlightenment from a transcendent condition that demands world renunciation to an embodied enlightenment that is possible for lay practitioners in everyday life." (2013:221).

Kornfield, in his article, "Obstacles and vicissitudes in spiritual practice," in Grof & Grof's *Spiritual Emergency* (1989:137-169) mentions "dark night (of the soul)" 5 times in a general way. It was only in *The Path With Heart* (1993:148-152) that Kornfield explains his usage of "dark night" in some detail. To him, the **dark night** is the experience of "this dissolution and dying within our own body" (p 149), and "the increasing power of awareness has been gradually unraveling our identity, releasing our grip on all that we have held in life" (p 150).

7.4.4.4 Let us now look at the late Pali term, ***dukkha ñāṇa***. Despite a careful search through Kornfield's 3 works quoted by Lutkajtis (2019:4-8)—"Obstacles and Vicissitudes in Spiritual Practice" (1989), *The Path With Heart* (1993) and *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry* (2001)—I could not find any mention of ***dukkha ñāṇa*** ("knowledges of suffering") in any of them. Apparently, either Kornfield has mentioned the *idea* without using the term itself, or that Lutkajtis thinks so. It is possible that Kornfield did not use the term at all since it is non-canonical.[1335]

Anyway, Lutkajtis (2019) quotes *A Path With Heart* where Kornfield reminds us that it is important to have a knowledgeable meditation teacher and guide, "otherwise, we will get lost or overwhelmed by these states and quit. And if we quit meditation in the middle of the stages of loss, death, dissolution, and fear,[1336]

> they [the *dukkha ñāṇa*s] will continue to haunt us. They can easily become entangled with our personal loss and fear in our everyday life. In this way, they can become undercurrents in our consciousness, and the unresolved feelings can last for months or years, until we do something to take ourselves back to this process and complete it.
>   (Kornfield, *A Path With Heart* 1993:150 f; amplification by Lutkajtis 2019: ch 2)

Technically, the *dukkha ñāṇa*s are the "vipassana knowledges" (*vipassanā,ñāṇa*),[1337] which include some challenging stages of the progress of insight, especially the stages related to the "knowledge of suffering" (*dukkha ñāṇa*). A number of meditators and teachers in the VCE study from across Buddhist traditions referred to the "dark night" as a shorthand either for challenges associated with the knowledges of suffering in particular, or for meditation-related difficulties in general.

7.4.5 The "insight gone wrong" discourse

7.4.5.1 Kornfield's books are readable and successful (especially that it leads you to go on to meditate) partly because he speaks the Northern Californian language of DIY spirituality. Notice especially that *A Path With Heart* (1993) is filled with allusions to a dazzling horizon of spiritual figures from Jesus to Mullah Nasruddin, to Nisargadatta of Bombay (one of his many gurus) to shamanic figures, to the Goddess of Compassion, and a bevy of illustrious Asian Buddhist teachers, includ-

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[1334] A Gleig, "From Theravāda to Tantra: the making of an American Tantric Buddhism?" *Contemporary Buddhism* 14,2 2013:221-238.

[1335] The term *dukkha-ñāṇa* is not found in the Pali canon. Even the 1st noble truth is called *dukkha,sacca,* not *dukkha,ñāṇa.* This term was elaborated by the self-declared Arahant Daniel Ingram in his *Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha* (2018), where he speaks of "the Knowledges of Suffering,' aka 'the Dark Night'" (2018: 31).

[1336] Kornfield 1993:148-152.

[1337] Analayo, "Vipassanā-ñāṇa," *Ency of Buddhism,* Sri Lanka, 2009: https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/encyclopedia-entries/vipassananana.pdf. See SD 28.3 (1.2 f).

ing of course the Buddha. These are pregnant allusions with undelivered imports, lightning rods for readers to zap from their cumulus of self-knowledge.

In this space of democratic spirit, nothing is sacred—what better subject to be profane about than the sacred—perhaps the most sacred of statements is a *negation* of the sacred. US meditation teacher **Shinzen Young** disagrees with Kornfield's usage of "dark night." Contrary to Kornfield, Young thinks that it is not uncommon that at some point meditators will face "periods of negative emotion, confusion, disorientation, and heightened sensitivity to internal and external arisings … I would not refer to these types of experiences as 'Dark Night'."[1338]

7.4.5.2 Rather, Young uses the term "**dark night**" in a more focused way for a phenomenon that he describes as more serious, potentially disabling and considerably rarer; that is, the misinterpretation of the Buddhist insights of emptiness (*suññatā*) and nonself (*anattā*). Traditionally, in Buddhism, gaining insight into the nature of emptiness and nonself is a positive thing and should be experienced as liberating. However, Young argues that occasionally these insights can be misunderstood by meditation practitioners, leading to a state that is sometimes referred to as "falling into the pit of the void … (that) entails an authentic and irreversible insight into Emptiness and No Self."[1339]

Young then draws a parallel with the clinical condition **depersonalisation** and **derealization disorder** (DP/DR). In his YouTube video titled 'Enlightenment, DP/DR & Falling Into the Pit of the Void' he refers to DP/DR as "'Enlightenment's evil twin."[1340] (2011). In psychiatry, DP/DR is "the presence of persistent or reoccurring episodes of depersonalisation, derealisation, or both."[1341] This aspect of the "dark night" seems to overlap with the phenomenon of "one beat slow" [7.3.3.2], but seems more adverse.

7.4.5.3 Young states that descriptions that match the "pit of the void," or DP/DR, are found in classical Buddhist literature, including the Pali Canon, but he provides neither details or references.[1342] However, scholars have noted similar problems associated with the insight into emptiness recorded in Buddhist literature. **Robert Sharf** (2015), for example, mentions a similar state—"falling into emptiness" (墮空 *duòkōng*)—described in the medieval Hongzhou school of Chan.[1343] *Duokong* is said to arise from unbalanced meditation practice; specifically, it occurs when a meditator places excessive focus on achieving "inner stillness" (凝寂 *níngjì*) at the expense of engagement with the scriptures (p 476).

Further, *duokong* is associated with "meditation sickness" (禪病 *chánbìng,* or "Zen sickness"), a term that has been used by various Buddhist masters to critique practices that they considered detrimental to contemplative progress.[1344] Sharf writes:

[1338] Shinzen Young, "Enlightenment, DP/DR & Falling Into the Pit of the Void," YouTube (2009), 15 Sep 2023.

[1339] Young, "The Dark Night," 2011 [The DarkNight] (15 Sep 2023).

[1340] Kornfield mentions "pseudo-nirvana" (1993:148) (ie, false view of nirvana, still with a self0view) merely as the meditator's misapprehension. Compared to Kornfield's views on the "dark night," Young's "enlightenment's evil twin" would be an "overkill": at this stage the meditator is far from the path and is dealing with the hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*) of restlessness (*uddhacca*). With *uddhacca* as a mental fetter (*saṁyojana*) (in the non-returner), it includes a struggle with compassion, being troubled by the world's suffering, and so on: see "Dharma-restlessness": SD 60.1a (1.1.2).

[1341] DSM 5 TR 2022 [f48.1]: "1. **Depersonalization:** Experiences of unreality, detachment, or being an outside observer with respect to one's thoughts, feelings, sensations, body, or actions (e.g., perceptual alterations, distorted sense of time, unreal or absent self, emotional and/or physical numbing). 2. **Derealization:** Experiences of unreality or detachment with respect to surroundings (e.g., individuals or objects are experienced as unreal, dreamlike, foggy, lifeless, or visually distorted)." DP/DR is of course another issue.

[1342] Young, "Enlightenment, DP/DR," 2009.

[1343] R Sharf, "Is mindfulness Buddhist? (and why it matters)," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 52,4 2015:470-484.

[1344] Sharf's n21 (biblio details added): "This language of inner stillness and falling into emptiness is found, among other places, in the records of another Hongzhou school critic Fayan Wenyi (885-958) and his dharma brother Xiufu (d 951?). Wenyi's Fayan lineage stressed the study of doctrine and texts as a corrective; see his

Today we might translate "meditation sickness" as "zoning out," by which I do not mean be-
ing lost in thought or daydreaming. Rather, I suspect that when medieval meditation masters
used terms such as "falling into emptiness" and "meditation sickness," they were targeting
techniques that resulted in an intense immersion in the moment, in the now, such that the
practitioner loses touch with the socially, culturally, and historically constructed world in
which he or she lives. The practitioner becomes estranged from the web of social relations
that are the touchstone of our humanity as well as our sanity. The key to avoiding this is to
learn to see both sides at once. Zongmi says: "While awakening from delusion is sudden, the
transformation of an unenlightened person into an enlightened person is gradual."

(Sharf, "Is mindfulness Buddhist? (And why it matters)," 2015:476 f)

Young's definition of the "dark night" refers to a relatively rare and quite extreme meditation
situation, but there is a more common, though less intense form of "insight gone wrong"—perhaps a
lingering nihilistic attitude which arises from misunderstanding emptiness to mean that nothing in
the world has a real existence. According to meditation teachers, becoming stuck in either of these
dark nights can hinder, even destroy a meditator's chances of progress and liberation.[1345]

7.4.6 The meditation "adverse effects" discourse

7.4.6.1 In due course, reaching to our own time, the "dark night" became a postmodern Buddhist
term that blankets a variety of meditation-related "**adverse effects**"—a term used by Leon S Otis for
TM meditators[1346] and by Deane Shapiro for Vipassana meditators.[1347] Negative effects related to
meditation have been described across a variety of religious traditions, and in Western psychology.[1348]
More recently, Lindahl and colleagues have described meditation adverse effects as meditation
experiences that are "challenging, difficult, distressing, functionally impairing, and/or requiring addi-
tional support."[1349] They further note that:

Meditation-related effects that are not health-related benefits or that are reported as dis-
tressing have been classified as "side effects" or "adverse effects" (AEs), especially in clinical
psychology research."   (Lindahl et al 2017:3 f)

7.4.6.2 Professor **Willoughby Britton**, a meditation researcher, used the term "dark night" to
refer to a variety of meditation adverse effects, and founded **the Dark Night Project** at Brown Uni-

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biography in fasc 24 of *Jingde chuangdeng lu* (T2076, 51,400b1-3), and the discussion in A **Welter**, *The Linji Lu
and the creation of Chan orthodoxy:* Oxford University Press, **2008**:32 f), and B **Brose**, *Buddhist empires: patron-
age, lineage, and the rise of Chan in China*, unpubl MS, **2013**:116. Guishan Lingyou (771-853), a 3rd-generation
teacher in the Hongzhou line, was another critic of a perceived tendency toward moral turpitude in the growing
Zen movement; see T **Kirchner**, "The admonitions Zen master Guishan Dayuan," *Hanazono daigaku kokusai zen-
gaku kenkyūjo ronshū* 1, 1-18, **2006**; M **Poceski**, "*Guishan jingce* (Guishan's admonitions) and the ethical founda-
tions of Chan practice," in (edd) S Heine & D S Wright, *Zen classics: Formative texts in the history of Zen Buddh-
ism,* Oxford Univ Press, **2006**:15-42. On meditation illness see J **Ahn**, *Malady of meditation: a prolegomenon to
the study of illness and Zen*, unpubl doc diss. Berkeley: Univ of California, **2007**.

[1345] Lutkajtis 2019:11.

[1346] L S Otis, "Adverse effects of Transcendental Meditation" [1984] in (edd) D H Shapiro & R N Walsh, *Medita-
tion: classic and contemporary perspectives*, NY: Aldine Transaction, 2009.

[1347] D Shapiro, "Adverse effects of meditation: a preliminary investigation of long-term meditators," *Internat-
ional J of Psychosomatics* 39 1992:62-67.

[1348] A Lutkajtis, "The dark side of Dharma: why have adverse effects of meditation been ignored in contempor-
ary Western secular contexts?" *J for the Academic Study of Religion* 31,2 2019:192-217.

[1349] J R Lindahl et al , 2017:1.

versity. The Dark Night Project began as an effort to document, analyse, and publicize accounts of the adverse effects of meditation.[1350]

According to an article in *The Atlantic* titled "The Dark Knight of the Soul":

> One of her [Britton's] team's preliminary tasks—a sort of archeological literature review—was to pore through the written canons of Theravadin, Tibetan, and Zen Buddhism, as well as texts within Christianity, Judaism, and Sufism. "Not every text makes clear reference to a period of difficulty on the contemplative path," Britton says, "but many did."
>
> "There is a sutta," a canonical discourse attributed to the Buddha or one of his close disciples, "where monks go crazy and commit suicide after doing contemplation on death,"[1351] says Chris Kaplan, a visiting scholar at the Mind & Life Institute who also works with Britton on the Dark Night Project.   (Rocha 2014)

Nathan Fisher, the research manager, condenses a famous parable by the founder of the Jewish Hasidic movement. Says Fisher, "[the story] is about how the oscillations of spiritual life parallel the experience of learning to walk, very similar to the metaphor Saint John of the Cross uses in terms of a mother weaning a child … first you are held up by a parent and it is exhilarating and wonderful, and then they take their hands away and it is terrifying and the child feels abandoned."[1352]

7.4.6.3 Britton started Cheetah House, her 19th-century 4-storey house on College Hill in Providence, RI, as a non-profit semi-residential social service organization, where people who had experienced meditation adverse effects could stay and recover. Cheetah House has grown from a physical place into a cyber-presence via a website, which states:

> Cheetah House is a non-profit organization that provides information and resources about meditation-related difficulties to meditators-in-distress and providers or teachers of meditation-based modalities.[1353]

While Britton's Dark Night Project has since been renamed **the Varieties of Contemplative Experience** (VCE)[1354] and the Cheetah House website does not mention the term "dark night" (except in a section that contains meditator's personal stories), the adverse effects of Britton's meditation work and the media attention that it attracted, led to the creation of a dark night meme in postmodern Buddhist meditation culture. The term is popular with writers and social media as an umbrella term to refer to any disturbing meditation-related state or adverse effect, such as depression, anxiety, dissociation, psychosis or the recurrence of trauma.

7.4.6.4 Britton's work, especially through Cheetah House, is a crusade to help those troubled by **the adverse effects of meditation** and also to research into these meditation-related difficulties (in

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[1350] Tomas Rocha, "The Dark Knight of the Soul," *The Atlantic* (25 June 2014. [TheAtlantic] 15 Sep 2023.

[1351] **Vesālī S** (S 54.9/5:320-323), SD 62.21. When we carefully study the circumstances of this Sutta, the Buddha's compassion leaps out to us: there is not a hint of neither criticism nor frustration at the misunderstanding of the 60 monks. The Buddha accepts that his teaching did only half its job: the monks understood not to be attached to beauty but attached themselves to ugliness instead! Thus worldly revulsion arose in them. Hence, the Buddha simply teaches those that remain on how to sit with that difficult feeling. This difficult feeling has arisen, so we sit with it, we observe it. "I don't think the monks have gone 'crazy' at all, I don't think the Buddha thought that, and I don't think [Kaplan's] comment does the sutta justice (it treats it as unserious, but it is serious)." (Matt Jenkins, 27 Nov 2023).

[1352] Rocha, 2023.

[1353] Cheetah House (Providence, RI) website at https://www.cheetahhouse.org/. Accessed 30 July 2019.

[1354] *The Varieties of Contemplative Experience* (2017) [BrownU] 15 Sep 2023.

particular, the relationship between meditation and trauma)[1355] and an increased recognition of the wide diversity of meditation-related experiences.

According to Lutkajtis, "while Kornfield's earlier work on the dark night was therapeutically oriented, Britton's work is both *therapeutically* and <u>politically</u> oriented, as it has expanded the definition of the dark night to include symptoms (eg, psychosis, re-traumatisation) that some members of the baby boomer generation of meditation teachers have perhaps too quickly and rather insensitively dismissed as pre-existing or unrelated psychopathology." (2019:14 emphases added).

Britton's Cheetah House project marked a milestone in the journey of meditation in the West, and an inspiration for others elsewhere concerned with the adversities faced by many who take up meditation. In the past, meditators experiencing these types of severe symptoms might have been simply excluded from meditation retreats or admitted for hospital care, but there now seems to be more effort into understanding and integrating such experiences within meditation communities. These are clear signs of better things to come with Buddhism in the West.[1356]

7.4.7 What we were really seeking

7.4.7.1 As Buddhism becomes more globalized, it is meaningful and helpful to speak of 2 broad categories of Buddhists: the religious Buddhist and the spiritual Buddhist. These are not statistical groups since they simply reflect the attitudes of such people towards Buddhism. People in either categories (as we see them) may or may not describe themselves as "Buddhists" officially. This does not concern me, as I am merely interested in how they see Buddhism or what they do with Buddhism.

Most modern or Westerners today who are practising Buddhism or in some way influenced by it, is unlikely to see themselves as "post-modern" or "non-postmodern" [7.4.4.1]. Such terms tend to be notoriously unclear or amorphous beyond the narrow field of those who use those terms; and such terms are often forgotten even while the scholars live, or are displaced by more fashionable or acceptable terms by enthusiastic or insightful new scholars.

Furthermore, except for some rare personal inclinations or those acting out of pious faith in their teacher or group, it is unlikely that there is any category of Buddhists who are primarily seeking "awakening" or "enlightenment," however it is defined. In other words, it is more likely to be more about how awakening or enlightenment is conceptualized. We each tend to define our own Buddhism when it boils down to details.

7.4.7.2 For Matt Jenkins (a British Buddhist and one of my proofreaders), says,

> I think what I want is for an end to suffering for all sentient beings—that is the destination at the end of the path. We can call that destination "enlightenment" because enlightenment is how that end will be achieved. I think that is different from an end goal of wanting to transform the self, becoming some sort of "enlightened being." The difference here is along the lines of whether being an enlightened being is an end, or a description of someone who has reached an end.
>
> I don't disagree with Gleig's reading here [7.4.4.1], I think "seeking enlightenment' is a useful shorthand; but I would think of it more in terms of postmodern Buddhists wanting to "achieve enlightenment" (a self-goal) while I and perhaps Buddhists in older traditions want to "reach enlightenment" (a goal for all sentient beings—*sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhit'attā*).
>
> I think that is a tradition thing—I first practised with a sangha led by monks from Myanmar, and we chanted suttas first and meditated second. The meditation was thus contextualised in the light of things like lovingkindness.

[1355] David A Treleaven, *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing,* NY & London: W W Norton, 2018: chs 3 (on W Britton) & 8 (on Cheetah House).
[1356] Lutkajtis 2019:11-14.

Perhaps, we can draw a spectrum which runs at one end from "enlightenment for all," through "enlightenment primarily for me," and ending up as "mindfulness for me"—as a way of crystalising my earlier concerns about the content of McMindfulness (the issue is that we are no longer looking for the elimination of suffering for all, or not even for our-selves, we're only looking for its alleviation and only for ourselves).

(Matt Jenkins, personal communication, 26 Nov 2023)

7.5 MEDITATION AND THE FUTURE

7.5.1 Kammaṭṭhāna

7.5.1.1 I will close this study by making 2 salient points: Buddhist meditation as practice and meditation as business. By "Buddhist meditation" I mean Theravāda Buddhist meditation which is rooted in early Buddhism. This is a natural choice because of at least 2 key reasons.

The first reason is that Theravāda, "the doctrine of the elders," goes back to the earliest records or tradition that we have of the teachings of the historical Buddha, and in which all other Buddhist schools and sects are rooted. We should thus know early Buddhism in order to understand how the other Buddhisms developed.

The second reason is that early Buddhism, as preserved in the Pali Canon—despite the idiosyn-cratic views of what "canon" means (or should mean) and whether we can know anything about the historical Buddha—contains:

• a rich array of <u>teachings and theories about the mind</u>,[1357]
• normative teachings of <u>practical meditation</u> as an integral part of <u>the Buddhist training</u> (a morally wholesome mental practice),[1358]
• sutta <u>case-studies</u> of the mental liberation of the early Buddhist saints,[1359]
• canonical records of <u>the meditative and awakening experiences</u> of the Buddha and the early arhats,[1360] and
• a wide range of <u>contemporary Buddhist meditation traditions</u>.[1361]

7.5.1.2 Throughout this special survey of "meditation in society" (SD 60.1), we have noticed that most Western scientific study of Buddhist meditation had been almost exclusively about Vipassana, rooted in the ethnic Buddhism of Myanmar. Clearly these studies have been very informative. How-ever, we have yet to give similar attention to another perhaps more ancient form of ethnic medita-tion, that is, **Kammaṭṭhāna** (*kamma* + *ṭhāna*; literally, "basis of action").

Even though it is a commentarial term, it is much older than "Vipassanā" as used by the Burmese, which goes back to Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923).[1362] *Kammaṭṭhāna* is an ancient commentarial term for the canonical meditational practices, especially the 40 meditation subjects.[1363] As a modern ethnic term, it is popular in Thailand.[1364] Traditionally it is a *samatha* tradition that often speaks of the

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[1357] Such as the "body-mind" process: SD 60.1d (2); and the "extended mind": SD 60.1e (12.7).
[1358] Such as "a moral psychology of self-deception": SD 60.1d (7.1).
[1359] Such as "ASCs in the Bodhisattva Siddhattha": SD 60.1f (4.5); experiencing nonself: SD 60.1f (6.4.6).
[1360] Such as "Streamwinners 'enjoying sensual pleasures'": SD 60.1f (4.2.2).
[1361] On samatha-vipassana and the Asian meditation masters of recent times: SD 60.1b; SD 60.1d (6.2).
[1362] SD 60.1b (2.3-2.4).
[1363] Vism 110,21 f (cf Vism 89,28), DhsA 168,9; CA 315,23. It is often used in the Comys to refer to specific "meditation subjects" taught by the Buddha, eg, Vism 115,3 (**Rāhula S**, M 1:320-426), MA 2:134,14 f (**Vammīka S**, M 1:142-145). See CPD: kammaṭṭhāna.
[1364] We have briefly surveyed the history of Kamaṭṭhāna in Siam (modern Thailand) and its leading modern Kammaṭṭhāna teachers: SD 60.1b (4-5).

dhyanas, that is, as the basis for the attaining of liberating wisdom, especially in the "new Siamese meditation."[1365]

In the West, Kamaṭṭhāna is the main practice of **the Samatha Trust** in the UK (founded in 1973),[1366] and has spread to the US.[1367] For the moment, it seems that the meditation tradition of the Samatha Trust has managed to remain beyond the curious eyes of modern psychology.

Around the same time as the founding of the Samatha Trust, Goenka started his first Vipassana meditation centre in Kusum Nagar, Hyderabad, in India. The time is well-nigh that meditation researchers should make a careful study of the meditation practice of the Samatha Trust.

7.5.2 Meditation business

7.5.2.1 Jen Wieczner's *Fortune* article, "Meditation has become a billion-dollar business" (2016) opens by quipping:

> From Bridgewater's Ray Dalio and Salesforce's (CRM) Marc Benioff to Goldman Sachs (GS) traders and Google (GOOG) programmers, Big Business loves meditation. And these days a growing crop of meditation gurus love business right back.[1368]

According to IBISWorld industry research, in 2015 the meditation and mindfulness business made US$984 million. A few years later, according to Sensor Tower, there were nearly 1000 mindfulness apps available: top app Headspace has been downloaded some 6 million times, raking in $30 million. There are now a growing number of wearable gadgets designed to help people Zen out: the Muse S (Gen 2) Headband can help you calm and focus, and help you sleep (premium subscription bundle) for only US$444.98. More gadgets are appearing on the market, and with competition, prices would probably drop and better meditation quality promised. In 2017, the *Financial Times*, reported that there were 1,300 meditation apps ready for download.

In recent years, Wieczner (2016) writes, corporation employers had offered mindfulness training —averaging between $500 and $10,000 for large-group sessions—and, according to a survey by Fidelity Investments and the National Business Group on Health, this number would double. The profits of Google's non-profit training programme, Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute, rose by over 50% in 2015 by offering two-day workshops (up to $35,000 for 50 people) to dozens of Fortune 500 companies, including Ford and American Express.

7.5.2.2 In fairy-tale terms, we can say that it was in 1979, at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, Kabat-Zinn launched a revolutionary programme called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). The programme introduced mindfulness meditation practice as a way to help people with stress, anxiety, depression, and even physical pain. Over the years, it benefitted both civilians and the US army—and Kabat-Zinn.

Today, there are over 1,000 certified MBSR instructors teaching mindfulness techniques in some 300 hospitals and medical centres around the world. In terms of scientific research, the number of randomized controlled trials involving mindfulness started with only 1 (1995–1997) but grew to 216 in just a decade later (2013–2015). In 2003, only 52 papers were published in scientific journals on the subject of mindfulness; less than a decade later, by 2012, it had jumped to 477.[1369]

These days, mindfulness can be found everywhere from schools to prisons to sports teams. Meditation app Headspace claims to be the official mindfulness partner of the US Women's National Soccer Team. Trendy fitness apparel company Lululemon even advertised mindful clothing for men. In

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[1365] SD 60.1b (5).
[1366] SD 60.1b (6).
[1367] SG 60.1b (6.3).
[1368] "Meditation has become a Billion-Dollar Business," Fortune.
[1369] K Pickert, "The Mindful Revolution," *Time* 23 Jan 2014. [Time]

the US, you can now buy Mindful Meats and Mindful Mints, and Sherwin-Williams sells a paint colour they dub Mindful Gray. You can buy online a 16-oz bottle of Mindful Mayo vegan salad dressing, free of egg, dairy, and soy, free of preservatives, for only $4.50.

7.5.2.3 A key reason for this sudden popularity of mindfulness meditation is the growing body of scientific evidence to support its benefits. The *Harvard Gazette*[1370] article, "When science meets mindfulness" (9 Apr 2018), for example, reports that recent studies showed that mindfulness bene-fits a range of conditions both physical and mental, including helping to counter stress, chronic pain, and other ailments such as psoriasis, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

With mindfulness nowadays so well marketed and widely consumed, we must ask: are there possible downsides to marketed mindfulness?[1371] David Gelles writes in the *New York Times*, "With so many mindful goods and services for sale, it can be easy to forget that mindfulness is a quality of being, not a piece of merchandise."[1372] Gelles himself wrote a book, *Mindful Work: how meditation is changing businesses from the inside out* (2015).

7.5.3 Conclusion: Future meditation

7.5.3.1 In this volume, SD 60.1f, we see research psychologists and specialist scholars having a better grasp of early Buddhist teachings and the writings of modern Buddhists which inform the frame of reference for the study and practice of meditation, and the prognosis and healing of medi-tation's adverse effects in our times. With such developments, we also see the growing **psychologiz-ation and secularization of Buddhism**, especially its meditation tradition.

The present trajectory will likely lead to a kind of "scientific" mastery of early Buddhism, that is, the Buddha's historical teachings as **moral psychology**, that forms the basis for future psychology. With a better understanding of the awakening experience of the Buddha, future psychologists and neuroscientists will be better informed, thus better understand for themselves—as 1st person expe-rience—of the nature of the mind. I call this **metabuddhism** (in lower case), early Buddhism as the basis for meditation psychology.

7.5.3.2 What will become of **Buddhism** then, we may ask? We must also ask how many Buddh-ists really know what is going on with modern meditation? And those Buddhists who know about it, how many of them really care, or are doing anything about it? First of all, any informed Buddhist will notice that urban Buddhism today is rapidly being secularized by the clerics who care more for eth-nic traditions and academic titles than the true teachings. Buddhism, like many secularizing religions, has become so competitive that clerics would put themselves above all the good that Buddhism teaches just to look worthy in the world's eyes of those very things they were meant to renounce. This is **narcissism** that we have examined in some depth in this volume [5.3 f].

At the same time, Buddhism, as taught by the Buddha, is being dismantled both ways, from within (by the clerics who were supposed to uphold the Vinaya and live the Dhamma), and from without by the modern scholars and scientists (who have drafted Buddhism as a nursemaid of psy-chology and modern learning). So it seems.

Since this seems prophetic, let us turn to the language of prophecy. The Buddha is the Sun and Buddha-Dharma the Phoenix: the Sun sets and rises again. The Phoenix dies in a blaze, from whose ashes she rises again. Why this happens I cannot explain: it's the nature of things. How she will rise again, I'm not clear, but rise she will. Perhaps, we will get hints and whispers from the myriad myths of cultures. Buddha-Dharma, after all, leads to our awakening from the very same heart from which all the great myths and legends arise to guide and inspire us to live the now so that tomorrow will come with joyful promise, and today returns ever brighter.

[1370] "When science meets mindfulness"—Harvard Gazette.
[1371] On "McMindfulness," see SD 60.1e (1.1.2.1).
[1372] D Gelles, "The hidden price of Mindfulness Inc," NY Times 19 March 2016.

In the mythical language of **the Makhā,deva Sutta** (M 83), the Buddha exhorts us, especially the renunciants, to continue the "good tradition" (the noble eightfold path) he has instituted and not be the "last man" or "last person" (*antima,purisa*)—by thinking that we cannot become arhats today, or not even reach the path. (MA 3:318 f). The path ends for us when we think we cannot reach it.

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