



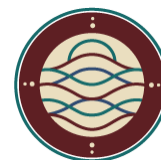
CCR Ghatika Monthly



How to Observe the Meditating Mind: Micro-Phenomenology in our Daily Practice

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13 September 2025



center for
contemplative
research

Overview



Objectives of the session



Introduction to Settling the Mind in its Natural State



Guided Meditation of Settling the Mind



Micro-Phenomenology as a First-Person Research Method



Micro-Phenomenological Inquiry into Experience of Meditation



Sharing & Exploring



Settling the Mind in its Natural State

(Aka "shamatha focused on the mind"; "taking the mind as the path";
"taking appearances and awareness as the path")

"Whatever kinds of mental imagery occur, be they gentle or violent, subtle or coarse, of long or short duration, strong or weak, good or bad – observe their nature. And avoid any obsessive evaluation of them as being one thing and not another."

"Whenever you meditate, bear in mind the phrase "without distraction and without grasping"

Lerab Lingpa

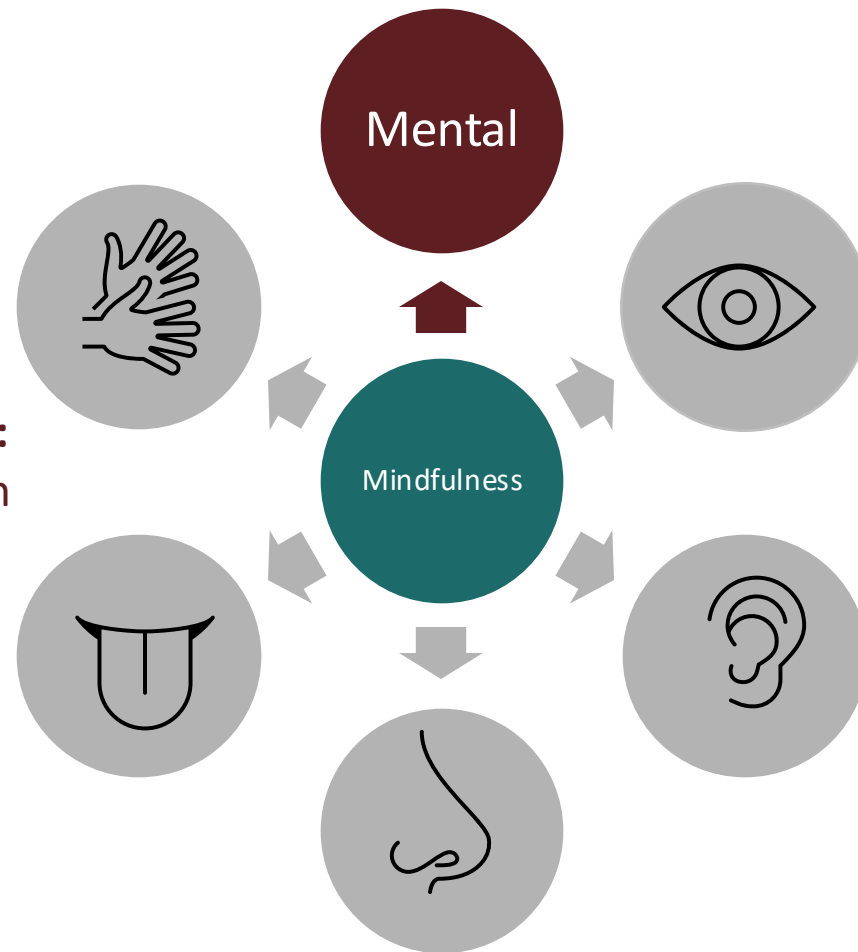
(B. Alan Wallace, *Open Mind*)



Shamatha is Selective

Object of mindfulness:
space of the mind and
whatever arises within
it

Object of introspection:
quality of attention with
which we're observing
the mind



Cinema of the Mind



Appearances arising as Objects



Discursive
thoughts



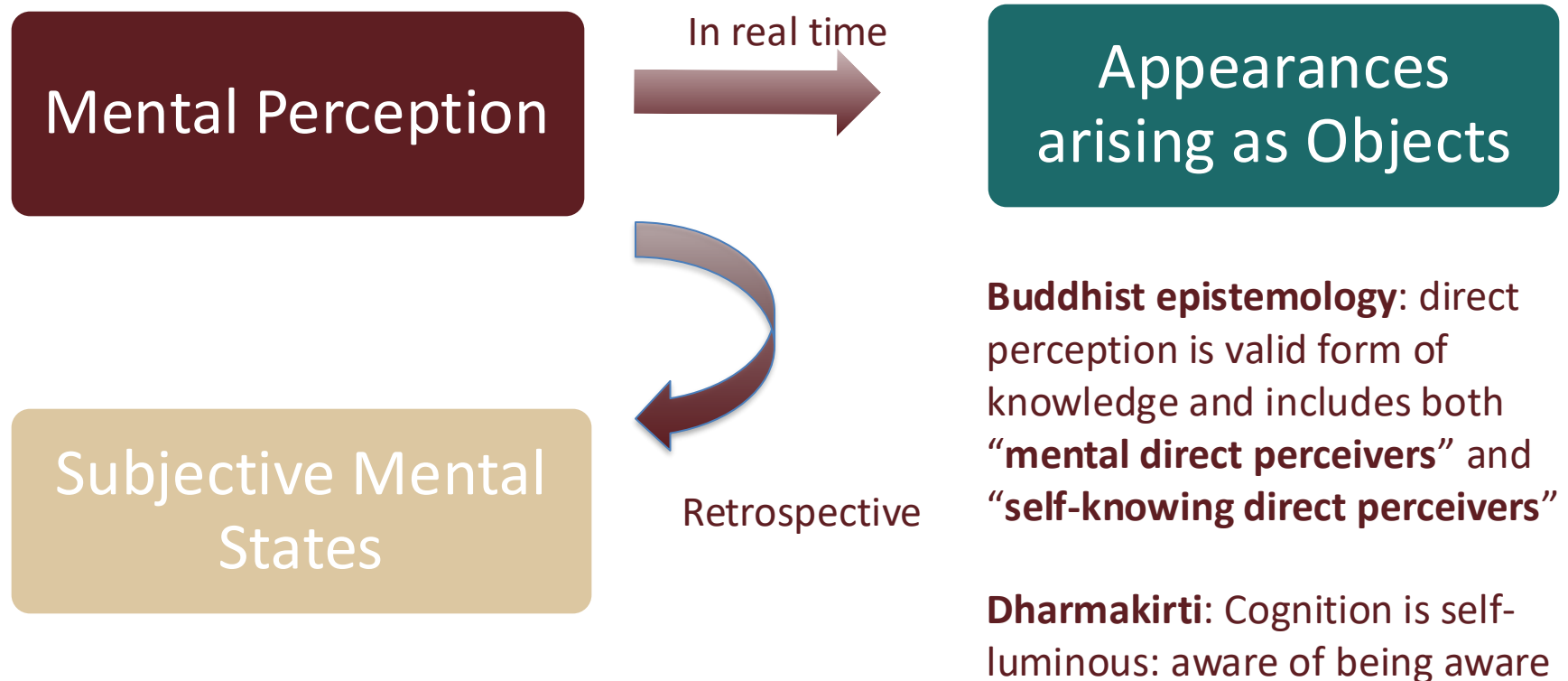
Memories



Mental images

Subjective mental processes:
feelings, emotions, desires,
intentions

Observing Mental Events with Mental Perception



Guided Meditation



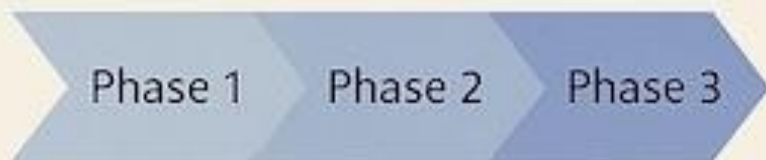
What is Micro-Phenomenology?

- interview method (adapted to research in cognitive sciences by Claire Petitmengin) for exploring the structure of lived experience
- Varela: To understand the mind, research cannot be based only on “objective” data, but requires a rigorous method for studying human experience.
- Two types of structure: its temporal unfolding (**diachronic**) and its multi-dimensionality at one point in time (**synchronic**)
- Premise: a large part of experience remains unrecognised, “**pre-reflective**” as attention is absorbed into the content (“the **what**”) at the expense of the mode of experience (“the **how**”)
- Participants treated as **co-researcher**, expert on own experience
- **Parallel to meditation** of observing the mind versus being absorbed in it

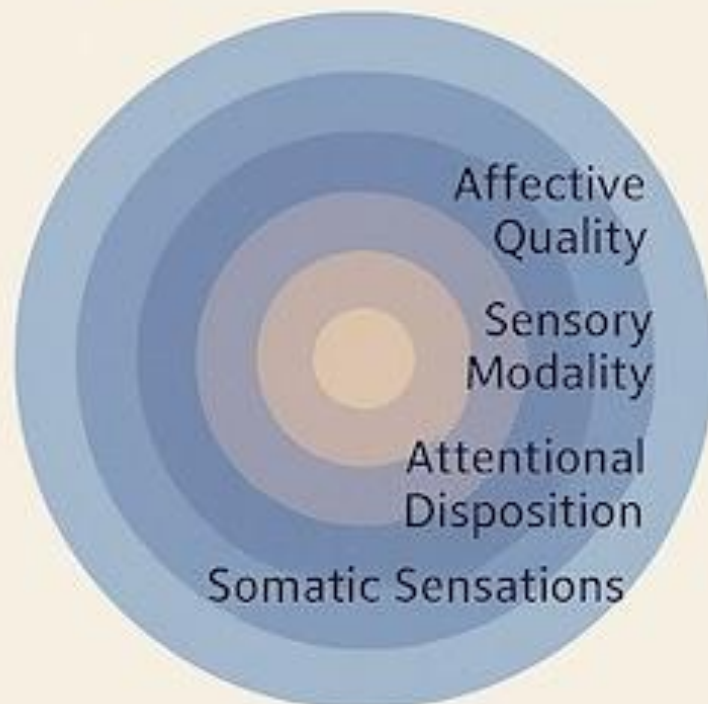


Micro-Phenomenological Analysis

Diachronic structure



Synchronic structure



- Method for analysing descriptions of subjective experiences in order to identify possible generic structures (invariants)
- Method for assessing the reliability of descriptions



Guided Meditation



How can MP Support our Practice?

- Deepen retrospective mindfulness & introspection
- Recognise the phases leading up to attentional imbalances of excitation/laxity
- Understand how to restore mental balance through awareness of micro gestures performed to overcome cognitive fusion, identification
- Guard against cognitive hyperactivity by keeping our reflections nonconceptual and close to direct experience
- Help us share our meditative experience with precision with spiritual mentors; (can also support mentors)
- Support non-identification with meditative experiences





Sharing & Exploring

- ❖ What insights did you gain from the micro-phenomenological exploration of your experience?
- ❖ Did you become aware of any aspects of your experience that had been pre-reflective?
- ❖ How might this kind of inquiry inform your meditation practice?



References

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