ELI FRANCO

Introduction[1]

The present volume has its origin in a research project funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) from 2002 to 2004 (Project Nr. P14861) on the concept of para- and supra-normal perception in the Buddhist epistemological tradition. The project was conceived as part of the vast project "The epistemological-logical tradition in India and Tibet," initiated by Ernst Steinkellner and directed by him for more than twenty years. The topic of para- and supra-normal perception, or extrasensory perception, constitutes a hitherto neglected theme in the study of Buddhist philosophy of religion, despite its considerable importance inasmuch as it concerns the very basis and foundation of the Buddhist religious tradition, namely, the core insights of the historical Buddha.[2] In the classical period of Buddhist philosophy, these insights were classified and interpreted by the Buddhist tradition as examples of yogic perception. It is this notion of yogic perception, its theoretical conceptions and presuppositions, the arguments for and against it, its cultural and religious varieties, and its epistemological implications that form the central topic of the ongoing project and, to a large extent, of this volume.

[1] I would like to thank Prof. Dagmar Eigner for co-organizing the conference that was the starting point for this volume, especially for helping shape its interdisciplinary character, as seen in the chapters on psychology and shamanism in this volume's second half. I am also indebted to Anne MacDonald and Philipp Maas, who kindly read the introduction and made pertinent and very helpful remarks.

[2] This statement is not meant to express a position in the ongoing debate about the historicity of the Buddha and information about him found in the Buddhist texts. Paradoxical as it may sound, the more we know about the Buddhist canons, the less we know about the Buddha as a historical person. Rather the statement concerns the way the Buddha was (and still is) perceived by the Buddhist tradition and how the Buddhist tradition argued for the reliability of the teachings that are attributed to the Buddha.

The belief in meditation[3] as a source for extrasensory perception seems to have always been present in South Asian civilization. Some scholars trace the ideals of asceticism and the practice of yoga all the way back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Needless to say, in view of the absence of probative evidence, this must remain a matter of opinion and speculation.[4] However, clear references to meditation can already be found in the late Vedic literature, for instance, in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, which states that the Self, or soul, cannot be apprehended by ordinary sensory means. Muṇḍaka 3.1.8 declares that the Self can be perceived neither by means of the eye (or better, by the faculty of sight), nor by speech, nor by other sense faculties (*deva*), nor by austerities (*tapas*), nor by ritual action (*karman*). Rather, the partless Self is seen by the meditating man[5] when he (or his mind) has become pure through the lucidity of his knowledge.[6]

While in the initial historical stages the practice of meditation may have developed within the context of ritual and world-affirming values, it increasingly came to be associated with the *śramaṇa* milieu. The word *śramaṇa* is derived from the root *śram*, meaning "to strive, to make an effort," or more specifically "to perform austerities." Accordingly, the word *śramaṇa* refers to an ascetic or religious mendicant in general. The expression "*śramaṇa* milieu" or "*śramaṇa* movement"

---

[3] The term "meditation" is used in a wide variety of ways. I follow David Fontana, who suggests that the common features among the various forms and traditions of meditation may be reduced to three: concentration, tranquility and insight; see David Fontana, "Meditation." In: Max Velmans and Susan Schneider (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*. Oxford 2007: 154-162, at p. 154. Antoine Lutz et al., however, explicitly reject any attempt to define meditation in general as involving unverifiable hypotheses and trivializing diverse practices; see Antoine Lutz et al., "Meditation and the Neuroscience of Consciousness: an Introduction." In: Philip David Zelazo et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness*. Cambridge 2007: 499-551, on p. 500.

[4] It is notable that unlike the case of the practice of austerities (*tapas* and similar terms) there are no clear correspondences to yoga and meditative practice in other ancient Indo-European cultures. However, even if the practice of yoga and meditation are genuine South Asian developments, it is not necessarily the case that they are related to the Indus Valley Civilization.

[5] The masculine form is used here; it is clear that the Upaniṣadic authors were not thinking, as a rule, of women gaining access to this privileged knowledge.

[6] See Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*. New York 1998: 450: *na cakṣuṣā gṛhyate, nāpi vācā, nānyair devais tapasā karmaṇā vā / jñānaprasādena viśuddhasattvaṃ tatas tu taṃ paśyate niṣkalaṃ dhyāyamānaḥ //.*

refers to ascetics living, mostly celibately, on the fringes of or completely outside society, some of them loosely associated in small groups, others more tightly organized into religious orders. Many religious movements emerged from the *śramaṇa* milieu, not the least Buddhism and Jainism, as well as innumerable religio-philosophical movements and sects that did not survive to the present day or did not assume a dominant role.

The *śramaṇa* milieu had a profound influence on South Asian civilization as a whole, spreading its characteristic values of world negation, world renunciation and liberation from rebirth far beyond the ascetic circles and into the mainstream of society, especially its brahmanic elite. The most typical and fundamental concepts of Indian religious philosophy originated in this ascetic milieu or were propagated by it: the view that the world is governed by a process of rebirth (*saṃsāra*) and is fundamentally frustrating and painful; the tenet that moral actions (*karman*) determine the form of rebirth; the idea that escape or liberation (*nirvāṇa, mokṣa* and similar expressions) from rebirth is the ultimate ideal and highest good for living beings; the tenet that liberation is attainable by cognitive means, namely, by means of a special insight; the belief that such insight is only possible when one renounces all worldly ties (wealth or material possessions, family, etc.); the practice of "non-violence" (*ahiṃsā*) and various forms of austerities (*tapas*) as the means for gaining control over the sense faculties and desires (*kāma* and similar expressions), to mention the most conspicuous notions. Of course, these tenets and ideals are blended in various manners. Buddhism, for instance, emphasizes the elimination of desires at the expense of the obliteration of karma.[7] In Jainism it is the other way around.[8] With the notable exceptions of Mīmāṃsā orthodoxy[9] and materialistic-skeptic heterodoxy,[10] Indian religious philosophy has been writ-

[7] Note that karma is not mentioned in the four noble truths of Buddhism; it is also not included in the twelve members of dependent origination, although later Buddhist interpreters claim that it is included in *saṃskāra* ("volitional impulses").

[8] Next to these two dominating models of liberation, namely through the eradication of desires or of karma, one can add for the later period, with its spread of theistic movements, the notion of liberation through devotion to God and by divine grace. On yogic perception in the Vaiṣṇava tradition, see the papers by Marcus Schmücker and Marion Rastelli in this volume.

[9] See the contributions by Lawrence McCrea and John Taber in this volume.

[10] See Eli Franco, *Perception, Knowledge and Disbelief*. Repr. Delhi 1994.

ten for the most part from the point of view of the renouncer or in acceptance of the values of the renouncer, even though the authors of philosophical works themselves were not always renouncers. Religio-philosophical works, such as the *Bhagavadgītā*, that repudiate renunciation and propagate the life of action within society are the exception rather than the rule.

What is common to most of the ascetic movements is the belief that liberation can be attained through knowledge, through a fundamental extrasensory insight into the ultimate nature of reality, which is sometimes even equated with omniscience (*sarvajñatva*).[11] Theoretically one can discern two models regarding the attainment of this insight. Either the capacity for such extrasensory perception is innate to the soul or the mind, and can be automatically attained by removal of the obstacles (impurities, karma) that prevent the soul or the mind from exercising its innate cognitive capacity, or this capacity for the liberating insight, or even omniscience, is not inherent in the soul or mind, but can be attained by means of spiritual cultivation and refinement. In general, the former model seems to be predominant in South Asian religions. A typical example is the Jaina theory that knowledge or cognition (*jñāna*) is the innate nature (*svabhāva*) of the soul and that the soul will, under the proper conditions, cognize everything that is knowable (*sarvaṃ jñeyam*).[12] As Jaini puts it, "[t]he amount of *karma* destroyed correlates directly with the gain in purity of the soul and increase in the range of knowledge. Therefore, a total destruction of the forces of *karma*, together with the causes of their accumulation, must inevitably result in perfect purity, which would automatically usher in the state of

[11] The logical outcome of this belief is that the ultimate cause of bondage to this world is ignorance or error. This is especially emphasized in Sāṃkhya–Yoga, Vedānta and Buddhism.

[12] Everything that is knowable means the infinite number of souls (*jīva*), the infinitely infinite (*anantānanta*) amount of matter (*pudgala*), the principle of motion (*dharma*) and rest (*adharma*), space (*ākāśa*), time (*kāla*) and the infinite number of transformations (*paryāya*) through which they all pass. See Padmanabh Jaini, "On *Sarvajñatva* (Omniscience) of Mahāvīra and the Buddha." In: *Collected Papers on Buddhist Studies*. Ed. Padmanabh Jaini. Repr. Delhi 2001: 97-123, on p. 101.

'omniscience.'"[13] Consequently, according to the Jainas every liberated soul is omniscient.[14]

A similar belief can be encountered in Canonical Buddhism. Here we find the simile of gold ore and the mind. Gold ore is defiled with iron, copper, tin, lead, and silver, but when it is purified it shines with its natural luster. Similarly, "when the mind is emancipated from the five defilements, it becomes supple, pliant, lustrous, firm, and becomes rightly concentrated for the destruction of the defiling impulses."[15] Another simile compares cognition to a pure crystal which takes on the color of an object touching it; in the same manner cognition is defiled by desire, etc. Thus, the defilements are considered to be only adventitious to cognition, while its true nature is luminous.

However, this view was rejected by some of the major schools of Conservative Buddhism, notably the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda.[16] According to them, cognition is not naturally or originally pure, for it is defiled by passion and karma. If an originally pure and luminous cognition could be tainted by adventitious defilements, one might also assume that defilements could become pure by the association with pure cognition. Thus, in Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda it is assumed that when the connection with desires has been severed, an impure cognition ceases and gives rise to a new cognition that is free from obstacles.[17]

Even if the mind is not luminous and pure by nature, it nevertheless has been considered to have a latent capacity for paranormal perception. This capacity is cultivated in a negative way, not directly by increasing the faculty of perceiving, but by eliminating the obstacles to

---

[13] See Jaini, *ibid.*, p. 102.

[14] Buddhists, on the other hand, often distinguished between the perfect enlightenment of the Buddha, which was also equated with omniscience, and the lesser enlightenment of the Arhat, the disciple who differs from the Buddha inasmuch as he/she can reach enlightenment only with the help of the Buddha or the Buddha's teachings. Of course, this lesser enlightenment also consists in an extrasensory perception.

[15] Aṅguttara Nikāya III 16-17, quoted in K.N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*. London 1963: 423.

[16] See Étienne Lamotte, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti : Vimalakīrtinirdeśa.* Louvain 1962: 53; André Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du petit véhicule*. Paris 1955: 67-68, no. 44.

[17] See Louis de la Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*. Paris/Louvain 1923-1931. Vol. 6: 288.

paranormal perception.[18] The five obstacles (*pañca-nivaraṇa*) are covetousness (*abhijjhā*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*). A mind that has become free from these obstacles develops further by means of practice of tranquility (*śamatha-bhāvanā*) and concentration.

The attainment of extrasensory perception is usually associated with *dhyāna* (Pali: *jhāna*) meditation.[19] While dwelling in the state of the fourth *dhyāna* one attains what is usually termed *abhiññā* (Sanskrit: *abhijñā*), an early and common Pali term that is the closest equivalent to "extrasensory perception." *Abhiññā* is usually said to have six components:[20] (1) the knowledge of magical powers (such as making the earth shake, multiplying oneself, passing through walls, flying, diving into the earth as if it were water, walking on water, touching the sun and the moon with one's hand, etc.), (2) clairaudience ("divine sense of hearing"), (3) telepathy or the knowledge of other minds, (4) recollection of previous lives, (5) clairvoyance ("divine sense of sight"), and (6) knowledge of the destruction of the defilements.[21]

These six capacities have close equivalents in the Pātañjala Yoga tradition.[22] A substantial number of aphorisms in the *Yogasūtra*

---

[18] An analogy to this type of indirect approach may be found in the Buddhist path; in this context it is not required that one knows what the Self is, but rather that the empirical constituents of a person are not the Self.

[19] For a brief description, see my contribution to this volume.

[20] For a classical study on this topic, based mainly on the Pali canon, see Sigurd Lindquist, *Siddhi und Abhiññā. Eine Studie über die klassischen Wunder des Yoga*. Uppsala 1935. For a useful general survey, see Étienne Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*) *avec une étude sur la Vacuité*. Vol. IV. Louvain 1976: 1813-1817. See also the first section of Anne MacDonald's paper in this volume.

[21] To these six, Jayatilleke (*ibid*. 439-441) adds another four: another type of telepathic knowledge and the threefold knowledge (*tisso vijjā*) attained in enlightenment. The historical relation between the *abhiññās* and the threefold knowledge is not entirely clear. It seems that the latter are included in or elaborated into the former. However, the first five *abhiññās* are considered to be mundane, that is, attainable also by non-Buddhist yogis.

[22] I distinguish here between yoga and Yoga: yoga is a technique of gaining control over the body, senses and mind in order to attain a liberating insight. It is a technique or a method and as such is not connected to any philosophy or religion in particular; thus we have Buddhist yoga, Jaina yoga, Vedānta yoga, and so on; Yoga (capitalized), on the other hand, is used here as the name of a particular philosophi-

(hereafter YS) deal with the supranormal attainments or perfections (*siddhi*) of the yogi who has reached an advanced state of meditation. Among these attainments—which have been a cause of great embarrassment to Yoga scholars and practitioners alike[23]—one also finds special forms of knowledge, such as the recollection of past lives, by concentrating on traces left by past experience in these lives (YS 3.18), knowledge of other minds (YS 3.19), knowledge of the time of one's own death and that of others (YS 3.22), knowledge of subtle and concealed objects (YS 3.25), knowledge of remote cosmic regions, such as the world of Brahma and Prajāpati, by meditating on the sun, and knowledge of the arrangement and movement of the stars by meditating on the moon and the pole star, respectively (YS 3.26-27), knowledge of one's body by concentrating on the navel (YS 3.29), as well as supernatural sight, hearing, smelling, etc. (YS 3.36). However, yogis do not only attain such extraordinary forms of knowledge, but also miraculous powers such as the ability to become invisible (YS 3.21) or strong like an elephant (YS 3.24), to fly through the air (YS 3.42), to become as small as an atom, to levitate, to become as large as a mountain or a city, to stretch one's body to the point of being able to touch the moon with one's finger tips, to dive into the earth as if it were water, to control material things by causing them to be produced and destroyed, or by rearranging their parts, and to fulfill one's wishes (YS 3.45 and commentaries thereon).

The similarity between the *siddhis* of Yoga and the *iddhis* and *abhiññās* of Conservative Buddhism is not the only point of resem-

---

cal tradition, closely affiliated with Sāṃkhya, whose foundational text is the Yogasūtra of Patañjali; thus one also refers to it as Pātañjala Yoga. On this tradition, though not specifically on the *siddhis*, see Philipp Maas' contribution to this volume.

[23] On the embarrassed reactions to the descriptions of the *siddhis* by modern scholars, see Yohanan Grinshpon, *Silence Unheard: Deathly Otherness in Pātañjala-yoga.* Albany 2002: 32-35. It is indeed surprising how often the *siddhis* are only cursorily mentioned and neither enumerated nor described (not even by Grinshpon himself or by Mircea Eliade in his voluminous *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*); for an exception, see Alain Danielou, *Yoga. The Method of Re-Integration*. Repr. London 1973: 149-157. Danielou lists and describes forty-six attainments: eight physical attainments, thirty subsidiary attainments and eight spiritual attainments. Critical and skeptical responses to claims of yogic attainments, especially to claims of extraordinary knowledge, were also voiced from within the South Asian tradition. The two contributions by McCrea and Taber in this volume reproduce these voices well.

blance between the two traditions. It is probably not generally well known to what extent Buddhist scholasticism, especially of the Sarvāstivāda School, had a decisive influence on the author(s) of the *Yogasūtra*. A long list of similarities between the *sūtras* and various Buddhist doctrines was compiled by Louis de La Vallée Poussin.[24] It suffices to mention a few of them: the four types of concentration (*samādhi*), which correspond to the four levels of *dhyāna* (see YS 1.17); the definition of God (*īśvara*) in YS 1.25 as the one in which the seed of omniscience reaches the highest degree (*niratiśayaṃ sarvajñabījam*), a definition that can only be understood in light of Buddhist Mahāyāna teachings (of Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha); the four *brahmavihāras* in YS 1.33; the threefold division of knowledge/wisdom (*prajñā*) into knowledge that "holds the truth" in contradistinction to knowledge which arises from study (*śruta*) or reasoning (*anumāna*) in YS 1.48-49; the interpretation of the doctrine of karma (YS 2.12-13, 31, 34, 4.7); the division of suffering into three kinds in YS 2.15 (*pariṇāma-tāpa-saṃskāra-duḥkha*), which is clearly of Buddhist origin; the theory of the existence of three times (past, present and future) in YS 3.13 and 4.12, which is a reflection of the corresponding Sarvāstivāda theory; the doctrine of knowledge of other minds (*paracittajñāna*) as knowing only whether the cognition of another person is good or bad, but without knowing the object of the cognition (YS 3.20-21); the four perfections of the body (*kāyasampad* YS 3.46); and, of course, the five types of *siddhi* (YS 4.1), which are either innate, produced by the use of herbs, by uttering magical syllables (*mantra*), from the practice of austerities (*tapas*), or through the practice of meditation/concentration (*samādhi*).

Such claims of extraordinary knowledge and supernatural bodily capacities were presumably not made, at least for the most part, by the persons to whom they are attributed, the Buddha,[25] the Jina or other

---

[24] See Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "Le Bouddhisme et le Yoga de Patañjali." *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 5 (1936–1937): 223-242. The direction of the influence is not always clear, but for the most part one can assume a Buddhist influence on Yoga; Maas dates the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra, which includes the *sūtras* as well as the earliest commentary, to a time span reaching from 325 to 425 CE (see p. 268 below), a period in which Buddhism was philosophically dominant in South Asia. Individual *sūtras*, however, may be of considerably earlier date.

[25] In canonical Buddhism the stance towards omniscience is ambiguous. The Buddha is reported to have said that actual omniscience, that is, knowing all things at once, is impossible; thus other religions, notably Jainism, are criticized on this account.

accomplished yogis, but by their pious followers.[26] They are primarily due, I assume, to the natural propensity to aggrandize one's teachers, and even more so, the mythical founder of one's tradition. Yet the crucial question remains: Is meditation a suitable means for gaining knowledge, especially knowledge that is not attainable otherwise? Some are of the opinion that in India all philosophical theories arose directly or indirectly from meditative experiences. Sweeping formulations such as "In India philosophy is the rational interpretation of mystical experience" (Constantin Regamey) are plainly absurd, but even more careful formulations are highly problematic, as I argue in my paper in the present volume. One has to distinguish here between theory and practice: In theory, the Buddha, the Jina and many others, although certainly not all founders of traditions,[27] gained their deep insights into the nature of reality while absorbed in meditation, but in practice we see that also in India metaphysical theories were conceived and developed—is this really surprising?—by philosophers philosophizing. The same is true in the case of the Tibetan tradition. As Dorji Wangchuk points out in his paper in this volume, new philosophical theories in Tibet were mainly created in an attempt to resolve contradictions and inconsistencies found in the heterogeneous Buddhist scriptures.

For the traditional practicing yogis, such as the followers of the Buddha and the Jina, the question of gaining new knowledge through meditation usually does not arise, at least not theoretically. For them there is nothing new to discover in the course of their meditation; the objective of meditation is to gain deeper understanding of the truths handed down by the tradition. The threefold sequence of study, reflection and meditation that is prescribed for Buddhist practitioners, briefly described by Vincent Eltschinger in this volume, means that one studies

---

However, potential omniscience, i.e., that there is no part of reality that one cannot grasp, is admitted. See Jayatilleke [as in n. 15]: 203-204. After the second century CE, omniscience came to be regarded as an essential property of being a Buddha. On the various terms used to designate the omniscience of the Buddha with special reference to the Yogācāra tradition, see Paul Griffiths, Omniscience in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra and its Commentaries. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 33 (1990): 85-120, especially pp. 88-89.

[26] Grinshpon, *ibid.*: 60, however, suggests that the doctrine of *siddhis* may be based on near-death experiences.

[27] Notable exceptions are traditions like the Sāṃkhya, Yoga or Nyāya, which attribute their beginnings to the original visions of certain Rishis.

the teachings of the Buddha, reflects on them with rational means, and then meditates on these same teachings. Similar procedures are well known in the Hindu traditions and are closely associated with Yoga and Vedānta. Although it is assumed that the knowledge attained in meditation is deeper and more certain than the knowledge attained by rational means, it is not really a different knowledge. Moreover, the teachings provide the structure and/or the basis for the interpretation of experiences in meditation. Accordingly, there is not much room for "new" experiences. Indeed, it would have been presumptuous for a traditional yogi to claim that s/he had attained new knowledge. And in addition, if a yogi would have claimed that he had discovered something new that is at odds with what was discovered by the founder of his tradition (the Buddha, etc.), he would have risked being ostracized as a heretic by his community.[28]

In other words, the traditional view about the results of meditation can be summarized with the phrase: You should not get out what you did not put in. What one gets out should conform, at least in its broad outlines, to previously established teachings. And this conception is hardly surprising in the context of a traditional society that believes that perfect knowledge was already attained in the past and may only have diminished in the present.

The perspective changes, of course, when one considers the great founders of traditions like Buddhism. By definition, a Buddha is someone who reaches enlightenment by himself; unlike the later Buddhist disciples, a Buddha does not have another Buddha to guide him. In his case, meditation must impart new knowledge, be it only newly discovered long forgotten knowledge.[29] Consequently, the Buddha's claim to knowledge cannot be grounded in any tradition. Therefore, the question arises: Can the original insights of the meditating Buddha be verified by independent means? We may be caught here in the Mīmāṃsā dilemma, ably represented by McCrea and Taber in their contributions below: If these insights cannot be verified, why should they be ac-

[28] Accordingly, when defining yogic perception, the Buddhist philosophers limit the scope of such perception to the teachings of the Buddha; on this point, see my paper below p. 122.

[29] According to the Buddhist tradition, there were an infinite number of Buddhas in the past, each discovering the Buddhist teachings anew. Similar notions are found in the Hindu tradition, for knowledge disappears partly or completely during cosmic dissolution and has to be regained after each new creation.

cepted? If they can be verified, we do not need them; whatever they tell us can be known from other sources.

From a modern perspective, most of us, I assume, would adopt the position of the Mīmāṃsakas: Theories about the world gained from meditative practice are either uncertain or superfluous. For most of us, the external world is whatever the natural sciences say it is.[30] And if a theory realized in the course of meditation happens to agree with what they say, this is interesting and all the better, and if it does not, all the worse—for the theory, not for the natural sciences.

Incredulity towards the veracity of meditative visions was also felt within the Buddhist tradition. To repeat an example given by Wangchuk in his contribution, how is one to make sense of statements that in just a single atom there exist Buddha fields corresponding in number to the total number of atoms in the universe? The most elaborate attempt to establish the validity of the teaching of the Buddha was undertaken by the Buddhist philosopher Dharmakīrti (ca. 600-660?) and his followers. According to them, the teachings of the Buddha can be divided into a main part and secondary parts; the main part, which is identified as the four noble truths and the doctrine of Non-Self (*anātman*), is independently verifiable, in principle by anybody, by means of perception and inference.[31] Visions of the Buddha fields and other miracles[32] would presumably have to be relegated to the secondary and non-essential parts of the Buddha's teachings, be interpreted as only didactically useful, or not be accepted at all as being a genuine part of the teaching. The fact that certain teachings are secondary does not imply that they are false, but only that they need not be independently established and defended against external criticism. Dharmakīrti did believe in the possibility of extrasensory perception, but such perception, he

---

[30] Or, in fact, after Popper and Kuhn not even that; physical theories are no longer considered to be "true," but only "approximations" (that lead periodically to paradigmatic changes) to a reality, which can never be known.

[31] There are an increasing number of studies on this topic; for a relatively recent discussion, see John Dunne, *Foundation of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy*. Somerville 2004: 223-252.

[32] On the complex and ambivalent stance towards miracles in Buddhism, see Phyllis Granoff, "The Ambiguity of Miracles. Buddhist Understandings of Supernatural Power." *East and West* 46 (1996): 79-96. For a remarkable study of miracles employed by the Buddha to convert various beings, which combines Buddhist philology with art history, see Monika Zin, *Mitleid und Wunderkraft*. Wiesbaden 2006.

thought, could only be utilized towards relatively minor aims such as the neutralization of the poison of snakes, not towards soteriological aims.[33] Although Dharmakīrti was arguably the most important Buddhist philosopher of South Asia, it is hard to say whether this opinion was widely accepted in Buddhist circles. It was obviously formulated in a period when Buddhism was under pressure from powerful philosophical criticism and suffering from dwindling political support.

Due to the encounter of Tibetan Buddhism with Western civilization in the second half of the 20th century, this Buddhist tradition seems to be slowly undergoing the process of coming to terms with natural sciences that the Catholic Church has been going through during the last centuries.[34] Certain statements of the Dalai Lama, at least when addressing a Western audience,[35] indicate remarkable openness and readiness to accept the world view of modern physics[36] at the expense of Buddhist cosmology.[37] Similar processes are occurring in Theravāda

---

[33] See Eltschinger, *Dharmakīrti sur les mantra et la perception du supra-sensible*. Vienna 2001: 109-114.

[34] That this process is far from being completed is clear from recent debates on intelligent design.

[35] See Thupten Jinpa, Science as an Ally or a Rival Philosophy? Tibetan Buddhist Thinkers' Engagement with Modern Science. In: B. Allan Wallace (ed.), *Buddhism and Science*. New York 2003: 71-85, p. 79: "Unfortunately, so far no written work in Tibetan from the Dalai Lama has been published that articulates his views on the potential areas of engagement between Buddhist thought and science."

[36] One of the main purposes of the "Mind and Life" conferences is to provide a "high-level tutorial for the Dalai Lama" in quantum mechanics. We are told, for instance, that (http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/news/3186) the "Dalai Lama did not have a problem with photons having both particle and wave-like properties, but was reluctant to accept that individual quantum events are random. For example, he refused to accept that we cannot know which path a photon takes in a two-path quantum interference experiment." It is also remarkable that the Dalai Lama is now reportedly supporting the study of physics being part of the instruction at all Buddhist monasteries. See also Arthur Zajonc (ed.), *The New Physics and Cosmology. Dialogues with the Dalai Lama.* Oxford 2004.

[37] See http://www.dalailama.com/page.163.htm: "I [viz., the Dalai Lama] have often remarked to my Buddhist colleagues that the empirically verified insights of modern cosmology and astronomy must compel us now to modify, or in some cases reject, many aspects of traditional cosmology as found in ancient Buddhist texts." Furthermore (*ibid*): "[I]n the Buddhist investigation of reality, at least in principle, empirical evidence should triumph over scriptural authority, no matter how deeply venerated a scripture may be." See also The Dalai Lama, *The Way to Freedom*. San Francisco 1994: 73, quoted in Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-La*. Chicago

Buddhism and in Japanese Buddhism, though in a less conspicuous manner, for other Buddhist traditions lack a central authoritative figure like the Dalai Lama. It is not difficult to notice that Buddhism (especially, but not only Tibetan Buddhism) is repositioning itself as a rational and empirical cognitive science, a science of the mind based on introspection and meditation, supplemented by altruistic ethics. Cosmology, if mentioned at all, is relegated to the background, and just as in Dharmakīrti's argument, presented as unessential. Typical for this trend is Matthieu Ricard, who has become one of the most prominent figures representing Tibetan Buddhism in intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogues. According to Ricard, Buddhism is different from all other religions because it does not require an act of faith, and it could better be designated a science of the mind than a religion.[38]

A most extreme, almost belligerent form of this discourse, peculiar and displaying a surprising ignorance of the Buddhist tradition,

---

1999: 186: "The purpose of the Buddha coming to this world was not to measure the circumference of the world and the distance between the earth and the moon, but rather to teach the Dharma, to liberate sentient beings, to relieve sentient beings of their sufferings." Dharmakīrti's statement (*Pramāṇavārttika* 2.33) that the Buddha's absolute knowledge of the number of insects on the earth is of no use to us has not lost its relevance.

[38] See Wolf Singer, Matthieu Ricard, and Susanne Wasmuth, *Hirnforschung und Meditation. Ein Dialog*. Frankfurt am Main 2008:10: "[Buddhismus] … erfordert keine Glaubensakte. Man könnte den Buddhismus vielmehr als eine Wissenschaft des Geistes und einen Weg zur Transformation bezeichnen." The rational and empirical image of Buddhism is clearly belied by studies of traditional Buddhist societies; for just one example among many, see B.J. Terwiel, *Monks and Magic*. Bangkok 1994.

For a recent insightful and informative study (with an incongruously Maimonidian subtitle) of the relationship between Buddhism and Western science in the last hundred and fifty years, see Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Buddhism and Science. A Guide for the Perplexed*. Chicago/London 2008. Lopez notes that in order to spread across Asia, Buddhism assimilated the Vedic gods, the Tibetan "protectors of the snowy peaks," and the Japanese *kami*; he then raises the question: "In order for Buddhism to establish itself in Europe and America, must the God of the West, the God of Science, also find its place in the Buddhist pantheon?" I believe that this is unlikely. Despite the political correctness and mutual respect that accompany the numerous attempts at rapprochement between Buddhism and science, defensive and apologetic undertones are clearly discernable throughout, even in the eloquent discourses of someone like Ricard. A more appropriate metaphor than the assimilation of the God of Science might be that of seamen caught in a shipwreck throwing overboard what is dispensable in order to safeguard the essential.

has been propounded by B. Allan Wallace. Wallace, who attempts to apply the vocabulary of philosophy of science to Buddhism, claims that Buddhism "posits testable hypotheses" about the nature of the mind and its relation to the physical environment, and that Buddhist theories "have allegedly been tested and experientially confirmed numerous times over the past twenty-five hundred years, by means of duplicative meditative techniques."[39] Further, "Buddhist insights into the nature of the mind and consciousness are presented as genuine discoveries in the scientific sense of the term: they can be replicated by any competent researcher with sufficient prior training."[40]

The distinctions and characterizations put forward by Ricard, Wallace and others are historically doubtful, for Buddhism had neither a scientific character—certainly not in the sense of "science" when applied to modern physics—nor was its scope limited to the mind. Buddhism had its own theories of matter in order to account for all elements of existence (*dharmas*). Nevertheless such new interpretations of Bud-

---

[39] See Wallace 2003 [as in n. 35]: 7. The alleged experiential confirmation of Buddhist theories would be, in my opinion, closer to the experiential confirmation of witchcraft and divination (described in many ethnological studies such as of the Azande by Edward Evans-Pritchard) than to a confirmation of an experiment in modern physics or the cognitive sciences. In a similar vein, Wallace claims that "many Buddhist theories are obviously the expression of rational public discourse" (p. 5), but his idea of rationality remains a mystery to me. Wallace is hostile to the academic study of Buddhism, whose scholars he describes as "scholars who spent their time reading other people's books and writing their own books about other people's books." He considers their lack of contemplative experiences as introducing "a glaring bias into modern academic Buddhist scholarship" (p. 7). Most scholars of Buddhism, he says, take "an Orientalist approach" and the study of Buddhism in Western academia is labeled "commonly unscientific" (p. 7). With such a cavalier approach, it is not entirely surprising that Wallace occasionally commits serious blunders such as mistaking "the attainment of cessation" (*nirodhasamāpatti*) for "a primary goal of Buddhist meditation" (p. 7). In fact, this meditation is not a part of the Buddhist path to salvation and may be considered a meditative luxury.
Wallace quotes approvingly (p. 4) from Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion* and seems to subscribe to the tenet that "pure" and "authentic" Buddhism is located in the experiences, lives and actions of living Buddhists in Asia and not in Buddhist texts, or as King calls them, "the edited manuscripts and translations carried out under the aegis of Western Orientalists." Given that the vast majority of Buddhist traditions have not survived to the present day (Bareau discusses more than thirty "sects" for Conservative Buddhism alone), this approach, if followed, would severely limit and impoverish the scope of Buddhist studies.

[40] See Wallace 2003 [as in n. 35]: 8-9.

dhism can be useful. Even though most scholars, myself included, are not looking at meditation as a source of knowledge of the external world, it may certainly be a source of knowledge in areas where the enhancement of concentration and memory may tell us something new and significant about ourselves. If rebirth is possible, and there is a considerable body of evidence in favor of this hypothesis[41]—but then the same can be said of miracles—meditation may perhaps be the means of awakening recollections from past lives. The study of meditation itself is not only crucial to the understanding of South Asian and Buddhist culture, but can also be employed in areas where introspection is called for, for instance in the study of the mind (as mind, and not as brain). It is not surprising, therefore, that the academic fields where meditative techniques have been studied and used best are psychology and psychotherapy. This is demonstrated by the papers in this volume by Michael M. DelMonte, Renaud van Quekelberghe and Shulamith Kreitler.

It became clear already in early stages of the project that yogic perception is an ideal topic for interdisciplinary study. The present volume is the outcome of an attempt to initiate such a study, a study that centers on consciousness, body, mind and health, and that binds together such disparate disciplines as Buddhist and Tibetan studies, religious studies, philosophy and the history of philosophy, anthropology and psychology.

One of the best available means of promoting cross-disciplinary studies are interdisciplinary symposia. They offer the participants the occasion to present the results of their research to a sympathetic and interested audience of scholars who work on similar topics in other disciplines; it creates a general framework for dialogue, and not of lesser importance, lets scholars and scientists experience their limitations. After the initial difficulty of getting accustomed to new terminology, new sets of questions, and new approaches, which initially makes communication seem impossible, one slowly comes to the realization that what other disciplines have to say is not only relevant, but greatly moti-

[41] See Ian Stevenson, *Cases of Reincarnation Type*. 4 Vols. Charlottesville 1975-1983; *European Cases of Reincarnation Type*. Jefferson 2003; Satwant Pasricha, *Claims of Reincarnation: An Empirical Study of Cases in India*. Delhi 1990; Jim Tucker, *Life Before Life: A Scientific Investigation of Children's Memories of Previous Lives*. New York 2005.

vating and inspiring. This, we hope, will also be the experience of the reader.

In the following, we present the program of a conference of this type that was organized by Dagmar Eigner, Cynthia Peck-Kubaczek and myself at the Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in June 2006, and summarize those papers given at this conference that constitute the body of this volume. Some of them are of course significantly longer, modified versions of the talks that were presented.

PROGRAM

Tuesday, 27 June 2006

9:00 Welcome

Ernst Steinkellner, Director, Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Opening address

Eli Franco, Director, Institute for Indology and Central Asian Studies, University of Leipzig; Dagmar Eigner, Institute for the History of Medicine, Medical University of Vienna

9:30 John Taber, University of New Mexico

Infinity in All Directions

10:15 Lawrence McCrea, Harvard University

"Just Like Us, Just Like Now": The Tactical Implications of the Mīmāṃsā Rejection of Yogic Perception

11:30 Orna Almogi, University of Hamburg

The Physicality and Immanence of Gnosis in rDzogs-chen

12:15 Dorji Wangchuk, University of Hamburg

A Relativity Theory of the Purity and Validity of Perception in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism

15:00 Vincent Eltschinger, Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia

Dharmakīrti on the Career and Cognition of Yogins

15:45 Eli Franco, University of Leipzig

Meditation and Metaphysics: On Their Correspondence and Mutual Interaction in South Asian Buddhism

17:00 Anne MacDonald, University of Vienna

Seeing in Not Seeing: The Madhyamaka Experience

Wednesday, 28 June 2006

9:30 Karl Baier, University of Vienna

Meditation and Contemplation: Late Medieval to Early Modern Europe

10:15 Marion Rastelli, Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia

Perceiving God and Becoming Like Him: Yogic Perception and Its Implications in the Tradition of Pāñcarātra

11:30 Yohanan Grinshpon, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Serpent and the Void: Kundalini and Empty Consciousness in Tantric Yoga

12:15 Elizabeth De Michelis, University of Cambridge

What do Haṭhayogins Perceive? *Dhyāna* (meditation), *samādhi* (enstasy) and the Manipulation of Mind, Senses and Sense-organs (*manas*, *citta*, *indriya*) in Selected Classical and Modern *haṭhayoga* Texts

15:00 Philipp A. Maas, Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia

Mental Processes, Direct Perception, and [Meditative] Concentration (*samādhi* / *māpatti*) in Classical Sāṃkhya Yoga

15:45 Marcus Schmücker, Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia

Between God's Cognition and Normal Perception: Yogic Perception According to the Later Tradition of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta

17:00 Oded Maimon, Tel Aviv University

Consciousness Phases According to Experience with Eastern Philosophies

Thursday, 29 June 2006

9:30 Dietrich Ebert, University of Düsseldorf and University of Leipzig

Physiological Correlatives of Dharana and Their Meaning

10:15 John Baker, Moorpark College, California

Psychedelics, Culture, and Consciousness: Some Biocultural Considerations

11:30 Diana Riboli, Panteio University, Athens

Shamans and Transformation

14:00 Dagmar Eigner, Medical University of Vienna

Transformation of Consciousness through Suffering, Devotion, and Meditation

14:45 Shulamith Kreitler, Tel Aviv University

Altered States of Consciousness as Structural and Functional Variations of the Cognitive System

Friday, 30 June, 2006

9:30 Renaud van Quekelberghe, University of Koblenz-Landau

Mindfulness and Psychotherapy: The Revival of Indian Meditative Traditions within Modern Psychology, Psychotherapy and Medicine

10:15 Urs Rüegg, University of Vienna

Psychotherapy and Altered States of Consciousness: Which Scientific Concept is Helpful?

11:00 Günther Fleck, University of Vienna

The Consciousness Disciplines and Knowledge Production: An Epistemological Account

12:15 Michael M. DelMonte, St. Patrick's Hospital, Dublin

Empty Thy Mind and Come to Thy Senses: A De-constructive Path to Inner Peace

15:00 Discussion

SUMMARIES

Part I: Yogic Perception in the South Asian and Tibetan Traditions

Of the above twenty-three lectures, seventeen could be collected in the present volume. The following brief summaries of the papers accompanied by short comments are designed to help the reader to navigate through the presented terrain. In Indian philosophical texts, there are often two protagonists, an opponent and a proponent, with the opponent always speaking first (so that the proponent can have the last word). We will follow this fine procedure here and begin with two papers that present some of the most powerful objections to and criticism of yogic perception that were articulated in the Indian tradition. The Mīmāṃsā tradition is often labeled as the most orthodox of all Indian philosophical traditions. Yet this tradition rejects with vehemence some of the most distinctive tenets that one associates with Hinduism, notably, the existence of God,[42] the cyclical dissolution and re-emergence of the

[42] While the Mīmāṃsā does not reject the existence of deities who might play the role of recipients in sacrifices, the existence of an omnipotent or omniscient God, like Śiva or Viṣṇu, to whom the creation of the world, the composition of the Veda or a decisive influence on the human lot may be attributed, is vigorously rejected.

cosmos, the ideal of liberation (*mokṣa, nirvāṇa* and similar expressions)[43] and—what concerns us here—yogic perception.

In "'Just Like Us, Just Like Now': The Tactical Implications of the Mīmāṃsā Rejection of Yogic Perception," **Larry McCrea** shows why the Mīmāṃsaka philosopher Kumārila (7th c. CE) considered the very possibility of yogic perception a serious threat to the validity of the Vedic tradition. He presents Kumārila's arguments succinctly and clearly and explains the context in which they were raised. The main concern of the Mīmāṃsā is to demonstrate that the Vedas ("the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism") are the only source for knowing dharma.[44] Thus, it is not yogic perception as such, but its potential as a source for knowing the dharma that makes the Mīmāṃsakas fervently oppose it.

To begin with, even if a yogi such as the Buddha could indeed perceive truths that are beyond the range of perception of ordinary people, this would be useless for them. There is, as McCrea puts it, "an unbridgeable epistemic divide" (p. 58) between yogis and ordinary people. Thus an ordinary person can never know who is a genuine yogi and who is a quack or a swindler. "It takes one to know one." On the other hand, if the statements of a yogi could be confirmed by ordinary means, they would be superfluous.[45]

At any given time, people as a rule lie. One cannot trust them today, and in the past they were equally unreliable. The constancy of behavior between past and present individuals, past and present societies, is one of the most characteristic assumptions of Kumārila. The same consistency or uniformity in the perceptual capacity of ordinary people is assumed to have existed throughout the ages. It is clear that people's capacities can have quantitative differences: some people may be able to see objects that are far away or very small, objects that an-

---

[43] This human aim is absent in the early Mīmāṃsā texts, but was introduced in those written after the 6th century CE.

[44] Dharma is narrowly interpreted by the Mīmāṃsā as characterized by an injunction to perform a sacrifice. It is a far cry from dharma referring to moral or meritorious action; see Wilhelm Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection*. Albany 1991, especially chapter 4: Vedic Apologetics, Ritual Killing, and the Foundation of Ethics.

[45] This criticism is reminiscent of a famous argument against the validity of inferences: inferences are either not established or they prove what has already been proved: *sāmānye siddhasādhyatā, viśeṣe 'nugamabhāvaḥ.*

other person cannot see, but there is no radical or qualitative difference between what all people see: colors are seen and not heard.[46]

A common move to substantiate the reliability of a person, be it a yogi like the Buddha or a God like Śiva, relies on his self-identity. If the Buddha's statements about matters that can be examined by ordinary people (say, about medicine and healing) are invariably confirmed to be true, one may trust his statements about other matters as well (for instance, about karma and past lives). If the mantras revealed by Śiva that are applicable to everyday life function well (for instance, bring wealth to their user), one may assume that his other mantras function equally well.

As Kumārila makes clear, an argument in this form is patently false. The fact that someone is reliable in area A does not imply that he is reliable in area B, especially when area B is beyond the reach of ordinary people. Would we accept metaphysical speculations about God because they are put forth by a physicist who has been proven reliable in physics?

Kumārila also emphasizes the plurality of yogic visions and the ensuing contradictions. If the cognition of our yogis contradicts that of your yogis, whom shall we trust? In fact, no yogi can be trusted. Unless one possesses such knowledge oneself, one is unable to judge whether another person knows things beyond the reach of the senses. Any other standard opens the way to frauds or even honest but delusional people claiming knowledge about extrasensory objects they do not possess.[47]

Probably in response to Kumārila, later Buddhist and Hindu writers who attempted to establish religious authority put a strong emphasis on the speaker's motivation. It is not enough that one knows the truth; one also has to have a positive motivation to communicate that truth (this motivation is usually identified with compassion towards living beings and the ensuing wish to help them) and a lack of motiva-

[46] Actually there are people who do hear colors, as anyone with synaesthesia (apparently one out of every thousand people) or anyone who has had a psychedelic experience would know.

[47] In the last part of McCrea's paper, which I do not summarize here, he briefly presents Kumārila's positive arguments for the reliability and eternity of the Veda. It would be an interesting exercise to check whether the arguments about the impossibility of knowing whether a person is omniscient might not be applied to the impossibility of knowing that the Veda is eternal.

tion to lie. Unlike Kumārila, who states that people usually lie, the Buddhist philosopher Dharmakīrti maintains that people tell the truth unless they have a motive for lying, and he further argues that the Buddha has no such motive because he has nothing to gain from lying to us.[48] Although the aspect of motivation and compassion of the speaker can be found prior to Kumārila in discussions about religious authority and reliability (e.g., in the *Nyāyabhāṣya*), this aspect does not seem to have been emphasized before his time.

However, even if one can be sure that the Buddha had no motivation for lying to his disciples, it is possible that he was deluding himself. Dharmakīrti counters this objection by maintaining that the major part of the Buddha's teaching is *not* about objects beyond the reach of the ordinary perception and inference, but is about objects that are independently verifiable. So even if the Buddha were wrong about non-empirical matters such as karma,[49] this would hardly matter as long as he is verifiably right about the phenomenon of suffering, its cause, and the way to remove this cause. Similarly, he may or may not be literally omniscient, but even if he isn't, this hardly matters as long as he knows everything there is to know about how to stop suffering. As Dharmakīrti somewhat sarcastically puts it: we don't care whether the Buddha knows the number of worms in the world.

John Taber's paper, "Yoga and our Epistemic Predicament," covers partly the same ground as McCrea's, but it is wider in scope. It begins with the question whether yogic experience is at all possible and investigates the epistemic conditions that would allow one to answer the question affirmatively. What matters to Taber is not whether such experiences are subjectively possible, but whether they are true. In other words, whether there can be a means for new knowledge, especially of

[48] See *Pramāṇavārttika* 2.145b: *vaiphalyād vakti nānṛtam*. "He [The Buddha] does not tell a lie because [this would] be fruitless." This verse is edited and translated in Tilmann Vetter, *Der Buddha und seine Lehre in Dharmakīrtis Pramāṇavārttika*. Vienna 1990: 52.

[49] Although karma is one of the causes of rebirth, Dharmakīrti explicitly rejects the possibility of eradicating karma in order to stop rebirth. As long as one lives, one continuously produces new karma and thus, the complete elimination of karma is never possible. The only way to stop rebirth is to eliminate desire, as is stated in the four noble truths.

objects that are traditionally associated with yogic perception, such as past and future objects,[50] or indeed of *all* objects.

Historians of Buddhism and Indian philosophy, as well as scholars of religion, usually disregard the question of truth in many facets of their studies, not only with regard to yogic perception.[51] Yogic perceptions, however, are important because the belief in them played such an important role in various societies and cultures. It is for this reason that Taber is not content with leaving the question of truth aside (p. 72):

"Surely it is of the utmost significance if a particular society or culture attributes value to, and invests considerable cultural energy and resources in, something that is, at basis, an illusion—just as it would be if a particular person were to build his life around a belief that is patently false, say, a belief in the existence of some imaginary being. We would immediately suspect that some pathology is at work, distorting that society's collective perception of reality."

Taber approaches the question of truth by examining a question that was debated over centuries in Classical India, the famous debate between the Mīmāṃsakas and the Buddhists (beginning in the 7th century and lasting until Buddhism had practically disappeared from the Subcontinent around the 12th century).[52] Interestingly, for the most part the debate was not whether a particular person (such as the Buddha or the Jina) had acquired the right knowledge about what ultimately must be done and avoided, but about the very possibility of a human being acquiring such knowledge. A presupposition shared by all parties in the debate was that if such knowledge is at all possible, it would be acquired by yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*), for that is the only type of perception whose scope can go beyond the present. So who won this debate? Taber concentrates on the *Proof of an Omniscient Person* by the

---

[50] Seeing past and future objects is counted by the *Yogasūtra* as one of the accomplishments (*siddhi*), i.e. the supernatural powers that the true yogi possesses; see *Yogasūtra* 3.16.

[51] The factoring out of the question of truth is not specific to Buddhist or Hindu studies, but is typical for religious studies in general. See Johann Figl, "Wahrheit der Religionen. Ein Problem der neueren Religionswissenschaft und der Religionsphänomenologie." In: Gerhard Oberhammer and Marcus Schmücker (eds.), *Glaubensgewissheit und Wahrheit in religiöser Tradition*. Vienna 2008: 81-99.

[52] The debate began in earnest with Kumārila in the 7th century and continued till the 11th century in the writings of Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti.

Buddhist philosopher Ratnakīrti (ca. 990-1050), who represents the last phase of Buddhist philosophy in South Asia.

Taber compares the attribution of yogic perception to the Buddha to the attribution of miracles to Jesus. In both cases the credibility of the testimony must be weighed against that which speaks against it, e.g., witnesses being few, of doubtful character or having a vested interest in what they affirm. However, above all the credibility of the testimony has to be weighed against the improbability of the fact to which it testifies (p. 77-78).

Can one show that yogic perception is not a miracle, that it does not violate the laws of nature? Yogic perception qua perception has to have two qualities: it has to be free of conceptual construction (or be vivid) and has to be non-erroneous. Concerning the first characteristic, it seems impossible to transform conceptual teachings like the four noble truths into a vivid visual image, no matter how long one meditates on them. In establishing the first characteristic, Ratnakīrti explains that one should not consider perception, as has been traditionally done, to be an awareness that is somehow related to the senses. Rather perception is nothing but an immediate awareness, and such awareness is not limited to sense data.[53]

Yet even if we grant that long, intense and uninterrupted meditation causes objects of cognition to appear with such clarity or vividness as if they stood before one's eyes, the question of their veracity remains open. However, as far as I can see, Ratnakīrti does not elaborate on this issue, probably because he follows Dharmakīrti's assumption that the Buddha's main teaching and his reliability are provable by ordinary means of knowledge. Only towards the very end of his treatise does he attempt to prove genuine omniscience, without, I suspect, being entirely convinced of his own proof.

Taber concludes his investigation with the failure of the Buddhists to prove the possibility of omniscience. Of course, the impossibility of omniscience remains equally improvable. This, however, is hardly

[53] In this, Ratnakīrti follows his teacher Jñānaśrīmitra, who follows in turn an original development by Prajñākaragupta (ca. 750-810). The latter identified perception with immediate awareness (*sākṣātkaraṇa*) and consequently claimed that even inference can be perception; see Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana (ed.), *Pramāṇavārttikabhāṣyam or Vārtikālaṅkāraḥ of Prajñākaragupta (Being a Commentary on Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇavārtikam)*. Patna, 1953: 111.20: *tasmād anumānam api sarvākārasākṣātkaraṇapravṛttaṃ pratyakṣam eva*.

surprising, for practically no philosophical tenet can be proved. The question Taber raises next is crucial, namely, how to deal with the fact that yogic perceptions are widely, even cross-culturally, reported. Should one simply investigate such phenomena and put aside the question of their veracity? This is, in fact, the common practice in religious studies (as an academic discipline), no matter which culture or which religion forms the object of investigation. One may attempt to determine what is actually being said, what impact it has on a given culture, what function it fulfils in society, and so on without asking whether it is true, or even assuming it is untrue. But this is not the path Taber proposes to take. If societies and traditions are inherently healthy and rational, they cannot be based on falsehoods or on the thin theoretical possibility that that yogic perception is not impossible. Yet we must continue to collect data and keep our minds open, and we must be willing to consider yogic perception at its face value. For the time being, however, as long as our theory of nature cannot accommodate yogic perception, it will remain deeply problematic.

Eli Franco's paper, "Meditation and Metaphysics," has a different concern altogether, but it may still belong to the *pūrvapakṣa* of this volume inasmuch as it challenges the role attributed to yogic perception in shaping Buddhist philosophy. The notion that Buddhist philosophy arose from meditation has been widespread among scholars of Indian philosophy. Sweeping formulations of this idea, such as by Constantin Regamey or Edward Conze, are clearly wrong and need not be further examined. However, even more careful and qualified formulations, such as that by Lambert Schmithausen, remain in the final analysis improvable and questionable. Schmithausen is, to the best of our knowledge, the only scholar who has not just pronounced this idea, but who has seriously attempted to prove it on the basis of rigorous philological analysis. Thus, his work deservedly forms the focus of the attention here. Franco examines this hypothesis in some detail and provides thereby a bird's-eye view of most if not all the important philosophical theories in South Asian Buddhism. He argues that the relation between meditation and metaphysics in Buddhism cannot be reduced to a single model. In the final analysis, one cannot avoid the conclusion that certain philosophical theories (which are described in the paper) arose from meditative experiences and certain others did not, and that the origin of still others cannot be determined, in which case it seems preferable to

suspend judgment. This conclusion may seem trivial and obvious, but it goes against the mainstream in Buddhist studies.

Anne MacDonald's contribution, "Knowing Nothing: Candrakīrti and Yogic Perception," deals with the topic of yogic perception in the Madhyamaka tradition, one of the major schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism that had a profound influence both on Indian and Chinese Buddhism and is alive in the Tibetan tradition until the present day. While focusing on the objectless meditation on emptiness (*śūnyatā*), she also provides a succinct introduction to Madhyamaka philosophy in general. Nāgārjuna (2nd-3rd c. CE), the founder of the Madhyamaka tradition, said practically nothing on meditation or yogic perception in his Mūlamadhyamakakārikās. His main concern there was to disprove the existence of the elements of existence (*dharma*) as postulated in various metaphysical theories of Conservative Buddhism. To understand the Madhyamaka stance on yogic perception and related issues it is informative to turn to other works by Nāgārjuna and to his influential commentator Candrakīrti (600-650 CE). MacDonald notes that the supernatural capacities of knowledge (*abhijñā*)[54] are barely mentioned in Candrakīrti's writings owing to their negligible soteriological role. Candrakīrti's interest in supramundane knowledge lies in an insight into the nature of reality that facilitates the break out of the "jail of *saṃsāra*." This he equates not with an insight into the four noble truths, but into the emptiness or unreality of all things.

Thus, the questions arise: How can one escape from something that is not real? And is *nirvāṇa* as unreal and as non-existent as *saṃsāra*? The Mādhyamikas reject the four possible views: that *nirvāṇa* exists, that it does not exist, that it both exists and does not exist, or neither. The thorough knowing (*parijñā*) of the non-existence of both existence and non-existence is, according to the Mādhyamikas, powerful enough to release one from the bonds of *saṃsāra*. Candrakīrti equates this knowing with non-perception of existence and non-existence: When the yogi remains without an apprehension of any of the things accepted by others as existing or non-existing, the object of his thorough knowledge is different from and excludes all phenomenal entities. The true nature of dependently originated phenomena, MacDonald contends (p. 145), should be understood as the "Mādhyamika's onto-

[54] See p. 6 above.

logical *nirvāṇa*." The knowing of this nature, sometimes referred to as knowing the "thusness" (*tattva*) of things, is the knowing without object that the yogi cultivates in the meditative state. Later Mādhyamikas such as Kamalaśīla (740-795), who was heavily influenced by Dharmakīrti and the epistemological tradition (discussed in Eltschinger's paper in this volume), interpreted this knowledge as cognition apprehending nothing but itself (*svasaṃvedana*). However, this interpretation would not have been acceptable to Candrakīrti.

In the course of a debate with a Realist opponent who claims that the object confers its form to consciousness, Candrakīrti points out that consciousness of a non-existent object, such as the son of a barren woman, would have to conform to the non-existent form and be itself non-existent.[55] When consciousness does not apprehend the image of an object, it simply cannot arise. Equally impossible is the epistemologists' account of liberating insight being the culmination of meditation on the four noble truths. According to them, at the beginning of meditation its object is conceptual, i.e., a universal, but in the course of meditation it gains in vividness till it becomes a particular.[56] This assumption, Candrakīrti maintains, is simply impossible, for a conceptual object can never become a particular.[57] Indeed, the epistemologists themselves assume that the particular and the universal are mutually exclusive. Further, even if such a process were possible, cessation (*nirodha*) could not be perceived because consciousness cannot arise without an objective support (*ālambana*).

---

[55] Candrakīrti seems to play here on two meanings of the word "form" (*ākāra*), which can be understood as an image or as the own nature of a thing. The same ambiguity is present in other terms meaning "form," notably the term *rūpa*.

[56] This process is compared in later times to someone so besotted with his lover that he perceives her in his mind with such vividness that it is as if she would be standing in front of his eyes. See also Franco, "Perceptions of Yogis. Some Epistemological and Metaphysical Considerations." In: *Proceedings of the 4th International Dharmakīrti Conference* (forthcoming).

[57] It is indeed difficult to understand how an abstract and necessarily conceptual statement such as "everything is impermanent" can become a particular object, no matter how long and how intensely one meditates on it. This point was debated between Buddhists and Naiyāyikas for centuries (as long as Buddhism remained alive on the Subcontinent); on the last phase of this debate, see Taber's paper in this volume.

But what are the implications of this stance? Does it mean that ultimate reality is pure nothingness and the ultimate realization that one cannot know anything? MacDonald contends that Candrakīrti's view is more sophisticated. For him the actual realization of the true nature of all things is performed by an altogether different type of awareness termed "gnosis" (*jñāna*).[58] Unlike normal awareness (*vijñāna*), gnosis does not have an object and perceives the inconceivable reality that was always there; it has a form (or nature) that transcends all manifoldness (*sarvaprapañcātītarūpa*). Candrakirti also states that the Buddhas abide in this objectless gnosis. In advancing this interpretation, MacDonald goes against the construal of Madhyamaka by North American scholars such as C.W. Huntington and Dan Arnold.

Vincent Eltschinger's paper, "On the Career and the Cognition of *Yogin*s," is a remarkable contribution towards the reconstruction of the religious philosophy of Dharmakīrti. It consists of two parts. The first part sketches a systematic development of the meditating Buddhist monk from the stage in which he is still an ordinary person, beset by a false view of Self and Mine giving rise to desire, to the moment of enlightenment and the ensuing liberation. Dharmakīrti follows the traditional Buddhist scheme of three successive stages in understanding the Buddha's teaching as epitomized by the four noble truths, these three stages being studying, reasoning and meditating.[59] As soon as one attains a meditative vision of the four noble truths for the first time (*darśanamārga*), the yogi stops being "an ordinary person" and becomes a noble person (*ārya*). However, this vision can only remove the conceptual error about the existence of a Self; the deeply-rooted, innate conception of the Self (*sahajasatkāyadṛṣṭi*) is far more difficult to eradicate and one has to repeat the meditative vision of the four noble truths in various aspects again and again until this innate or instinctive conception of Self, which is present even in lower animals that are unable to conceptualize, is uprooted.

According to the Yogācāra tradition, with which Dharmakīrti is affiliated, living beings are divided into various "families" (*gotra*)

---

[58] On various aspects of gnosis in the Tantric tradition, see Orna Almogi's paper in this volume.

[59] A similar three-stage process of understanding can be found in Hinduism, and it is still practiced, especially in the Vedānta tradition: studying (*śravaṇa*), reflecting (*manana*), and meditating (*nididhyāsana*). See also YS 1.48-49 referred to above.

that determine the mode of liberation either as Hearers (i.e., disciples of the Buddha who reach enlightenment with the help of the Buddha), or as Buddhas-for-themselves (*pratyeka-buddha*, who reach enlightenment by themselves, but do not help other living beings), or as Buddhas (who reach enlightenment by themselves and help others to reach it). While the path of the Hearers and the Pratyeka-Buddhas is relatively short, the Bodhisattva, the person who has resolved to become a Buddha, has to prolong his stay in *saṃsāra* in order to acquire additional skills that enable him to become a "teacher" for all living beings; he must eliminate imperfections of body, speech and mind, and become practically omniscient. The practice of the path ends in the so-called transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparivṛtti*), an expression that was first used for the change of sex (from woman to man), but which came to designate the irreversible elimination of all defilements and their latent causes ("seeds"), this elimination characterizing the state of being Buddha.[60]

The second part of Eltschinger's paper deals with the cognition of a yogi in its epistemological dimension. Yoga is characterized as a chariot pulled by two horses, tranquility of mind (*śamatha*) and discernment (*vipaśyanā*).[61] It carries one to an insight (*prajñā*) of the true nature of reality. Yogic perception, as every perception, must be reliable and free of conceptualization. The first characteristic does not seem to be problematic for Dharmakīrti; the reliability of yogic perception is grounded in the Buddhist scriptures, which are also established by independent means such as perception and inference. For instance, one meditates on the four noble truths that are already known to be true before the meditation begins.[62] One may also meditate of course on a non-existent object such as an imaginary disintegrating corpse. In this case the yogic cognition is simply not true (and therefore not perception—*pratyakṣa*) for the simple reason that its object has no correspondence in

[60] See also Hidenori Sakuma, *Die Āśrayaparivṛtti-Theorie in der Yogācārabhūmi*. Stuttgart 1998.

[61] See Louis de La Vallée Poussin: *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*. Vol. 8. Repr. Brussels, 1980: 131, n. 2.

[62] This perspective changes radically from the 8th century onwards, due to the debates with the Mīmāṃsā. From this point in time it is not an ordinary yogi, but the Buddha himself, the yogi par excellence, who is the focal point, and it is not the reliability of the Buddhist yogi who follows the Buddha's teachings which is at stake, but that of the Buddha, who cannot rely on a further Buddha to establish the truthfulness of the Buddhist teachings.

reality. Dharmakīrti's main concern, however, is how a conceptual cognition can become non-conceptual. His criterion for the absence of conceptualization is the vividness of a cognition—when one sees an object as if it were standing before one's eyes. Dharmakīrti's solution to this problem was not completely satisfactory, and later Buddhist philosophers (Kamalaśīla, Prajñākaragupta, Jñānaśrīmitra, Ratnakīrti) continued to deal with it and suggest still other solutions.[63]

However, if yogic perception apprehends an object that was already established by a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), how could it be itself a means of knowledge, for a means of knowledge must apprehend a new object, an object that was not perceived earlier? Dharmakīrti's answer would probably be that although the object was previously established by scripture and reasoning, it was not established as a non-conceptual object. Thus, the process of meditation is the reverse of the process of perceiving in everyday life. In everyday life, the cognitive process begins with a non-conceptual perception of an object which gives rise to a conceptual cognition. In meditation one begins with a conceptual object, and the meditation culminates in the conceptual construction being cast away. This cognitive process consists in destroying ignorance and other defilements of consciousness so that the cognition may shine again in its intrinsic luminous nature, with which it can apprehend reality as it truly is.[64]

Dorji Wangchuk's contribution, "A Relativity Theory of the Purity and Validity of Perception in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism," extends our field of vision to Tibetan Buddhism, or better, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, for the philosophical developments of the Tibetan scholars cannot be understood without their Indian background. Wangchuk notes that one occasionally comes across philosophical theories and interpretations that are of purely Tibetan origin and most of the purely Tibetan

[63] See also Taber's paper in this volume.

[64] Or one could say that although the inferential cognition of the four noble truths (attained at the second stage, between studying and meditation) is true, it does not make one obtain its object, and thus it cannot be said to be non-belying (*avisaṃvādin*) in the usual sense of the term. A similar case might take place with inference. What happens when one infers fire and then goes to the place of the fire and sees it? Both cognitions are valid, both are connected to the same object, yet each cognition is said have a new object. In fact they only cognize the same object from different aspects and cannot have different efficient actions (*arthakriyā*), which is characterized as attaining an object, for the same object cannot be obtained twice.

philosophical theories seem to be the product of an endeavor to resolve and systematize conflicting ideas found in heterogeneous Indian Buddhist systems. This thus tallies well with my observation that meditative visions have not played a crucial role in the development of philosophical theories in South Asian Buddhism.

Wangchuk examines an intriguing tenet in the Buddhist theory of knowledge, namely, that various types of living beings perceive one and the same entity in different modes. For instance, what appears to ordinary humans as clean water is perceived by so-called hungry ghosts (*preta*) as dirty and disgusting (sullied with blood and pus, etc.),[65] by the gods as nectar, and by yogis as a goddess or a woman who is capable of arousing *samādhic* ecstasy in them. The epistemological problem that arises from this tenet is clear: If the same object is perceived differently by different living beings, whose perception is true? How can one then distinguish between valid and invalid cognitions? Further, how can one substantiate yogic visions that seem downright impossible, as for instance the perception of innumerable Buddha fields in a single atom? Wouldn't the acceptance of such visions lead to "ontological nihilism"?

The renowned rNying-ma scholar Mi-pham (1846–1912) suggested making a distinction between various kinds of means of knowledge, most importantly between pure and impure worldly means (*kun tu tha snyad pa'i tshad ma* = *sāṃvyavahārikapramāṇa*). The degree of the purity of perception determines the degree of its correctness.[66] The purity of perception can be enhanced by meditation, but there is also a difference in the degree of purity of perception of those who do not meditate at all. For instance, a human being perceives water as water, which is regarded as purer than the *preta*'s perception of it as pus, regardless of whether that human being and *preta* meditate or not. Mi-

[65] This example first entered the philosophical discourse in Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā*. It is used by Vasubandhu to show that living beings (notably the *pretas*) can suffer from what may be called collective illusions due to similar karmic fruition. Vasubandhu, however, does not doubt the identity of water as an object in this example, but only attempts to prove that it does not exist outside the mind. As far as I know, the example is not further discussed in the Buddhist epistemological tradition from the perspective it obtained in Tibetan Buddhism, namely, that the identity of the object is doubtful.

[66] According to this theory, the cognition of water by ordinary people would have to be considered less true than the vision of the yogi who perceives the same substance as a goddess.

pham's theory was inspired by Rong-zom-pa, a rNying-ma scholar of the 11th century, who suggested that reality is "mere appearance" (*snang ba tsam*), behind which there is nothing. He also adduced a distinction in validity between human and non-human and between yogic and non-yogic perceptions. Thus, the validity of perception depends on the purity of perception, i.e., the purer the perception is, the more it agrees with ultimate reality, which is the absolute purity. Wangchuk also discusses briefly the Indian antecedents, especially in Madhyamaka sources, of this theory, which he calls "the relativity theory of the purity and validity of perception."

Meditation and yogic perception culminate in gnosis (*jñāna, prajñā* and similar expressions). The quasi-material aspects of this gnosis form the subject matter of **Orna Almogi**'s paper, "The Materiality and Immanence of Gnosis in Some rNying-ma Tantric Sources." According to these sources, gnosis is immanent in the human body, more precisely, in the center of the heart. Before describing the "metaphysiological" aspects of gnosis, Almogi looks into the conception of the human body in Buddhism in general. As is well known, Buddhist sources, including already the Pali Canon, consider the human body to be a collection of impure and revolting substances such as hair, nails, flesh, bones, bladder, liver, pus, blood, excrement, and the like. Yet the body is also recognized as the basis for the human experience that enables one to tread the path of salvation.

The Tantric attitude to the body is generally more positive. The Tantric practitioners conceive the body as a microcosm, and it is meditatively envisioned as the pure body of a deity; most importantly it is the abode of gnosis, the ultimate aim for all Buddhists. Although gnosis is to be acquired by practice, it is often conceived of as inherent, latent and changeless. It abides in the body like a lamp in a pot that can shine only if the pot is broken. The Buddha-Embryo theory—the theory that all living beings are potentially Buddhas and will eventually become Buddhas—is used as a foundation to substantiate the immanence of gnosis in one's body. The resemblance of this notion of gnosis to the Brahmanic concept of a permanent soul (*ātman*) is obvious,[67] and the rNying-ma scholars make a conscious effort to distinguish gnosis from such a soul.

[67] In fact, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the foundational text of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition uses the terms *ātman* and *paramātman* in the exposition of the Buddha nature.

The "meta-physiology" of gnosis involves channels, *cakras*, vital winds and seminal drops. Their divergent descriptions have been conveniently juxtaposed by Almogi in the form of tables. Each channel has its own color, a type of pure essence, and an essence-syllable that causes purification, phonic seeds that cause pollution, and birth caused by the pertinent phonic seeds and type of mind. For instance, the channel of gnosis has a blue light, which is square in shape, the pure essence of breath, the essence syllable *hūṃ*, and is inhabited by mental perception. It is clear that although gnosis is not a material entity, one does find statements describing it in terms of light, color, shape and sound. However, these are merely meant as aids to confused living beings, who have not recognized the permanent immanent gnosis within themselves. Nevertheless, it appears that these descriptions were sometimes taken literally.

Almogi's paper concludes the Buddhological section in this volume. Three contributions deal with yogic perception in the Hindu tradition. **Philipp André Maas** discusses the so-called Yoga of suppression as it appears in the first chapter of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, i.e., the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali with its oldest commentary, the so-called *Yogabhāṣya*,[68] a text that Maas has edited in an exemplary manner on the basis of twenty-one printed editions and twenty-five manuscripts. His starting point is Oberhammer's pioneering yet largely ignored study *Strukturen yogischer Meditation* (Vienna 1977), which shows beyond doubt that the Pātañjalayoga teaches four different kinds of meditations—not two, as is commonly assumed—which differ from each other with regard to their objects, structure and content. Maas' paper, however, limits itself to the first two of these meditation types, for which he suggests a new terminology. The common term for these types of meditations, which seems to have been coined by Frauwallner, is "Unterdrückungsyoga" or "Yoga of suppression." This term, however, can be misleading inasmuch as it evokes the common psychological meaning of "complete deletion of a reaction," in contradistinction to "inhibition," which refers to an inner impediment to activity that can be removed. "Suppression" is also used to refer to a voluntary suppression of an impulse for action. Obviously, none of these meanings is applicable to yogic meditation, nor is "suppression" as used by Indologists meant to

[68] Yoga in this section is short for Pātañjala Yoga.

convey these meanings, but rather to refer to the definition of yoga as the elimination or stopping ("the shutdown" as Maas calls it) of all mental processes. Further, it is often said that the purpose of yoga is to eliminate cognition, but this statement has to be qualified insofar as yoga does not eliminate the Self (*puruṣa*), which is defined as pure consciousness. What yoga aims at is the elimination of all objects of consciousness.

Maas also notes that the "Yoga of suppression" consists, in fact, of two different types of meditation; he suggests calling the first type "non-theistic yogic concentration" and the second "theistic yogic concentration." In the former type, the path leading to the cessation of mental activities is the practice of gradual withdrawal or detachment, in a first stage from everyday material objects, in a second stage from matter as such, and it culminates in self-perception of the Self, which leads to liberation from the cycle of rebirths. The theistic concentration is similar to the non-theistic in many respects—most importantly it also culminates in self-perception of the Self—but differs from it inasmuch as in the initial stages it has God (*īśvara*) as its object.

It is remarkable that in Yoga the concept of God lacks any sectarian or mythological elements. Moreover, there is no qualitative difference between God and any other liberated soul, except that the latter became liberated at a certain point in time, whereas God has always been liberated. Nor does God really intervene in the realm of matter, and his effectiveness within the world is rather limited. At the beginning of every re-creation of the world he "assumes" a mental capacity—doesn't this imply that he must leave his state of liberation?—in order to teach a seer and thus start a succession of teachers and disciples. His presumed motivation to do this, just as in the case of the Buddha, is compassion.

The concept of God being intrinsically identical to all other souls (or selves) can also be found in the tradition of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, a Vedānta school that is strongly affiliated with the Vaiṣṇava devotional movement, examined here by **Marcus Schmücker** in "Yogic Perception According to the Later Tradition of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta." This tradition is particularly interesting in its contrast to the Buddhist tradition. To begin with, yogic perception is hardly discussed in the writings of Rāmānuja (traditionally dated 1017–1137), the founding father of the Viśiṣṭādvaita. He accepts the possibility of its existence, but does not consider it capable of perceiving absolute reality

(*brahman*) (see n. 3 in the paper). However, Rāmānuja's follower, Meghanādārisūri (13th century), deals with this topic in a more extensive manner. Unlike the Buddhists, who go to a great deal of trouble to prove that yogic perception is free of any conceptual construction (see the papers by Taber, Franco and Eltschinger in this volume),[69] Meghanādārisūri assumes that all yogic perceptions are conceptual for the simple reason that they do not depend on the senses. This aspect of yogic perception puts it on par with the cognition of God (identified with Viṣṇu), or the highest Self (*paramātman*), as well as of the liberated souls—both those that have always been liberated (*nityamukta*) and those that became liberated at a certain point in time. The difference between the cognition of a yogi, who is still bound to *saṃsāra*, and the cognition of the liberated souls (God included) is that the latter have only conceptual cognitions. Of course the cognition of God is far larger in scope—it includes everything—than that of the yogi, but inasmuch as both are independent of the senses, both are conceptually constructed (*savikalpaka*). Furthermore, while the Buddhists consider every conceptualization to be false and claim that only non-conceptual cognitions are a true reflection of reality, Meghanādārisūri argues that an absolute correspondence between perception and reality is only possible in a conceptual perception. A non-conceptual perception, which depends on the senses and has only a momentary existence, is unable to perceive all properties of a given object. Especially the recurrent properties, the so-called common properties or universals (*jāti*), which are identified with the structure (*saṃsthāna*) of things, cannot be perceived as such when an object is seen for the first time. It is only in the second and subsequent cognitions that the recurrence of a universal can be perceived. Yet the common point between the Buddhist and the Viśiṣṭādvaita traditions is that the highest cognition, be it the omniscience of God or of the Buddha, is a subspecies of yogic perception.

---

[69] An exception, however, should be noted for the Buddhist Tantric work *Tattvasiddhi* attributed to Śāntarakṣita; see Ernst Steinkellner, "Is the Ultimate Cognition of the Yogin Conceptual or Non-conceptual? Part 2: Introducing the Problem in the Final Section of the Tantristic *Tattvasiddhi* with Analysis and Translation." In: *Esoteric Buddhist Studies: Identity in Diversity.* Proceedings of the International Conference on Esoteric Buddhist Studies, Koyasan University, 5 Sept.–8 Sept. 2006. Ed. by the Executive Committee, ICEBS. Koyasan 2008: 291-306. The possibility of Vedāntic influence on the doctrine of the *Tattvasiddhi* still needs to be explored.

The role of yogic perception in another Vaiṣṇava devotional tradition, the Pañcarātra, is examined in **Marion Rastelli**'s contribution, "Perceiving God and Becoming Like Him: Yogic Perception and Its Implications in the Viṣṇuitic Tradition of Pāñcarātra." The earliest evidence of this tradition dates back to the pre-Christian era, and it is still present today in the Vaiṣṇava tradition in South India. Unlike the other Buddhist and Hindu traditions presented so far, the Pañcarātra offers its followers not only a means of pursuing liberation from rebirth, but also allows the pursuit of worldly pleasures such as wealth, offspring, the fulfillment of sexual desires, death of enemies and a great number of supernatural powers. For the most part, these aims are to be achieved by ritual means into which yogic practices are integrated, but yoga is also practiced independently. There are two kinds of yogic practices: the Yoga of Eight Members (*aṣṭāṅgayoga*), which is practically identical to the practice described in Pātañjala Yoga bearing the same name (briefly referred to by Maas p. 6), and the Laya Yoga or the "Yoga of reabsorption." Some elements are common to both practices, as for instance, sitting in a particular posture, controlling one's breathing, and the withdrawal of the mind from the object of the senses. However, the two practices differ in their object; while the object of the yoga of Eight Members is static, the object of the Laya Yoga is dynamic. The term *laya* evokes the cosmic dissolution of the material elements, these being reabsorbed, each into the respectively preceding one, in the reverse order that they were created or emanated until they are all absorbed into the primordial matter, which is itself a manifestation of God.[70] The Laya Yoga imitates this process of destruction. The yogi visualizes object after object in the order of their destruction until he reaches a particular deity, this deity being an emanation of still another deity, and so on until one reaches the Supreme God. The *Lakṣmītantra* describes several deities that are to be meditated upon, and similar to the Buddhist Tantric meditation described by Almogi, each is associated with a special state of consciousness and with a specific sound (the various elements are conveniently presented by Rastelli in a table on p. 306).

[70] These cycles of cosmic emanation and dissolution are well known from Classical Sāṃkhya (see also Maas' paper in this volume, pp. 269-270) and Purāṇic literature. However, in the Pāñcarātra tradition the material elements are considered a manifestation of the God Vāsudeva.

In the Laya Yoga, the meditating yogi visualizes a deity and continuously recites a *mantra* until the deity appears to him; by concentrating on the deity the yogi becomes one with it and reaches a state called "Consisting of Him/Her" (*tanmayatā*), depending upon whether the object of meditation is a God or a Goddess. In other words, the subject and object of meditation become identical. What this identity means exactly is not entirely clear, however. Rastelli suggests that the identity cannot be complete or numerical; rather "consisting of Vishnu" is analogous to saying "consisting of wood": consisting of something would thus mean having all the properties of that thing. Thus, the result of meditation varies according to the object one meditates on. If one meditates on *brahman* (absolute reality) one attains the state of *brahman*, which means liberation from rebirth; if one meditates on Sudarśana, one attains the supernatural powers of Sudarśana, and so on.

In the Pañcarātra tradition, it is also possible to become "consisting of God" by ritual means, above all through a mental identification with the deity. This identification can be induced verbally by means of *mantras*, or by assuming the outward appearance of a deity, for instance, by wearing garments that are usually associated with the deity or certain adornments that are typical for it. A still easier way to attain the same goals, provided one has the financial means, is to offer fire oblations (*homa*) to the deity. It is interesting to note that all of these rituals, if performed well over a period of time, leave the deity no freedom of choice. It must appear before the yogi or the devotee.[71]

Part II: Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness from an Interdisciplinary Perspective

The second part of this volume examines broader aspects of altered states of consciousness beyond those occurring in yogic perception. In the first four papers, Karl Baier deals with meditation and contemplation in the Christian tradition, Dagmar Eigner and Diana Riboli focus on shamanic trance in Nepal and Malaysia, while John Baker clearly shows that drug-induced altered states of consciousness are an element present

[71] In this respect the Pāñcarātra tradition follows an older Vedic and Mīmāṃsā tradition which claims that the gods who are the recipients of certain sacrifices are in fact passive players inasmuch as they are obliged bring about the result for which a sacrifice is prescribed.

in all traditional and modern societies. Thus, altered states of consciousness are by no means limited to meditative traditions.

Karl Baier's contribution, "Meditation and Contemplation in High to Late Medieval Europe," is a useful reminder that Europe had its own rich tradition of meditation which has fallen into disuse, a tradition that, in an odd twist of fate, shows signs of revival under the growing influence of Indian meditative traditions.

Baier examines the period between the 12th and 15th century, a period that differs significantly from the preceding and subsequent centuries. He deals primarily with four trends that became prominent during this period: the development of elaborate philosophical and theological theories dealing systematically with meditation and contemplation; the democratization of meditation and contemplation; the emergence of new imaginative forms of meditation; and a differentiation between meditation and contemplation. Baier considers these trends and related developments by examining three texts: *Benjamin minor* (also called *The Twelve Patriarchs*) of Richard of St. Victor (?-1173), the *Scala Claustralium* of Guigo II (1174-1180) and the anonymous *Clowde of Unknowyng*.

In *Benjamin minor*, Richard of St. Victor develops a hierarchical system of different modes of cognition, correlating them to four basic cognitive faculties: *sensus*, *imaginatio*, *ratio* and *intelligentia* (sense-perception, imagination, discriminative rationality, intuitive insight). The lowest mode of awareness is termed *cogitatio.* It is "the careless looking around of the mind," motivated by curiosity and other passions. Meditation is a more focused way of thinking; it emerges when the *cogitatio* becomes seriously interested in an object it has uncovered. Its dominant mental faculty is *ratio*, discursive thinking, and it investigates the cause (*causa*), mode (*modus*), effect (*effectus*), purpose (*utilitas*) and inner structure (*ratio*) of its objects. Meditation culminates in contemplation, the fulfilled insight. *Cogitatio* is like crawling on the floor, *meditatio* like walking and sometimes running, but *contemplatio* is comparable to free flight (*liber volatus*) and beholding from above, this allowing the whole landscape be viewed at once.

Richard discriminates between different levels of ecstasy: a state in which the activity of the corporeal senses is only suspended, one in which imagination has come to a standstill, and a final absorption in

which even *intelligentia* is no longer active. All forms of ecstasy are accompanied by exaltation and intense joy.[72]

Guigo's *Scala Claustralium* (ladder for monastics), also known as *Scala paradisi* (the ladder to paradise) and *Epistola de vita contemplativa* (letter on the contemplative life) contains one of the most concise analyses of *spirituale exercitium* (spiritual exercise) written in the High Middle Ages. His intent was to integrate meditation and contemplation into the reading and interpretation of the Bible. In the early medieval period reading the Bible chiefly meant memorizing the text for liturgical purposes. In the 11th century the tradition of the Desert Fathers was revived, and the new order of the Carthusians integrated the lifestyle of the hermit with monastic community life. This led to an interiorization of religious reading, as is reflected in Guigo's text. The practice contained three stages, which, again, are strongly reminiscent of Buddhist, Yoga and Vedānta practices: *lectio*, the monk reading the Bible in his cell and following the literal sense of the text as attentively as possible, which led to meditation and the monk beginning to repeat a passage that touches his heart again and again;[73] *oratio*, the monk asking God to open his soul to His presence; and *contemplatio*, the monk gaining the deepest level of understanding of the biblical texts and experiencing their mystical sense (*anagogia*, *sensus mysticus*), which, as a direct encounter with God, can only be fully realized in contemplation. The basic distinction between meditation and contemplation is that in meditation the different faculties of the soul are still at work, whilst in contemplation their activities have calmed down and the ineffable center of the soul awakens.

In the centuries after Guigo, the link between reading the Bible and meditation lost its importance. The imaginative techniques had the effect of the Bible being replaced by manuals of meditation, such as *Vita Christi*, which were better suited for visualization and easier to grasp. Meditation and contemplation ceased to be a monastic privilege that could be practiced only in the solitude of monasteries; they could

---

[72] One is immediately reminded of the Buddhist descriptions of *dhyāna* and *āyatana* meditations, briefly described in Franco's paper, as well as of *saṃprajñāta samādhi* as discussed in Maas' contribution, but the differences are strong enough to reasonably exclude the assumption of borrowing or influence of one tradition on the other.

[73] This practice is traditionally called *ruminatio*, rumination on the text.

also be practiced in the flourishing towns. Book production developed enough to create a market of religious texts; these were usually compilations of monastic mystical theology, simplified schemes for the ascent to God, edifying stories about saints and miracles, and prayers. These books were not written in Latin, but in the vernacular languages. Thus, from the Late Medieval Period onwards, meditative and contemplative practices became increasingly popular among all strata of the literate European Christian society. Older forms of mysticism, based on withdrawal from the world and programs of asceticism and contemplative prayer, did not die out, but they were challenged by new lifestyles encouraging more democratic types of mysticism that were open to all (and therefore also communicated in the vernacular) and that did not demand retreat from the world.[74]

The *Clowde of Unknowyng*, written between 1375 and 1400 and today one of the most famous of all late medieval mystical texts, is a good example of the developments outlined above. The text follows the traditional distinction between *vita activa* (*actyve liif*) and *vita contemplativa* (*contemplatyve liif*). The first stage of active life consists of works of mercy and charity, the second, which is concurrently the first stage of contemplative life, is *goostly meditacion,* the third and final stage is *specyal preier*. The latter is described as *blynde thoucht* or *nakyd feeling* and culminates in ecstasy (*excesse of the mynde, overpassyng of thiself*), in which one is to leave behind distinct considerations of the self, sins, creation and God and enter a "*cloude of forgetyng*."

In the 15th century, the methodical structuring of thought within meditation became extremely elaborated. However, the more meditation became formalized, the more its limitations and dangers became obvious; the practice of contemplation began to decline. As Baier concludes, "only with the growing influence of Eastern religions and the revival of Western mysticism from the end of the 19th century onwards did the popularization of contemplative practices start all over again. The 20th century became the Age of the decline of the Baroque form of European meditation and gave birth to a second contemplation movement within Western Christianity."

Diana Riboli's contribution, "Shamans and Transformation in Nepal and Peninsular Malaysia," is an introduction to the different be-

[74] Here, too, the emergence of the Mahāyāna bears striking if superficial similarities.

liefs related to shamanic transformation into animal and plant forms, in particular in the ethnic groups of the Chepang in south-central Nepal and the Jahai and Batek of peninsular Malaysia. Despite the necessary adaptations of shamanic cultures to changes in social, economic and political conditions, the figure of the shaman generally remains that of a "hunter of souls," even in societies no longer based on hunting and gathering.

Riboli describes the rain forest as a closed universe from the Batek and Jahai point of view, divine and perfect, a sort of maternal uterus that satisfies all the basic requirements of its inhabitants and which is the beginning and end of everything.[75] In what is clearly an implicit critique of Lévi-Strauss and his followers, she claims that for the societies she has studied, a conceptual distinction between "nature" and "culture" has little or no significance.

Quite often the shamans' faculty of transforming themselves into animal or vegetal forms, of communicating with animals and deities, or flying between cosmic zones is seen as a relic from a mythical "Golden Age," a time when all human beings had these abilities. However, in some shamanic societies ecstatic journeys and altered states of consciousness are almost completely absent, although considered by Eliade and others to be an essential and defining element of shamanism.

Riboli points out that what scholars call "altered states of consciousness" or simply "trance" is a complex phenomenon, and that the Chepang language has no single term corresponding to it.[76] In spite of trances often having a similar physical appearance—the shaman's body jerking, trembling and sweating profusely, as well as appearing to undergo sensorial detachment—there are different types, and they are not experienced as the same by shamans or their audience. Riboli distinguishes between "incorporatory trances," in which shamans embody supernatural beings, and "trances of movement," in which shamans travel to other cosmic zones. In her earlier studies she included the category "initiatory trances," and noted that there are certainly still other types of altered states of consciousness, these being, however,

[75] The most friendly inhabitants of the rainforest are the *cenoi*, poetic creatures somewhat like our fairies, described as perfect little men and women living inside flowers who offer help to humans in distress.

[76] The same is true, of course, of what one calls "meditation," a rather vague term that has no exact correspondence in any South Asian language (see also n. 3 above).

difficult to document. Similarly, "shaman" itself is not a consistent category; the Chepang distinguish between *pande*,[77] who are allowed to travel to all cosmic zones, and *gurau*, who can transform themselves into animal forms.[78] The Jahai use *halak* and *jampi* to refer respectively to shamans of greater and lesser powers.

Though Riboli has noted a decline in many of the shamanic practices described by Endicott in the 1970s, she nevertheless confirms, contrary to observations by certain scholars, that despite the strong pressures and tensions they are continually subjected to, both Batek and Jahai forms of shamanism are still very much alive today. In fact, after the recent passing away of one of the oldest and most venerable shamans, many young men have been receiving dreams in which the old shaman is teaching them about the shamanic vocation. A new generation of young shamans seems to be emerging.

Dagmar Eigner's contribution, "Transformation of Consciousness through Suffering, Devotion, and Meditation," investigates the spiritual and personal development of shamans and mediums in Central Nepal. It is based on Eigner's study of traditional healers in Central Nepal undertaken for a total of thirty-six months between 1984 and 2005. Her research has focussed on Tamang shamans living in the middle hills east of Kathmandu Valley. The Tamang constitute the largest ethnic minority in Nepal and there are many shamans among them. These shamans mostly treat a multi-ethnic, socially disadvantaged clientele, who seek cures for a wide variety of ailments. Some shamans have moved away from traditional healing methods, partly because of their lack of the needed knowledge and partly in order to accommodate the multi-ethnic environment. In this context, Eigner has investigated the similarities between the healing methods of different healers and the role of ethnic-specific knowledge of myths in the shamanic procedures.

Contact with a deity is considered a basic component of a shaman's power. Shamans and mediums usually experience a vocational calling, in which they are chosen by a spiritual power to become a healer. Often this is not immediately recognized and the unusual behav-

---

[77] It seems that about ten percent of *pande* are women; Riboli investigated thirty *pande*, three of whom were women.

[78] This second category seems to be mythical or defunct; in eight years of extensive field work, Riboli has not encountered a single shaman who claimed to possess this ability.

iour of the chosen person is interpreted as a disturbance of her/his well being. The period of crisis is attended by physical and psychic suffering that is not alleviated by standard medical treatment. On the contrary, in some cases attempts to force the so-called evil spirits to depart causes the suffering to intensify. Sometimes several years pass before deities or ancestor spirits reveal themselves through the persons they have chosen.

After the initial crisis, such a person forms a strong relationship with the spiritual world. They then begin a process of granting the deities and tutelary spirits increasing space within their psyche, and of diminishing the desires and expression of their own ego. Devotional exercises slowly alter the mind of a shaman so that with growing experience, the chosen person remains continuously in a state of transformed consciousness. Having attained this altered level of consciousness, they are able to carry out whatever is needed during healing sessions without effort and without a conscious decision on their part. Their change in personality is primarily realized during treatments, in which their patients experience the power of the deities, this being the core of the healing process.

Eigner's paper presents a number of narratives of shamans and mediums from Central Nepal describing this process of transformation. Briefly presented are various healers' perceptions of the spiritual world, their own connection to it, and their understanding of the cures they achieve. These narratives show that the strong connection with the spiritual world changes these healers for the rest of their lives; their status in the community, their relationships with the people around them, and their sense of identity have become irreversibly altered.

In "Psychedelics, Culture, and Consciousness: Insights from the Biocultural Perspective," **John Baker** suggests that the use of psychedelic substances to alter consciousness is more ancient than all of the other techniques discussed in this volume. He also argues that studies of psychedelic experiences can be very useful for discerning the roles that cultural expectations and individual characteristics play in shaping and understanding altered states of consciousness. Baker's interactionist position assumes that consciousness is affected by both "top down" and "bottom up" phenomena. Consequently, the study of consciousness states requires a comprehensive framework that incorporates biological and psychological insights into the study of socio-cultural phenomena.

The number of plants, fungi, minerals, and even animals capable of inducing altered states of consciousness is large, and the use of

these substances has been documented throughout the world since ancient times. The use of such substances reflects both the basic human predilection to enter altered states and the fact that almost any psychoactive substance can be utilized for personally integrative and culturally constructive purposes when used appropriately.

In contrast to the traditional use of psychedelic substances in non-Western cultures, many Westerners have a "hallucinophobic" attitude about psychedelics. This attitude has its roots in the proscriptions against pagan religions issued by the Emperor Theodosius in 380 CE, when he adopted Christianity as the official religion of the empire and suppressed the ancient mystery cults. During the next sixteen hundred years, most European knowledge about the proper ways to use these substances and exploit their effects for constructive purposes was lost. Consequently, few were prepared for the renaissance in psychedelic use that began in the 19th century and accelerated in the 20th, especially after the discovery of LSD.

With the spread of LSD and other psychedelic substances, millions of individuals were able to experience and explore highly unusual states of consciousness. Lacking traditional frameworks for using these substances or understanding their effects, some people experienced "bad trips" or suffered physical injury because they were temporarily unable to react appropriately to external events. Laws were quickly passed that prohibited the manufacturing, distribution, use, or possession of psychedelic substances. By the mid-1960s, all psychedelic research on human subjects had been curtailed. As a result, many people in the West continue to view psychedelics in a highly negative light.

Baker uses the terms "sacrament" and "sacramental" to distinguish between psychedelic use in societies that embrace such use and in those that condemn it. In the former, a person's first use of a psychedelic substance often has an initiatory quality and occurs after a period of training in which the individual has been taught to anticipate and "correctly" interpret such experiences. Here, psychedelics often serve culturally integrative purposes. In the second type of society, psychedelics are typically used clandestinely and without proper guidance. In such contexts, psychedelic experiences may lead an individual to question his or her society's values and world view. In spite of this, such experiences are often interpreted in near-mystical terms and can have profoundly positive effects upon the user.

The "sacrament/sacramental" distinction recognizes that cultural attitudes play a profound role in shaping states of consciousness. At the same time, the biological underpinnings of modern anthropology remind us that the uniqueness of each person begins at the genetic level, and is expressed in differences in the make-up of our individual nervous systems as well as our life histories. Consequently, every experience of an altered state of consciousness is unique, and is open to multiple interpretations.

Baker concludes that psychedelic agents do not only represent important tools for studying consciousness, but also have the potential to "democratize" consciousness by making it possible for large numbers of people to explore domains previously accessible to only a few. He suggests that the near-universal desire to experience an altered state of consciousness can—and should—be channeled in a way that minimizes the possibility of problems and maximizes the potential for personal and social gain.

Shulamith Kreitler's contribution, "Altered States of Consciousness as Structural Variations of the Cognitive System," presents a new approach to defining consciousness in terms of an innovative theory of meaning. Most approaches to consciousness have been based on the assumption that differences in consciousness consist primarily in degrees of awareness, so that it may seem superfluous to dwell on the characterization of various so-called altered states of consciousness. However, an analysis of different states of consciousness reveals several major dimensions in which they indeed do differ, e.g., salience and the status of the "I," the sense of control and the ability to control, clarity of thought, precision of perception with regard to external reality and environment, emotional involvement, as well as the arousal, accessibility and inhibition of certain kinds of information. These specified dimensions allow the common states of consciousness to be characterized according to their differences in terms of major cognitive, emotional and behavioral features. The differences between the states of consciousness imply that a new approach is necessary. The new suggested approach is cognitive and based on a theory of meaning dealing with the contents and processes underlying cognitive functioning. Meaning is defined as a referent-centered pattern of meaning values. A referent is the input, the carrier of meaning, whereas meaning values are cognitive contents assigned to the referent in order to express or communicate its meaning. Together, the referent and the meaning value form a meaning

unit. Five sets of variables are used for characterizing the meaning unit: meaning dimensions, which characterize the contents of the meaning values; types of relation, which characterize the immediacy of the relation between the referent and the cognitive contents; forms of relation, which characterize the formal regulation of the relation between the referent and the cognitive contents; referent shifts, which characterize the relation between the referent and the presented input; and forms of expression, which characterize the forms of expression of the meaning units. Each individual person functions cognitively in terms of a specific meaning profile (i.e., a set of meaning variables habitual for that person) that determines his or her range of cognitive potentialities and also affects manifestations at the level of emotions and personality. Cognition is a function of the structure and activation of the meaning system.

Kreitler's main thesis is that states of consciousness are a function of comprehensive changes in the cognitive system brought about by specific organizational transformations in the meaning system. One major kind of reorganization consists in changing the dominant types of relation that regulate the functioning of the cognitive system in ordinary wakeful states, namely the attributive and comparative, to the exemplifying-illustrative and metaphoric-symbolic that regulate the functioning of the cognitive system in certain states of consciousness. Structural changes of this kind may be attained by either psychological or physiological means. When they occur, cognitive functioning, personality manifestations, mood and affect, as well as physiological processes may be affected. Kreitler describes the changes in consciousness attained by means of experimentally-induced changes in meaning, as well as the resulting changes in cognitive and emotional functioning. The new approach may enable the matching of cognitive tasks to suitable states of consciousness, the production of states of consciousness by self-controlled cognitive means, and even the definition of new states of consciousness.

The two final papers, by Michael M. DelMonte and Renaud van Quekelberghe, consider the use and integration of meditation in psychotherapy. **Van Quekelberghe** begins with a brief discussion of "mindfulness" (Pali: *sattipaṭṭhāna*, Sanskrit: *smṛtyupasthāna*) in the context of Theravāda Buddhism. The purpose of mindfulness is to increase the powers of concentration as a preparatory stage to meditation properly speaking (*samādhi*). It consists in the conscious awareness of

everyday activities such as breathing, thinking, feeling, moving, eating and even defecating. In the last decade or so, cognitive behavior therapy and psychoanalysis has begun to focus on mindfulness as a constructive method for overcoming clinical symptoms and suffering. Quekelberghe notes that the recent shift in cognitive therapy from symptoms as the "content" to symptoms as the "context" offers an analogy to the traditional Eastern (Buddhist and other) distinction of consciousness directed towards an object and consciousness without an object. "Context" would correspond to emptiness, peace of mind, pure silence, crystal-like transparency and an empty mirror; while "content" would correspond to ego-related passions, mirages, thoughts and feelings. This dichotomy indicates the need to step back from the many to the one, from the changing to the changeless, from bondage to freedom.

In the second part of his paper Quekelberghe offers a very useful survey of the relationship between psychotherapy and Buddhism from the 1930s to the present day. He begins with the well-known study "Buddhist training as an artificial catatonia" by Franz Alexander (also summarized by DelMonte), which has inspired many leading psychiatrists to focus on the parallels between schizophrenic regression and meditation. However, there were also exceptions to this general trend and some psychiatrists, such as Johannes Schulz and Arthur Deikman, considered yogic traditions positively, fighting against the "naïve arrogance" of psychiatry and psychoanalysis towards the Eastern meditative practice.

Jung rejected the psychoanalytic view of Asian or Buddhist meditation as infantile regression, autistic defense formation or narcissistic neurosis. Yet he too believed that an integration of Western psychotherapy and Eastern meditation was—if at all possible—not desirable. On the other hand, the so-called Neo-Freudians, including Karen Horney, Erich Fromm and Harold Kelman, involved themselves with Zen-Buddhism in the 1950s and emphasized points of convergence of their discipline with it. Kelman, for instance, considered psychoanalysis to be a meditative training in mindfulness and the development of therapist-client relationship as analogous to the guru-devotee relationship. In the 1980s, Jeffrey Rubin tried to integrate Buddhist ideas into a so-called contemplative psychoanalysis, although oddly enough he somehow confused the Buddhist conception of egoless-ness (Pali: *anatta*, Sanskrit: *anātman*) with the psychoanalytic narcissism theory. The dialogue between Buddhism and psychotherapy has continued un-

interruptedly until the present day, with Barry Magid currently its most prominent proponent.

W.L. Mikulas was the first behavior therapist who integrated Buddhist meditation into behavior therapy. He emphasized self-control skills and few theoretical constructs, focused on the concrete content of conscious experience, and made a clear distinction between observable behavior and problematic concepts such as person, ego, identity and the world. Quekelberghe summarizes the work of a number of behavior psychotherapists who found correspondence between the Buddhist teachings and techniques of behavior therapy, namely, stress reduction programs based on mindlessness. These include Da Silva, Kabatt-Zinn, Grossman, Linhan, Perls, Hayes, and last but not least, Quekelberghe himself.

Another important area of dialogue between Asian meditative traditions and psychotherapy is transpersonal psychology and therapy[79]—a school of psychology that studies and encourages spiritual self-development, peak experiences, mystical experiences, systemic trance and other metaphysical experiences of living. In an earlier work,[80] Quekelberghe described the main fields of this spiritually oriented psychotherapy. Quekelberghe ends his article with a plea to establish modern "wisdom research centers" after the model of the famous Buddhist monastery Nālandā.

Michael DelMonte's paper, "Empty Thy Mind and Come to Thy Senses: A De-constructive Path to Inner Peace," studies the beneficial effects of Yoga practices, Qi-gong, and modern Gestalt therapy on psychological growth (Eros). In an age when our minds and our senses are over-stimulated and our emotions over-aroused, meditation may be positively used as an antidote to mental over-drive. Paradoxically deep "mindfulness," when competently practiced, may lead to peaceful "mindlessness,"[81] a state of "no thought."[82] Such techniques are particu-

---

[79] The *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* describes transpersonal psychology as "the study of humanity's highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness."

[80] *Transpersonale Psychologie und Psychotherapie*, Ed. Dietmar Klotz. Eschborn bei Frankfurt/M. 2005.

[81] In this respect, meditative therapy is the opposite of the "talking cure" typically used in Freudian and other therapies.

[82] DelMonte's view of the relationship between thought and consciousness strikes me as being potentially anti-Darwinist (§4): "Although consciousness without thought

larly effective in cases of unhealthy attachments, be they attachment to victimhood and self-righteous misery, obsessive attachment to people or objects, or fear of loss as linked to separation anxiety. These attachments lead to defensive detachment which DelMonte calls "schizoid defense"; in extreme versions this defense is found in the affective non-attachment of borderline personalities, defensive isolation, extreme egotism, or solipsism.

However, DelMonte also warns us of the risks of using meditative techniques inappropriately; their use may become detrimental to social engagement and emotional attachment, foster "narcissistic emptiness," pathological de-realization and de-personalization as well as pathological regression—fixated on Thanatos, i.e, the wish to return to an undemanding pre-incarnate state. Meditation is not suitable for everybody nor is everyone ready for it.

The challenge for all self-conscious and reflective beings is how to build up an internal sense of self while being and living in an impermanent world. We all have a quest for knowledge as well as two typical orientations: introversion and extroversion, which need to be in equilibrium. Successful meditation helps one find the right balance between, on one hand, introspection and self awareness and on the other, social adaptation. Not surprisingly, introspection tends to become more important as we age.

A final point is what DelMonte calls "the obsessive Western focus on individualism" that leads to a strong individual identity being forged at the risk of this over-valued "mask" or "false self" being taken too seriously. The traditional Eastern society, says DelMonte, does not overly focus on individualism[83] and may facilitate attempts to dis-

---

is a possibility, its opposite, thought without some consciousness is not (excluding the Freudian repressed unconscious). Consciousness thus appears to be primary, and from it emerges thought as a secondary epi-phenomenon: An epi-phenomenon that can become "parasitic," in the sense that consciousness can play the role of a reluctant host to our unbidden thinking."

[83] DelMonte touches here on a set of problems that are especially associated with the work of Louis Dumont (see especially his *Homo Hierarchicus. Le système des castes et ses implications.* Repr. Paris 1979). However, Dumont's inspiring work also met with strong criticism. The issues involved are too complex and multifaceted to be dealt with here, but to risk a generalization about Indian civilization (for I have no overall competence in "Eastern" civilization), I would say that the tensions and inner conflict between "Homo Hierarchicus" and "Homo Equalis" are present also within Indian society.

identify from over-invested individualism. It is interesting that the aim of yoga as a psychotherapy is not to become "atomized emotional islands," although this is precisely the purpose of traditional yoga (see for instance Maas' paper in this volume): Liberation consists in the awareness that one is an isolated "island," albeit not an emotional one.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The above papers fall into two broad categories, those dealing with historical-philological aspects of yogic perception and meditation, and others broadly falling into the social sciences of anthropology and psychology. The need for an interdisciplinary approach between textual and sociological disciplines is so obvious that it hardly needs to be mentioned. But at the risk of stating the obvious: The benefits of an interdisciplinary approach as practiced here should go in at least two directions. On one hand, after taking a walk in the modern social sciences, the textual scholars should be able to go back to their sources and gain a better understanding of them. The social scientists, on the other hand, who study meditative experiences as a cultural phenomenon, would certainly benefit from the historical depth that can be gained from the study of texts. As Richard Gombrich once said—I paraphrase from memory—Buddhism has been around for 2500 years: who in his right mind would want to restrict one's study of it to the last century? The same is true of course for Hinduism and the European civilization.

To conclude, I should mention perhaps what was underrepresented at the conference and is completely lacking in the present volume: the natural sciences. This reflects the approach and interests of the organizers. Collingwood once chastised someone who thought the mind is what proves recalcitrant to an explanation by the natural sciences: "In the natural sciences, mind is not that which is left over when explaining has broken down; it is what does the explaining. If an explanation of mind is what you want, you have come to the wrong shop; you ought to have gone to the sciences of the mind."[84]

Our intention is not to question the relationship between the mind and the brain, or their possible ontological identity. At present, however, we do not yet seem to gain much when quantum physicists

[84] R.G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan.* Oxford 1942 (Repr. 1944), p. 11, § 2.48.

tell us that consciousness is related to the collapse of a wave function which is used to describe the probability of distribution of all possible states of an observed system. Nor do we wish to dwell on the concept of relativity in Madhyamaka Buddhism as a precursor of modern physics or on the resonance of emptiness and quantum mechanics. We also consider of little relevance to our studies whether gamma or alpha rays increase or decrease in deep meditation. It may be fascinating to observe the physical changes that occur in meditation, which include metabolic, autonomic, endocrine, neurological, encephalographic and digestive effects, galvanic skin responses, hormone levels in blood, as well as limbic arousal in the brain. We deny neither the merit nor interest nor importance of these studies, but have deemed them of peripheral relevance to the studies undertaken in this volume.