

B. Alan Wallace

Intersubjectivity in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism

This essay focuses on the theme of intersubjectivity, which is central to the entire Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It addresses the following five themes pertaining to Buddhist concepts of intersubjectivity: (1) the Buddhist practice of the cultivation of meditative quiescence challenges the hypothesis that individual human consciousness emerges solely from the dynamic interrelation of self and other; (2) the central Buddhist insight practice of the four applications of mindfulness is a means for gaining insight into the nature of oneself, others and the relation between oneself and the rest of the world, which provides a basis for cultivating a deep sense of empathy; (3) the Buddhist cultivation of the four immeasurables is expressly designed to arouse a rich sense of empathy with others; (4) the meditative practice of dream yoga, which illuminates the dream-like nature of waking reality is shown to have deep implications regarding the nature of intersubjectivity; (5) the theory and practice of Dzogchen, the 'great perfection' system of meditation, challenges the assertion of the existence of an inherently real, localized, ego-centred mind, as well as the dichotomy of objective space as opposed to perceptual space.

Introduction

The theme of intersubjectivity lies at the very core of the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist way of viewing the world and seeking spiritual awakening. According to this worldview, each person does exist as an individual, but the self, or personal identity, does not exist as an independent ego that is somehow in control of the body and mind. Rather, the individual is understood as a matrix of dependently related events, all of them in a state of flux. There are three aspects of this dependence. (1) The self arises in dependence upon prior contributing causes and conditions, such as one's parents and all others who contribute to one's survival, education and so on. In this way, our existence is invariably intersubjective, for we exist in a causal nexus in which we are constantly influenced by, and exert influence upon, the world around us, including other people. (2) The individual self does not exist independently of the body and mind, but rather exists in reliance upon a myriad of physical and mental processes that are constantly changing. (3) How does this self come into existence, if it is not inherently present either in any single psycho-physiological process or in all of them combined?

According to the Madhyamaka, or ‘Middle Way’, view, of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, which seeks to avoid the two extremes of substantialism and nihilism, the self is brought into existence by the power of conceptual imputation. That is, on the basis of either some aspect of the body (e.g. I am tall) or some mental process (e.g. I am content), the self is conceptually imputed *upon something which it is not*. Thus, even though I am not the height of my body, nor am I the affective state of being content, within the conceptual framework in which I think of myself and others think of me, it is conventionally valid to assert that I am tall and content.

Moreover, Buddhism maintains that conceptual frameworks are not private. They are public and consensual. So the ways in which I perceive and conceive of myself and others are inextricably related to the community of language-users and thinkers with whom I share a common conceptual framework. We view ourselves, others and the world around us by way of shared ideas, without which the world as we perceive it and conceive of it would not exist. Thus, our very existence as individuals, whether living in a community or in solitude, is intersubjective to the core.

What are the ramifications of this way of viewing reality? In this essay I shall focus on the following five questions, all pertaining closely to the idea of intersubjectivity. (1) Does individual human consciousness emerge solely from the dynamic interrelation of self and other, making it therefore inherently intersubjective? I shall address this topic within the framework of the Buddhist practice of the cultivation of *meditative quiescence*, in which the conceptual mind is stilled and the attention is withdrawn away from the physical senses and purely into the realm of mental consciousness. (2) In what ways does Buddhist meditation cultivate a sense of empathy as an indispensable means for gaining insight into the nature of oneself, others and the relation between oneself and the rest of the world? This theme will be presented in accordance with the central Buddhist insight practice of the *four applications of mindfulness*, in which one attends to the nature of the body, feelings, mental states and mental objects. (3) How does the theme of intersubjectivity pertain to Buddhist practices designed to induce greater empathy with others? In response to this question, I shall explain the Buddhist cultivation of the *four immeasurables*, namely, loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. (4) What significance does the Buddhist emphasis on the dream-like nature of waking reality have on the issue of intersubjectivity? Here I will focus on the meditative practice of *dream yoga*, which begins with training to induce lucid dreaming, or apprehending the dream-state for what it is while dreaming. (5) Finally, how does Buddhism challenge the assertion of the existence of an inherently real, localized, ego-centred mind, and in what ways does it challenge the dichotomy of objective space as opposed to perceptual space? This theme will be addressed by explaining some of the essentials of the theory and practice of *Dzogchen*, the ‘Great Perfection’, system of meditation aimed at fathoming the essential nature of awareness.

Meditative Quiescence

The Buddhist cultivation of meditative quiescence is regarded as an indispensable prerequisite for the cultivation of contemplative insight. The fundamental distinction between the two disciplines is that in the practice of quiescence, one refines the attention by means of enhancing attentional stability and vividness and counteracting the

mind's habitual tendencies toward alternating attentional excitation and laxity. The cultivation of contemplative insight, on the other hand, entails the precise examination and investigation of various facets of reality, using as one's instrument one's previously refined attentional abilities. Thus, the training in quiescence may be regarded as a kind of contemplative technology, aimed at developing the one tool by means of which mental phenomena can be directly explored. The training in insight, on the other hand, may be viewed as a kind of contemplative science, aimed at acquiring experiential knowledge of the mind, the phenomena that are apprehended by the mind, and the relation between the two.¹

Buddhism asserts that human beings with unimpaired sense faculties have six modes of perception. Five of those modes are by way of the five physical senses, and the sixth is mental perception, that faculty by means of which we perceive mental phenomena, such as thoughts, mental imagery, dreams and emotions. Mental perception is viewed as being quite distinct from our capacity to think, remember and imagine, all of which are conceptual faculties. Among the six modes of perception, the five physical senses can, at least in principle, be corrected, enhanced and extended by external, technological means. Common examples in the modern world (though not in classical India or Tibet) are the use of eyeglasses to correct vision and the use of telescopes and microscopes to enhance and extend our visual capacities.

If one's eyesight or hearing is defective, there is little if anything one can do by means of meditative or any other cognitive training to help matters. Mental perception, on the other hand, is not so easily amenable to technological enhancement, but among the six senses it is, according to Buddhism, the one that can be the most refined and extended. To start with, the normal untrained mind, which is so prone to alternating bouts of compulsive excitation and laxity, is regarded as 'dysfunctional'. So the bad news is that most of us are 'attentionally challenged', regardless of whether we suffer from attention deficit (laxity) and hyperactivity (excitation) disorders. But the good news is that this mental disability can be successfully treated with rigorous, sustained training.

Traditionally, Buddhists who are dedicated to exploring the extent to which attentional stability and vividness can be enhanced are advised to disengage temporarily from a socially active way of life. Withdrawing for a period of weeks, months, or even years, into solitude, they radically simplify their lifestyle and devote themselves single-pointedly to training the attention, while remaining as free as possible from all distracting influences. As long as one is actively engaged in society, one's very sense of personal identity is strongly reinforced by one's intersubjective relations with others. But now, as one withdraws into outer and inner solitude, one's identity is significantly decontextualized. Externally, by disengaging from social interactions, one's sense of self as holding a position in society is eroded. Internally, by disengaging from ideation — such as conceptually dwelling on events from one's personal history, thinking about oneself in the present, and anticipating what one will do in the future — one's sense of self as occupying a real place in nature is eroded. To be decontextualized is to be deconstructed. Surely this is why in traditional societies

[1] For a more elaborate discussion of meditative quiescence and its relation to contemplative insight see Wallace (1998 and 1999a), and for the relation between such contemplative modes of inquiry and modern science see Wallace (2000).

being sent into exile was regarded as one of the most severe forms of punishment, almost as drastic as capital punishment itself. In the penal systems of modern society one of the most severe forms of punishment is solitary confinement. Such isolation from society may be experienced as a terrible loss of personal freedom or as a marvellous opportunity for personal liberation. In both these ways it is like death itself.

This existential shift is not undertaken casually or without suitable preparation. To illustrate this point, the Buddha gave the analogy of a great elephant that enters a shallow pond in order to enjoy the pleasures of drinking and bathing (*Anguttara Nikaya*, V, 201 ff.). Due to its great size, the elephant finds a footing in the deep water and enjoys itself thoroughly. But when a cat seeks to emulate the elephant by jumping into the pond, it finds no footing, and either sinks or thrashes around on the surface. Here is the meaning of this parable. If one is inadequately prepared for the simplicity of the reclusive life, while dwelling for a sustained period in solitude the mind either sinks, by way of laxity, into dullness, boredom and depression, or else rises, by way of excitation, into compulsive ideation and sensory distractions. The critical issue here is whether one has cultivated sufficient emotional stability and balance to be able to live happily without reliance upon pleasurable sensual, intellectual, aesthetic and interpersonal stimuli. The single most powerful practice for achieving such emotional health is the cultivation of a sense of connectedness with others. This is done by empathetically reflecting again and again on others as subjects, like oneself, with their hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, successes and failures. In this way, whether alone or with others, one overcomes the sense of loneliness and isolation.

Among the many techniques taught in Buddhism for training the attention, the most widely practised method entails cultivating mindfulness of the breathing.² In this practice one begins by focusing the attention on the tactile sensations where one experiences the breath at the apertures of the nostrils. As one progresses in this training, the body comes to feel light and the respiration becomes more and more subtle. Eventually, while focusing the attention on the point of contact of the breath, right there a mental image spontaneously arises, on which one then sustains the attention. The type of image that arises varies from one person to the next, but may appear, for example, like a star, a round ruby or a pearl (Vajirañana, 1975, p. 249). This mental object remains the focus of one's attention until eventually it is replaced by a far more subtle 'after-image', which also may arise in a variety of forms.

At this point, one's attention is so concentrated in the field of mental perception that the mind is free of all physical sense impressions, including the presence of one's own body. If one then disengages the attention from the after-image, without relinquishing the heightened sense of attentional stability and vividness, in this absence of appearances one experiences a primal state of contentless awareness, known in Sanskrit as the *bhavanga*, or 'ground of becoming', from which all active mental processes arise (Harvey, 1995, p. 160). This mode of awareness is said to shine in its own radiance, which is obscured only due to external stimuli; and it is experienced as being primordially pure, regardless of whether it is temporarily obscured by adventitious defilements (see Vajirañana, 1975, pp. 151, 327–8; Kalupahana, 1987, pp. 112–15; *Anguttara Nikaya*, A.I.9–10, A.I.61). Remarkably, Buddhist contemplatives have also concluded that the nature of this ground of becoming is loving

[2] This practice is explained in detail in the opening chapters of Wallace (1999b).

kindness, and it is regarded as the source of people's incentive to meditatively develop their minds in the pursuit of spiritual liberation (*Anguttara Nikaya*, A.I.10–11).

The experience of such a state of contentless mental awareness is common to various schools of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist meditation, as well as other non-Buddhist contemplative traditions.³ So there seem to be good grounds for concluding that this is not simply a matter of speculation, but rather an element of experience for contemplatives trained in a variety of techniques and adhering to a wide range of philosophical beliefs. If this is indeed the case, the possibility of such experience has profound implications for questions concerning the intersubjective nature of consciousness. Is consciousness essentially intersubjective in the sense that the very nature of consciousness, with its own innate luminosity, is constituted by the relation of the self to others? The observation that the *bhavanga* is of the nature of love would imply that empathy is innate to consciousness and exists prior to the emergence of all active mental processes. One might infer from this that empathy on the part of researchers must be a prerequisite for any genuine science of consciousness. On the other hand, the assertion that this state of awareness is free of all sensory and mental appearances implies a certain degree of autonomy from language, conceptual frameworks and active engagement with others. This could suggest that consciousness is not really *constituted* by the relation of the self to others, but rather that it is intersubjective in the weaker sense of simply being inherently open to, and connected with, others. We shall return to this important theme later in this essay.

The Four Applications of Mindfulness

The cultivation of compassion is like a silken thread that runs through and connects all the pearls of Buddhist meditative practices. Compassion is based upon empathy, but in a very deep sense insight into the nature of oneself, others and the relation between oneself and the rest of the world is also based upon empathy. Moreover, a common Buddhist adage states that compassion without wisdom is bondage, and wisdom without compassion is just another form of bondage. Thus, wisdom and compassion must be cultivated together, and empathy is a common root of both.

The classic Buddhist matrix of meditative practices known as the four applications of mindfulness is based on the *Satipatthanasutta*, the most revered of all Buddhist discourses in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.⁴ This practice entails the careful observation and consideration of the body, feelings, mental states and mental objects of oneself and of others. A common theme to each of these four applications of mindfulness is first considering these elements of one's own being, then attending to these same phenomena in others, and finally shifting one's attention back and forth between self and others. Especially in this final phase of practice, one engages in what has recently been called *reiterated empathy*, in which one imaginatively views one's own psychophysical processes from a 'second-person' perspective. That is, I view my body and mind from what I imagine to be your perspective, so that I begin to sense my own presence not only 'from within' but 'from without'. Such practice leads to

[3] See the section 'Quiescence According to Mahamudra and Atiyoga', in Wallace (1998); Woods (1983); and Forman (1990).

[4] For a translation of this discourse, together with a modern commentary see Nyanaponika Thera (1973).

the insight that the second-person perspective on one's own being is just as 'real' as the first-person perspective; and neither exists independently of the other.

Another of the central aims of these four applications of mindfulness is to distinguish between the phenomena that are presented to our six modes of perception and the conceptual superimpositions that we often unconsciously and involuntarily impute upon those phenomena, including labels, categories and thoughts aroused by our emotional reactions. The Buddha summed up this theme when he declared: 'In what is seen there should be only the seen; in what is heard, only the heard; in what is sensed, only the sensed; in what is perceived mentally, only the mentally perceived.' (*Udana*, I, 10).

The first subject for the close application of mindfulness is the body, for this is our physical basis in reality, on which we most readily identify our own whereabouts and distinguish ourselves from others. The Buddha quintessentially describes this practice as follows: 'One dwells observing the body as the body internally, or one dwells observing the body as the body externally, or one dwells observing the body as the body both internally and externally.' (*Satipatthanasutta*, 5). In Pali (the language in which the Buddha's teachings were first recorded) the term translated here as 'observing' (*anupassati*) has the various meanings of observe, contemplate and consider, which override any strict demarcation between pure perception versus conceptual reflection. It means taking in the observed phenomena as fully as possible, both perceptually and conceptually, while still being sensitive to practical distinctions between what is presented to the senses and what is superimposed upon them. Such practice is done not only while sitting quietly in meditation, but while engaging in the various postures of walking, standing, sitting and lying down, as well as the activities of looking, bending, stretching, dressing, eating, drinking, excreting, speaking, keeping silent, staying awake and falling asleep.⁵

As one first attends to one's own body, one observes, among other things, the various events or factors that give rise to the emergence and dissolution of one's own experiences of and in the body. By *observing* one's own body, rather than simply *identifying* with it, one cultivates a kind of self-alterity, by experiencing one's own body simply as a matrix of phenomena, rather than as a self. Then on the basis of the experiential insights gained in this way, one perceptually observes the body of another, experiencing that also as a matrix of phenomena. Finally, one alternates between observing both one's own and another's body, perceiving qualities that are unique to each one, as well as discerning common characteristics, which might include events that lead to the emergence and dissolution of body-events from moment to moment.

The most important common characteristic between one's own and others' bodies is that none of them either is or contains a self, or personal identity. They are simply phenomena, arising in dependence upon prior causes and conditions. In this way one begins to break down the reified sense of the locality of one's own presence as being solely within the confines of one's own body. As William James reminds us, phenomenologically speaking, '*For the moment, what we attend to is reality . . .*' (James, 1890/1950, p. 322). By habitually failing to attend either to one's own body

[5] For a discussion of observing the four subjects of mindfulness inwardly, outwardly and both inwardly and outwardly see Nyanaponika Thera (1973), pp. 58–60.

or those of others, the bodies that we disregard are eventually not counted as existents at all. As James comments, ‘they are not even treated as appearances; they are treated as if they were mere waste, equivalent to nothing at all’ (*ibid.*, pp. 290–1). Moreover, by attending internally, externally, and finally internally and externally in immediate succession, one balances out any biases of attention one may have as a result of one’s own introverted or extraverted disposition. In addition, in this final phase of alternating the attention between self and others, one is in a position to observe relationships between self and others that may not be apparent as long as one is focused on one to the exclusion of others. As James cogently argues, very much in accordance with Buddhist principles, ‘*the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as “real” as anything else in the system*’ (James, 1912/1977, in McDermott, 1977, p. 195).

In the traditional practice of applying mindfulness to feelings, one observes the arising and dissolution of the three basic kinds of feelings of physical and mental pleasure, pain and indifference in oneself, others, and alternately between oneself and others. Other more complex affective states are left to the next practice, but special attention is given to pleasant and unpleasant feelings because these have such an enormous effect on the kinds of choices we make and the ways we conduct ourselves. According to Buddhism, for all sentient beings the most fundamental drive is to experience pleasure and joy and to avoid pain and suffering. Buddhist literature far more often makes references to ‘all sentient beings’, who share this common desire than it does to ‘all human beings’ alone. This is an indication that Buddhism is rightly characterized as more biocentric than anthropocentric.

While classical cognitive science has been ‘cognocentric’, in the sense of maintaining that humans are cognizers first and foremost, recent advances in affective neuroscience suggest that emotions are primary, and cognition has a secondary role as its organizing influence. According to Buddhism, neither cognition nor emotion is primary; rather, they are co-emergent, neither one capable of existing without the other. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the feeling of indifference, which some might regard as being an *absence* of feeling, is regarded in Buddhism as also being an affective state.

When observing the arising, presence and dissolution of feelings firsthand, one recognizes that they are not experienced by any means solely in the head, but rather in various regions throughout the body. Some do not appear to have any identifiable location at all. When it comes to empathetically attending to others’ joys and sorrows, pleasures and pains, one can legitimately ask: Are such ‘observations’ of others’ internal affective states strictly inferential? That is, are these observations really conceptual conclusions based upon perceived outward signs of affective states? Or might this type of empathetic awareness be more direct, more akin to perception? I am not aware that either Buddhism or modern science has reached a consensus regarding these questions, but I believe they are worthy of careful consideration.

In the cultivation of mindfulness of mental states, one follows the threefold sequence as above, while observing the mind as it is affected by different affective and cognitive states, such as craving, hatred, delusion, anxiety, elation, concentration and agitation. The aim of this practice is explicitly therapeutic in nature. Some affective and cognitive states are conducive to one’s own and other’s wellbeing, while others are harmful. By attending closely to the factors that give rise to a wide range of

mental processes and by observing the effects they have on oneself and others, one begins to recognize through experience those processes that are conducive to one's own and others' wellbeing and those that are destructive. In this way one identifies the distinctions between wholesome and unwholesome mental states. In particular, like a physician diagnosing an illness, one pays special attention to what Buddhism calls 'mental afflictions', which can be identified by the criterion that they disrupt the balance and equilibrium of the mind. While some wholesome mental processes, such as compassion, may indeed disturb the calm of the mind, this disruption is not deep, and its long-term effects on one's mental states and behaviour are healthy. Other mental processes, however, such as resentment, have a deep and harmful impact on one's cognitive and affective health, as well as one's subsequent behaviour, so they are deemed mental afflictions.

As in the previous practices of attending mindfully to the body and feelings, in this phase of the practice one observes one's own and others' mental processes simply as impersonal phenomena, arising in dependence upon prior causes and conditions. In particular, one pays special attention to duration of these mental states: how long does each one last, and for as long as it lasts does it exist as a stable entity persisting through time, or as a sequence of momentary events? When one observes a process in one's own mental continuum, is it affected by the sheer fact of being observed? Is it possible to observe one mental state with an awareness that is not itself in that same state? For example, is it possible to observe anger with an unangry mind? Does one observe an intentional mental process *while* it is occurring, or is such mindfulness always retrospective? It is important to bear in mind that the Pali term commonly translated as 'mindfulness' (*sati*) also has the connotation of 'recollection', implying that many, if not all, acts of mindfulness may actually be modes of short-term recall. The issue of observer-participancy is obviously crucial to the first-person examination of mental states, and it should by no means disqualify such introspective inquiry any more than the fact of observer-participancy has disqualified exploration in the field of quantum mechanics.

The fourth phase of this practice is the cultivation of mindfulness of mental objects, which include all non-intentional mental processes as well as all other kinds of phenomena that can be apprehended with the mind. Thus, this category is all-inclusive. At the same time, there is a special emphasis in this phase of practice on observing in oneself, others, and both oneself and others the contents of the mind affiliated with wholesome and unwholesome mental states, as well as the conditions leading to their emergence and dissolution. In addition, one mindfully observes all the phenomena of one's environment, from one's own perspective by means of direct perception and from the perspective of others by means of imagination. The overarching theme of all these practices is the cultivation of a multi-perspectival view of oneself, others and the intersubjective relations between oneself and all other sentient beings. These techniques are explicitly designed to yield insights into these facets of the lived world, but they all have a strong bearing on the cultivation of compassion and other wholesome affective states, without which the cultivation of wisdom alone is said to be one more form of bondage.

The Four Immeasurables

Just as the qualities of cognizance and loving kindness are co-existent in the ground state of awareness known as the *bhavanga*, so too in the course of spiritual maturation must the light of insight and the warmth of a loving heart be cultivated together. In Buddhism the matrix of practices that traditionally complements the four applications of mindfulness is the cultivation of the four immeasurables, namely loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity.⁶

Each of these affective states can easily be conflated with other emotions that are fundamentally dissimilar. To help distinguish between the affective states to be cultivated and their counterfeits it may be helpful to draw on different types of relations as proposed by Martin Buber in his classic work *I and Thou* (Buber, 1937/1996). We can begin with what Buber calls an ‘I–it’ relationship, in which one engages with another sentient being simply as an object, to be manipulated in accordance with one’s own desires. In such a relationship the other’s existence as a subject, fundamentally like oneself, is ignored or minimized. One views this person only in terms of how he or she (really ‘it’) may either be of aid in the pursuit of one’s own goals, be an obstacle in that pursuit, or be irrelevant. On that basis this individual comes to be regarded as a friend, enemy or as someone of no consequence. In an ‘I–it’ relationship there is effectively only one subject, oneself, but in explicitly dehumanizing the other, one is implicitly dehumanizing oneself as well.

An ‘I–you’ relationship, on the other hand, is essentially dialogical in the sense of one subject truly engaging with the subjective reality of another person. While an ‘I–it’ relationship is fundamentally manipulative, an ‘I–you’ relationship is truly intersubjective and therefore based upon a sense of empathy. According to Buber, in the midst of an ‘I–you’ relationship, one may transcend the polarity of self and other and engage with a sphere of between-ness of self and other, in which both subjects access the ‘eternal thou’ that transcends individuality. This eternal thou cannot be accessed unless *both* subjects are involved in an I–you relationship. It is at heart a participatory experience that cannot be accessed on one’s own.

While Western thought, inspired by the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions, is largely anthropocentric when it comes to intersubjective relationships, Buddhism, as mentioned before, may be deemed biocentric, for its central emphasis is on *all* sentient beings, and not on human beings alone. The aim here is to cultivate loving kindness and the other wholesome affective states in this tetrad to a degree that transcends all boundaries and demarcations.

The first of the four states to be cultivated is loving kindness, which is understood as the heartfelt yearning for the wellbeing of others. Although it is very tempting to translate the corresponding Sanskrit term (*maitri*) simply as ‘love’, the reason this is not commonly done is that in English this term is often used in ways that conflate an ‘I–you’ relationship with an ‘I–it’ relationship. The loving kindness cultivated in Buddhist practice emphatically entails an ‘I–you’ relationship, for one is vividly aware of the other person’s joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. But in English the word ‘love’ is also used in cases of sexual infatuation, personal attachment, and even strong attraction to inanimate objects and events, all of which involve ‘I–it’ relationships. In

[6] For a detailed explanation of all these practices see Wallace (1999b). One of the most authoritative traditional accounts of these practices is found in the fifth-century classic by Buddhaghosa (1979), I: IX.

Buddhism an entirely different term (*raga*) is generally used to denote such kinds of attraction, and it is variously translated as ‘attachment’, ‘craving’ or ‘obsession’.

According to Buddhism, attachment is an attraction for an object on which one conceptually superimposes or exaggerates desirable qualities, while filtering out undesirable qualities. In cases of strong attachment, one transfers the very possibility of one’s own happiness onto the object on which one’s mind is bent, thereby disempowering oneself and empowering the object of one’s fancy. Even when such attachment is directed toward another person, it entails more of an ‘intrasubjective’ than an intersubjective relationship, for one is engaging more poignantly with one’s own conceptual superimpositions than with the other person as a genuine subject. When the reality of one’s idealized object of attachment — with all his or her faults and limitations — breaks through one’s fantasies, disillusionment may ensue. That in turn may lead to hostility and aversion, in which one now superimposes negative qualities upon the person whom one previously held dear. Thus, according to Buddhism, loving kindness does not readily turn into aversion, but attachment does. While loving kindness is a wholesome affective state that is conducive to one’s own and others’ wellbeing, attachment is a major source of anxiety, distress and interpersonal conflict. It is therefore very important not to conflate them, but in most close human relations, such as between parents and children, spouses and friends, they are normally mixed. In these complex human relationships the Buddhist ideal is to attenuate the mental affliction of attachment and cultivate the wholesome affective state of loving kindness.

In what may appear at first glance to be paradoxical, in traditional Buddhist practice one first cultivates loving kindness for oneself, then proceeds to extend this affectionate concern to others. The rationale for this is based on a fundamental premise expressed by the Buddha: ‘Whoever loves himself will never harm another.’ (*Udana*, 47). This strategy seems especially appropriate in the modern West, where feelings of self-contempt, low self-esteem, guilt, and a sense of being unworthy of happiness appear to have reached epidemic proportions.⁷ In the meditative practice itself, one first attends to one’s own longing for happiness and wish to be free of suffering, and one generates the loving wish: ‘May I be free of animosity, affliction and anxiety, and live happily.’ In a way, this practice, like the preceding practices of mindfulness, entails a kind of self-alterity, in the sense that one is objectifying oneself and yearning for the person whom one has brought to mind: ‘May you be well and happy.’ Thus, one has entered into an ‘I–you’ relationship with oneself!

In the next phase of this practice one brings to mind someone else whom one loves and respects. Recalling this person’s acts of kindness and virtues, one brings forth the heartfelt wish: ‘May this good person, like myself, be well and happy.’ Continuing in this practice, one similarly brings to mind in sequence a dearly loved friend, then a person toward whom one has been indifferent, and finally a person for whom one has felt aversion. The aim of the practice is to gradually experience the same degree of loving kindness for the dear friend as for oneself, for the neutral person as for the dear friend, and finally for the enemy as for the neutral person. In this way, the artificial

[7] For a fascinating account of a cross-cultural dialogue with the Dalai Lama on this theme, see Goleman (1997), pp. 189–207.

'I-it' barriers demarcating friend, stranger and foe are broken down, and immeasurable, unconditional loving kindness may be experienced.

As stated previously, the counterfeit of loving kindness is attachment. According to Buddhism, the opposite of loving kindness is not indifference, but hatred. While indifference may be viewed as being turned 90 degrees away from loving kindness, hatred is turned 180 degrees away, for when the mind is dominated by hatred one actually feels *unhappy* at the prospect of another's wellbeing. The proximate cause of loving kindness is seeing loveable qualities within others, not merely their outer, surface attractions. One is successful in this practice when it causes animosity to subside, and one fails when the practice leads only to selfish affection, or attachment, for this implies that one is still stuck in an 'I-it' mentality.

The second of the four immeasurables is compassion, which is inextricably linked with loving kindness. With loving kindness one yearns that others may find genuine happiness and the causes of happiness, and with compassion one yearns that they may be free of suffering and its causes. These are really two sides of the same coin. While attachment is frequently confused with loving kindness (especially when they are both called by the same name — 'love'), righteous indignation for others can easily be confused with compassion. If one's 'compassion' extends only to the victims of the world, and not to the victimizers, this is likely to be one more case of attachment to the down-trodden, combined with aversion for the oppressors. In other words, one is still trapped in an 'I-it' mentality. The compassion cultivated in Buddhist practice is focused not only on those who are experiencing suffering and pain but on those who are sowing the seeds of further suffering and pain, namely those who harm others. According to Buddhism, all the evil perpetrated in the world stems from attachment, aversion, and the ignorance and delusion that underlie both. These destructive tendencies are regarded as mental afflictions, very much like physical afflictions, and those who are dominated by them are even more deserving of compassion than those afflicted with physical diseases. But to feel compassion for evil-doers is not to condone the evil they commit. It is to yearn that they be free of the impulses that compel them to behave in such harmful ways, and thereby to be free of the causes of suffering.

In the meditative practice of cultivating compassion, one attends first to someone who is wretched and miserable, wishing 'If only this person could be freed from such suffering!' As one progresses in this practice, one then sequentially focuses on an evil-doer (regardless of whether he or she seems happy at present), on a dear person, a neutral person, and finally on someone for whom one has felt aversion. The goal of the practice is like that for the cultivation of loving kindness, namely, to break down the barriers separating these different types of individuals until one's compassion extends equally to all beings.

The counterfeit of compassion is grief. In English, compassion is often verbally expressed with a comment such as 'I feel so sorry for that person', but according to Buddhism merely feeling sorry for someone does not necessarily entail compassion. When one empathetically attends to another person who is unhappy, one naturally experiences sadness oneself. But such a feeling may actually lead instead to righteous indignation and the vengeful wish to exact retribution on the one who has made the other person unhappy. On the other hand, in the cultivation of compassion, empathetic sadness or grief acts instead as fuel for the warmth of compassion. One does not simply remain in a state of sadness or despair, but rises from this with the wish: 'May

you be free of this suffering and its causes!’ One moves from the reality of the present suffering to the possibility of freedom from that suffering. Thus, empathetic sadness may act as a catalyst for compassion, but it is not compassion itself.

The opposite of compassion is not indifference, but cruelty. When this mental affliction dominates the mind, one does insidiously acknowledge the subjective reality of the other, and one consciously wishes for that person to experience misery. This is widely regarded as the greatest evil to which the mind can succumb. The proximate cause of compassion is seeing the helplessness in those overwhelmed by suffering and its causes. One succeeds in this practice when one’s own proneness to cruelty subsides, and one fails when the practice produces only sorrow. It is important to emphasize that the Buddhist meditative cultivation of loving kindness and compassion was never intended as a *substitute* for active service to others. Rather, it is a *mental preparation* for such altruistic service that raises the likelihood of such outer behaviour being truly an expression of an inner, benevolent concern for others’ wellbeing.

The cultivation of the final two immeasurables is virtually effortless if one has fared well in the cultivation of the first two. If one feels loving kindness and compassion for others, then when they experience joy the spontaneous response is empathetically to take delight in their happiness. But such empathetic joy can also be cultivated as a practice in its own right. In the Buddhist meditative technique, one focuses first on a very dear companion who is constantly of good cheer, then on a neutral person, and finally on a hostile person. In each case, one imaginatively enters into the joy of the other and experiences it as if it were one’s own. On the other hand, one may take pleasure merely in the superficial appearances of others’ wellbeing, which is the counterfeit of empathetic joy. The opposite of this wholesome affective state is envy, its proximate cause is the awareness of others’ happiness and success, and one fails in this practice when it yields a merely frivolous state of mind.

Equanimity, the fourth of the immeasurables, actually suffuses the other three, as one breaks down the self-centred divisions that are superimposed on other people. With equanimity, one’s loving and compassionate concern for others extends out evenly, with no bias toward friends or against enemies. Such equanimity is based upon empathy, recognizing that all sentient beings, like oneself, are equally worthy of happiness. This meditative practice begins by focusing on a neutral person, then a dear person, and finally a hostile person, in each case resting in a state of equanimity free of attachment and aversion. The counterfeit of the equanimity to be cultivated here is stupid indifference, with which one simply does not care about the wellbeing of others, whoever they are. The opposite of equanimity is attachment for one’s loved ones and aversion for one’s enemies, and its proximate cause is said to be taking responsibility for one’s own conduct. One succeeds in this practice when one experiences equanimity that is a fertile, level ground for the growth of loving kindness and compassion; and one fails when it produces mere indifference.

In the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the cultivation of loving kindness and compassion is combined in a classic practice known in Tibetan as *tonglen*, meaning ‘giving and taking’.⁸ Here the enactment of loving kindness is the ‘giving’ component of

[8] A more complete presentation of this practice can be found in Wallace (2001), which is a commentary on the eleventh-century *Seven-Point Mind-Training* composed by the Indian scholar contemplative Atisha, which is a primary source for the practice of *tonglen*.

the practice of giving and taking, and the enactment of compassion is the ‘taking’ component. The taking component begins by bringing vividly to mind a loved one or a community of people or other sentient beings who is either suffering or sowing the seeds of suffering by means of harmful conduct. One begins by empathetically entering into the suffering and the sources of suffering of this person, then one generates the wish ‘May you be relieved of this burden and may this adversity ripen upon me.’ Whatever the affliction or adversity, physical or mental, one imagines taking it upon oneself in the form of a black cloud being removed from the other’s body and mind and being drawn into one’s heart. As one does so, one imagines that the other person is gradually relieved of this burden. As soon as this dark cloud enters one’s heart, one imagines that it meets with one’s own sense of self-centredness, visualized as an orb of darkness. In an instant both that cloud of misery and the darkness of one’s self-centredness mutually extinguish each other, leaving not a trace of either behind.

In the ‘giving’ component of this practice, one imagines all the prosperity, happiness, and goodness in one’s life as a powerful wellspring of brilliant white light emanating from one’s heart in the reverse direction. One imagines these powerful rays of light reaching out and suffusing the person with the wish, ‘All that is good in my life, my possessions, my happiness, my good health, my virtues, I offer to you. May you be well and happy.’ As one does so, one imagines the light of this virtue and happiness suffusing the person who has been brought to mind, and one imagines his or her most meaningful desires and aspirations being fulfilled. Yet as this light from one’s heart flows forth unimpededly, it is not depleted, for it is imagined as arising from an inexhaustible source.

As one becomes familiar with this meditative practice, one may expand the scope of one’s awareness finally to include all sentient beings, taking in all suffering and mental afflictions and sending forth all one’s virtue and goodness. This practice may then be conjoined with the breath: During each inhalation, one imagines taking in the burden of suffering and the sources of suffering, and with each exhalation one imagines rays of white light emerging from one’s heart, bringing happiness and the causes of happiness to all the world.

The eighth-century Indian Buddhist saint Shantideva, on whose writings this practice is based, sums up the rationale behind this meditation: ‘I should eliminate the suffering of others because it is suffering, just like my own suffering. I should take care of others because they are sentient beings, just as I am a sentient being.’ (Shantideva, 1997, VIII: 94). This is a pure expression of an ‘I–you’ relation with all sentient beings. The ‘I–thou’ relationship as it is cultivated in Buddhist practice will be discussed in the next section.

Dream Yoga

The word ‘buddha’ means ‘one who is awake’, and the implication is that everyone who is not a buddha is asleep, most of us leading lives very much akin to a non-lucid dream. According to the Madhyamaka view, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, waking experience has a dream-like quality because of the disparity between the way things appear and the way they exist. All phenomena — oneself, others and everything else in the experienced environment — *appear* as if they bear their own inherent existence, independently of the conceptual frameworks within which they are

apprehended. But in terms of the way they *exist*, all conditioned phenomena are dependent upon (1) the causes and conditions that gave rise to them, (2) their own parts and attributes, and (3) the conceptual designations by which they are demarcated from other phenomena and *bear* their own components and qualities. In short, oneself, other sentient beings, and all other phenomena appear to exist in-and-of-themselves, but nothing has such an independent existence. According to the Madhyamaka view, that very absence of an inherent identity of any phenomenon is called *emptiness*.⁹

The fourteenth-century, Tibetan Madhyamaka philosopher Tsongkhapa asserts in this regard: ‘Although the objects of perception have forever utterly lacked a final self-nature or objective existence, nonetheless they indisputably appear with the nature of having real, inherent existence . . . These things function conventionally on the basis of the laws of interdependence and causality.’ (Mullin, 1996, p. 174). According to this view, the objects of perception — colours, sounds, smells and so forth — do not exist in the objective world, independently of the sense modalities by which they are perceived. But, for example, do trees exist apart from our perception of them? The Madhyamaka answer is that trees and the many other objects in the natural world do indeed exist independently of our perceptions. Flowers continue to grow and bloom when no one is looking, and trees fall to the forest floor, sending out ripples in the atmosphere and over the ground, and then begin to decay, whether or not anyone is there to witness these events.

One may then ask: ‘Do flowers, trees and other natural phenomena exist independently of any conceptual designations of them?’ To this the answer is that the words ‘flowers’, ‘trees’ and so on have no meaning apart from their definitions which we have attributed to them. Thus, the question has no meaning. But we may then push this point and ask: ‘Does *anything* exist independently of human language and thought?’ This question implies that the word ‘exist’ is somehow self-defining, that it stands on its own, independent of any consensually accepted definition. But all terms such as *subject*, *object*, *existence*, *reference*, *meaning*, *reason*, *knowledge*, *observation* and *experience* have a multitude of different uses, and none has a single absolute meaning to which priority must be granted. Since these terms are not self-defining, we employ their definitions according to the conceptual schemes of our choice. That is, we choose our definitions; they are not determined by objective reality. So, once again, proponents of the Madhyamaka view conclude that the question is meaningless: if the word ‘exist’ has no meaning independently of all conceptual frameworks, then it makes no sense to ask whether anything exists independently of all conceptual frameworks.

For this reason the Madhyamaka view rejects metaphysical realism, which has been defined as the view that (1) the world consists of mind-independent objects, (2) there is exactly one true and complete description of the way the world is, and (3) truth involves some sort of correspondence between an independently existent world and a description of it.¹⁰ In this regard, Nagarjuna, the second-century Indian philosopher who initially systematized the Madhyamaka philosophy, would concur with the

[9] The primary treatise expounding the Madhyamaka view is Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, translated by Garfield (1995).

[10] This definition is taken from Putnam (1990), p. 30.

statement by the twentieth-century physicist Werner Heisenberg: ‘What we observe is not nature in itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning.’ (Heisenberg, 1962, p. 58). Scientists question nature with the types of measuring devices created in collaboration with engineers. But the data collected by such a device arise in dependence upon both the objective phenomenon being studied and the measuring device itself. The data are thus produced as dependently related events, much as we hear sounds that are produced through the interaction of vibrations in some objective medium and our auditory faculties. But the *sounds we hear* do not exist independently in the objective world, nor do any of the other data collected by the instruments of technology.

Proponents of metaphysical realism might well grant this point but then counter that the conceptual world of physics exists, based upon objective magnitudes, and corresponds to the real, objective world, existing independently of language and thought. But to this point Einstein raises the concern, ‘. . . on principle, it is quite wrong to try founding a theory on observable magnitudes alone. In reality the very opposite happens. It is the theory which decides what we can observe.’ (Cited in Heisenberg, 1971, p. 63). As scientists interpret the data gathered from their measuring devices, they must distinguish between significant data and ‘noise’. The theory they are using plays an instrumental role in making such choices, just as it does in determining what types of measuring devices to create, and how to interpret the data gathered from them. What is finally ‘observed’ is deeply theory-laden.

Thus, not only do the perceptual objects detected with the senses or with the instruments of technology not exist independently of those modes of detection, they do not exist independently of the conceptual frameworks through which such measurements are filtered. Moreover, the theoretical entities conceived by physicists arise as related events arising in dependence upon both observational data and the conceptual faculties of the scientists who interpret and make sense of those data. This implies the intersubjective nature of both perceptual as well as conceptual experience, especially when we consider the consensual nature of conceptual frameworks.

While the Madhyamaka view finds certain similarities with the thought of some of the founders of quantum theory, among contemporary philosophies it is perhaps most akin to the pragmatic realism of Hilary Putnam. In a statement closely in accord with the writings of Nagarjuna, Putnam declares, ‘elements of what we call “language” or “mind” *penetrate so deeply into what we call “reality” that the very project of representing ourselves as being “mappers” of something “language-independent” is fatally compromised from the very start*’ (Putnam, 1990, p. 28). If there were no language users, there would not be anything true or anything with sense or reference. Thus the rich and ever-growing collection of truths about the world is the product of the experienced world intertwined with language-users, who play a creative role in producing our knowledge of the world.

According to the views of both Madhyamaka and pragmatic realism, once we have chosen a conceptual scheme there are facts to be discovered and not merely legislated by our language or concepts. Our conceptual scheme restricts the range of descriptions available to us, but it does not predetermine the answers to our questions. In accordance with the Madhyamaka view, Putnam writes, ‘. . . the stars are indeed independent of our minds in the sense of being causally independent; we did not make the

stars . . . The fact that there is no one metaphysically privileged description of the universe does not mean that the universe depends on our minds.¹¹

While the Madhyamaka view rejects the philosophical extreme of metaphysical realism, it equally rejects the cultural relativist or post-modernist view that no truth-claims can be made about anything independently of the culture in which they are imbedded. For example, the assertion that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence is regarded as a universal truth, not contingent upon the beliefs of any one person or society. The Madhyamaka view also rejects materialism as well as philosophical idealism as two more philosophical extremes, each one reifying the phenomenon of its choice — matter or mind — as being inherently real, independent of conceptual designation.

The Madhyamaka view provides the philosophical framework for the contemplative practice of dream yoga. In a non-lucid dream — that is, one in which there is no recognition that one is dreaming — all objective phenomena seem to exist in-and-of-themselves. They, like one's own persona in the dream, seem to be real. But upon waking, one recognizes that neither one's own mind in the dream, nor any person or situation encountered in the dream, had any such independent existence. This is equally true during the waking state and in the daytime practice of dream yoga, one maintains this awareness as constantly as possible. Everything one experiences throughout the day — contrary to appearances — arises in relation to one's own perceptions and conceptions. Every person one encounters is perceived and conceived in relation to one's own sensory and conceptual faculties. Never does one encounter the radically and absolutely 'other', for one's apprehension of the other is always dependent upon one's own subjective input. Thus, upon fathoming the emptiness of inherent existence of all waking phenomena, one maintains throughout the day a sense of the dream-like nature of all events, recognizing the profoundly intersubjective nature of all human relationships.¹²

As in modern techniques for inducing lucid dreaming, the daytime practice of dream yoga is complemented with night-time practices.¹³ Although many specific techniques are taught, one practice common to the modern techniques and to dream yoga is to fall asleep with the strong resolution to apprehend the dream-state as such when one is actually dreaming. While it can be difficult to recognize the dream for what it is and difficult to maintain that awareness without either waking up immediately or fading back into a non-lucid dream, when success in this practice is achieved it often comes with a sense of great freedom and exhilaration. One now knows that one's own body and everything else in the dream is an expression of one's own psyche, and even though one has no sensory experience of one's body lying in bed, one knows it is there, outside the context of the dream. In a non-lucid dream one has a very definite sense of one's own locality in the dream: other people in the dream are apprehended as being really 'over there'. But in a lucid dream, one is aware that everyone in the dream is an individual expression of some facet of the dreamer's mind.

[11] Putnam (1991), p. 407. I have discussed this point at greater length in the chapter 'The World of Human Experience', in Wallace (2000).

[12] Traditional Tibetan Buddhist accounts of the practice of dream yoga can be found in Padmasambhava (1998), Part II, ch. 4, and Mullin (1996), pp. 172–84.

[13] For a clear, modern account of the theory and practice of lucid dreaming see LaBerge and Rheingold (1990).

To clarify this point: other people in my dream are not manifestations of my mind as one more character in the dream, but they, like myself in the dream, are manifestations of the dreamer, who is asleep *outside* the dream. The dreamed person's mind still seems to be local, but in a lucid dream one is aware that the dreamer's mind pervades all people, things and events in the dream. So the lucid dreamer is, so to speak, localized as the dreamed persona, but non-localized in the knowledge of oneself as being the dreamer. Another way of saying this is that as a dreamed persona one engages in *intersubjective* relations with others in the dream, but with the recognition of oneself as the dreamer one knows all these encounters with others to be *intra-subjective*. As a lucid dreamer, one is aware of both these perspectives, and in the awareness that transcends the duality of oneself and others in the dream, one enters into an 'I-thou' relationship with the other who is none other than oneself.

This insight into nonduality enables one to see the fallacy of viewing others in the dream as being independently worthy either of hatred or attachment. If someone else in the dream has done something reprehensible, the agent of that act is not really different from oneself and has no independent existence whatsoever. Likewise, if there is someone very attractive in the dream, out of habit one may still experience desire, but one knows that the object of one's craving is none other than a creation of one's own mind. To overcome that habitual craving, one must thoroughly familiarize oneself with the insight that the object of one's craving has no independent, objective existence.¹⁴ When this insight penetrates one's waking experience as well, this opens up the possibility of cultivating an 'I-thou' relationship with others throughout the course of one's life.

Particularly in a lucid dream one has the sense of perceiving events in the 'private theatre' of one's mind, but Indo-Tibetan Buddhism nevertheless maintains that this theatre is pervious to external, spatially and temporally non-local influences. For example, this tradition accepts the possibility of precognition and remote viewing occurring in a dream, as well as during the waking state. Given the possibility of outside influences impinging upon one's dream, the dreamscape may be likened to an open-air theatre, in which one may perceive not only what is taking place on stage, but also hear crickets from the surrounding fields and jets flying overhead. Likewise, during the waking state, the field of one's mental perception — that domain in which one experiences mental imagery while awake and dreams while asleep — is equally open to outside influences. This raises the fascinating question as to the whereabouts of the borders of the mind and how porous those borders are, if any can be found.

In the practice of dream yoga there are further techniques to be applied after one has apprehended the dream-state for what it is, but for the present purposes I shall focus on the practice of cultivating lucid dreamless sleep. The eighth-century Indian Buddhist contemplative Padmasambhava writes of this practice, 'When you are fast asleep, if the vivid, indivisibly clear and empty light of deep sleep is recognized, the clear light is apprehended. One who remains without losing the experience of meditation all the time while asleep, without the advent of dreams or latent predispositions, is one who dwells in the nature of the clear light of sleep.' (Padmasambhava, 1998, p. 164). What he is describing here is the nature of awareness when it is perceived

[14] This same point is made regarding one's realization of emptiness during the waking state in Shantideva (1997), IX, 30–2.

nakedly, devoid of content and conceptual structuring. This is called the ‘clear light’ nature of awareness, about which Padmasambhava writes: ‘The nature of the clear light, even after the stream of thoughts has ceased and you have gone asleep, is a clear and empty phenomenon of the dream-state, which is like the center of limpid space, remaining nakedly, without an object.’ (*Ibid.*, p. 168).

This description of the clear-light nature of the mind sounds remarkably similar to the earlier account of the *bhavanga*, a primordially pure state of awareness that is said to shine in its own radiance and which is obscured only due to external stimuli. While the cultivation of meditative quiescence alone may withdraw one’s mind into this ground state of awareness, that does not ensure that one will actually *ascertain* the clear, empty, luminous nature of the mind. That is one of the goals of dream yoga, which is practised while sleeping, and it is also the goal of Dzogchen, or the ‘Great Perfection’, which is primarily practised while in the waking state.

Dzogchen

The theory and practice of Dzogchen is based upon and is perfectly compatible with the Madhyamaka view discussed earlier. Dzogchen is considered by many Tibetans as the pinnacle of Buddhist insight, and it challenges the view that the human mind exists as an entity independently of how we constitute it as an object of knowledge within a given conceptual framework. Cutting to the core of our very identity, Dzogchen practice probes into the deeply held assumption that there is such a thing as an inherently real, localized, ego-centred mind.

The classic strategy for investigating the ontological status of the mind according to this tradition is to examine firsthand the mode of origination, the location, and the mode of dissolution of mental events, including awareness itself.¹⁵ A primary challenge in this practice is to distinguish, by means of close mindfulness, between what is perceptually given and what is conceptually superimposed upon perceptual experience when examining the nature of these mental events. For example, most cognitive scientists believe that all mental events originate from the brain, and indeed they are in the process of discovering an ever-growing range of correlates for specific mental and neural processes. But there is also growing evidence to suggest that not only are mental events conditioned by brain events, some brain events are conditioned by mental events. The existence of close mind/brain correlations is uncontested, even in traditional Buddhist accounts. What is open to question is the exact nature of those correlations.

In this mode of contemplative inquiry, one focuses entirely on the *phenomena* of mental events, attending closely to the precise manner in which they arise in the field of one’s mental perception. This contemplative inquiry is guided by such questions as, ‘Do they arise all at once or gradually? Can their place of origin be identified? What is the nature of that out of which these mental events arise?’ In English, as in Sanskrit and Tibetan, it is often said that thoughts and emotions emerge from, or are produced by, the mind. One now seeks out the referent of ‘the mind’, from which mental events allegedly arise.

[15] Detailed, traditional presentations of this mode of investigation are found in the ‘Insight’ chapter in Padmasambhava (1998), and the ‘Insight’ chapter of the seventeenth-century classic by Karma Chagmé (1998).

In the second phase of this investigation one attends closely to the location of mental events. Once again one seeks to let *experience* answer this question, as opposed to one's preconceptions. For example, many neuroscientists claim that all mental events are located in the brain, and the basis for their assertion is, once again, the wide range of mind/brain correlates that they have ingeniously discovered. But the fact that two events, A and B, are temporally or causally correlated does not logically or empirically require that B is located in A, or that A is located in B. Thus, the close correlations between mental and neural events no more requires that the mental events are located in the neural events than it does that the neural events are located in the mental events. The temporal or causal correlation of the two certainly does not necessitate the conclusion that they are equivalent! Another recent scientific hypothesis is that mental processes are embodied in the sensorimotor activity of the organism and are embedded in the environment. In this contemplative practice one puts all such speculations to the experiential test by closely examining the location of mental events firsthand. This inquiry is led by questions such as, 'Are mental events located in the body? If so, in exactly which part of the body are they experienced as being present? If they are found to exist outside the body, where in the environment are they specifically located? Does the awareness of mental events have the same location as those objects of awareness?' Mental events are commonly said to exist 'in the mind', so in this practice one examines with great precision the nature of the perceptual space in which these events purportedly take place. It is worth noting that such contemplative inquiry is commonly practised while sitting motionless, so one's sensorimotor activity is held to a minimum. This has been found to facilitate attentional stability, but it certainly does not, by itself, decrease the amount of one's mental activity, which would be surprising if such activity were actually located in sensorimotor processes.

Finally, in this sequence of investigations, one examines how mental events disappear, whether gradually or suddenly, and one inspects that into which they disappear. Some Buddhist writings suggest that they disappear back into a subconscious realm of the mind, where they are stored as propensities, or latent impulses. In this practice one seeks to identify how and where mental events disappear into, once again seeking out the real referent of the word 'mind'.

The core of the Dzogchen practice of investigating the nature of the mind is stated succinctly by Padmasambhava, who took an instrumental role in introducing this practice in Tibet in the eighth century:

While steadily maintaining the gaze, place the awareness unwaveringly, steadily, clearly, nakedly and fixedly without having anything on which to meditate in the sphere of space. When stability increases, examine the consciousness that is stable. Then gently release and relax. Again place it steadily and steadfastly observe the consciousness of that moment. What is the nature of that mind? Let it steadfastly observe itself. Is it something clear and steady or is it an emptiness that is nothing? Is there something there to recognize? Look again and report your experience to me! (Padmasambhava, 1998, p. 116)

By means of such inquiry, generations of Buddhist contemplatives have come to the conclusion that the mind and awareness itself are not intrinsically identifiable. When sought out as inherently existing things or events, they are not to be found. This is equally true of all other perceptual and conceptual objects of awareness. The mind, like all other phenomena, is discovered to be empty, but it is not a mere vacuity. Rather, it is luminous, cognizant and empty, like boundless space, with no centre or

periphery, suffused with transparent light. Out of this luminous space of non-local awareness all phenomena arise in relation to the conceptual frameworks within which they are designated. But neither the objects of awareness nor awareness itself can be said to exist independently of their conceptual designations. Recognition of this fundamental nature of the world of experience yields a dream-like quality to life as a whole, in which all reified distinctions between subject and object, self and other, have vanished.

Once one has recognized the lack of inherent existence of the mind and all mental objects, one is ready to be introduced to the primordial nature of awareness that transcends all conceptual constructs, including the notions of existence and non-existence. This is the central theme of Dzogchen practice and is considered the deepest of all insights. Padmasambhava points out the fundamental nature of awareness as follows:

To introduce this by pointing it out directly, past consciousness has disappeared without a trace. Moreover, future realization is unarisen, and in the freshness of its own present, unfabricated way of being, there is the ordinary consciousness of the present. When it peers into itself, with this observation there is a vividness in which nothing is seen. This awareness is direct, naked, vivid, unestablished, empty, limpid luminosity, unique, non-dual clarity and emptiness. It is not permanent, but unestablished. It is not nihilistic, but radiantly vivid. It is not one, but is manifoldly aware and clear. It is not manifold, but is indivisibly of one taste. It is none other than this very self-awareness. This is an authentic introduction to the primordial nature of being. (Padmasambhava, 1998, p. 108)

In this intimate exchange between contemplative mentor and student, the mentor ideally speaks directly out of his or her immediate experience of pure awareness, and by receiving this introduction the student's own pure awareness is aroused and identified firsthand. Unlike conventional modes of cognition, here that which is apprehended and that which apprehends are identical. Such a mentor–student encounter is a paradigmatic 'I–thou' relationship, in which both realize a non-local reality that transcends the individuation of both subjects. But the realization of the primordial nature of awareness can also occur without engaging with another person. It does not arise from the interaction of two subjects, but rather transcends the distinctions among all subjects and objects.

In Dzogchen practice, close attention is paid to the spaces in which physical and mental phenomena appear to originate, abide and disappear. At the outset there seem to be two distinct kinds of space: external space, in which one experiences the environment, other people, and even one's own body, and internal space, in which one experiences one's own private mental processes, such as thoughts, emotions, mental imagery and dreams. According to Buddhist theory as a whole, all outer, public events and all inner, private events are equally 'natural', in the sense of arising in dependence upon prior causes and conditions. The notion that only matter and its properties are 'natural', while anything immaterial is 'unnatural' or 'supernatural' is utterly alien to the Buddhist understanding of the world. According to Buddhism, the natural world is filled with a myriad of phenomena, many of which are composed of atoms and their emergent properties, but also many of which are not. Contemporary examples of such immaterial phenomena would include not only consciousness and other mental events, but such phenomena as justice, information, numbers, geometrical forms, the mathematical laws of nature, space and time. Buddhism does not endorse materialism, but nor does it embrace Cartesian dualism. It is rather

pluralistic, recognizing that the natural world is far too rich to be categorized as being of only one or two types of substance.

On investigating the nature of external and internal space by means of Dzogchen practice, one discovers that these two spaces are also empty of any inherent nature. They are fabricated by conceptual imputations, and the boundary between them is unreal. This realization enables one to identify what is called the ‘mysterious space’, which is the nonduality of external and internal space. A central aim of Dzogchen practice is to maintain one’s recognition of this nondual space of pure awareness not only while in meditation but while actively engaging with the environment and other sentient beings. Dwelling in such a realization has been found to open up the reservoir of all-embracing, unconditional loving kindness and compassion that is innate to the true ground state of awareness. The distinction between wisdom and compassion has now vanished and there is no bondage anywhere in sight.

All the previous practices of meditative quiescence, the four applications of mindfulness, the four immeasurables and dream yoga are said to culminate in this one realization. Primordial awareness is the ground of all such practice. Its gradual realization is the essence of the entire sequence of practices, and its perfect actualization is the final fruition of the practice. The immensely rich world of diverse natural phenomena, all arising as dependently related events, is seen as the play of this non-local awareness, which is fully present in each individual. Thus, according to this contemplative tradition, to know oneself is to know others. To know oneself is to know the whole of reality as an expression of the nondual wisdom and compassion of the clear light of awareness.

References

- Buber, Martin (1937/1996), *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Touchstone).
- Buddhaghosa (1979), *The Path of Purification*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñanamoli (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society).
- Forman, Robert K.C. (ed. 1990), *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Garfield, Jay L. (trans. 1995), *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna’s Mulamadhyamakakarika* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Goleman, Daniel (ed. 1997), *Healing Emotions: Conversations with the Dalai Lama on Mindfulness, Emotions, and Health* (Boston: Shambhala).
- Harvey, Peter (1995), *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvana in Early Buddhism* (Surrey: Curzon Press).
- Heisenberg, Werner (1962), *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (New York: Harper and Row).
- Heisenberg, Werner (1971), *Physics and Beyond: Encounters and Conversations* (New York: Harper and Row).
- James, William (1890/1950), *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Dover Publications).
- James, William (1912/1977), ‘A world of pure experience’, in John J. McDermott (1977).
- Kalupahana, David J. (1987), *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).
- Karma Chagmé (1998), *A Spacious Path to Freedom: Practical Instructions on the Union of Mahamudra and Atiyoga*, comm. Gyatrul Rinpoche, trans. B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca: Snow Lion).
- LaBerge, Stephen and Rheingold, Howard (1990), *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine).
- McDermott, John J. (ed. 1977), *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Mullin, Glenn H. (trans. 1996), *Tsongkhapa’s Six Yogas of Naropa* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion).

- Nyanaponika Thera (1973), *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (New York: Samuel Weiser).
- Padmasambhava (1998), *Natural Liberation: Padmasambhava's Teachings on the Six Bardos*, comm. Gyatrul Rinpoche, trans. B. Alan Wallace (Boston, MA: Wisdom).
- Putnam, Hilary (1990), *Realism with a Human Face*, ed. James Conant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Putnam, Hilary (1991), 'Replies and comments', *Erkenntnis*, **34** (3).
- Shantideva (1997), *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, trans. Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion).
- Vajirañāna, Paravahera (1975), *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society).
- Wallace, B. Alan (1998), *The Bridge of Quiescence: Experiencing Tibetan Buddhist Meditation* (Chicago, IL: Open Court).
- Wallace, B. Alan (1999a), 'The Buddhist tradition of *Samatha*: methods for refining and examining consciousness', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, **6** (2–3), pp. 175–87.
- Wallace, B. Alan (1999b), *Boundless Heart: The Four Immeasurables* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion).
- Wallace, B. Alan (2000), *The Taboo of Subjectivity: Toward a New Science of Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Wallace, B. Alan (2001), *Buddhism with an Attitude: The Tibetan Seven-Point Mind-Training* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion).
- Woods, James Haughton (1983), *The Yoga System of Patañjali* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint).