A Buddhist Inspiration for a Contemporary Psychotherapy

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Introduction

The Buddhist world view is an holistic one; philosophy, psychology, religion, morality and even medicine are seamlessly interwoven into one cloth. In Western history all these disciplines have become increasingly independent and isolated. As an American psychologist wrote recently: "we have lost sight of the deeper roots of our discipline in philosophy, and, in turn, of philosophy in religion."[1] Such separation is a loss as the independent Western disciplines have themselves come to realise, creating such hybrid discourses as Systems Theory and Cognitive Science, for as psychologist Jerome Bruner has declared: "a psychology of mind can never be free of a philosophy of mind."[2] It is my contention that good psychotherapeutic practice has much to learn from such an holistic approach and that only such an approach can heal the alienation and reactionary narcissism that comes from our increasing feeling that we are distinct and separate from our world. I will argue that Buddhism offers not only a long tradition of integrated view, a view that is coming to seem evermore compatible with the contemporary world view of the West, but also methods of practice for instantiating that view that are particularly helpful and relevant today. For, as D.T. Suzuki said: "personal experience is… the foundation of Buddhist philosophy",[3] and it can thus reunite theory with lived experience.

According to traditional Buddhist method, I shall divide this exploration into Ground, Path and Goal. Ground will attempt to provide the context, first taking a brief look at the historical development of Western psychotherapies, and then focusing on Buddhism and the philosophical and psychological teachings which I consider particularly fit it as a source of meaning and psychotherapeutic techniques in the contemporary world.[4] Following this necessarily brief

[1] D. Goleman in Goleman & Thurman, eds., *Mind Science*, Boston, Wisdom, 1991, 3.
[2] J. Bruner, *In Search of Mind*, New York, Harper & Row, 1983, 129.
[3] D.T. Suzuki, *On Indian Mahayana Buddhism*, ed. E. Conze, New York, Harper & Row, 1968, 237.
[4] When speaking of Buddhism, I am attempting as far as possible, to give an overall view, explicating those doctrines which are central to Buddhism in general, rather than restricted to any particular school or outlook. However, I acknowledge that the balance is weighted towards the view of Mahāyāna in general, and Tibetan Buddhism in particular.

introduction to the two subjects I will endeavour to put together some suggestions about the specific value and relevance of this Buddhist outlook in relation to various problematics.

Path will look at those aspects of Buddhist practice which may be of particular value on the psychotherapeutic journey.

Goal will attempt to compare and contrast the goals of these two paths, the Buddhist and the therapeutic. Hopefully then, in the light of what has gone before, we may perhaps gather a few ideas as to what might be some features of a contemporary Buddhist-inspired psychotherapy.

GROUND

Western Psychology

First I should like to distinguish between my use of the terms psychology and psychotherapy.[5] In this paper I shall generally use psychology to denote the theory of mind, and psychotherapy as praxis relating to the healing of disease or to the healthful expansion of the potential of the mind, but I am aware that at times there is some overlap.

In terms of its therapies, Western psychology is often divided into four major schools—Behaviourist, Analytic, Humanistic, and most recently, Transpersonal. I will first attempt to compare them briefly in terms of their philosophies, key concepts, goals, therapeutic relationship and techniques. Behaviourism as its name implies is concerned with visible behaviour and the physical body and believes that humans are shaped by socio-cultural conditions. Its outlook is deterministic; behaviour is the result of learning and conditioning and stimulus-response mechanisms. It is not concerned with hypothetical and invisible consciousness, memory and interior processes of mind.

As behaviour is learned through imitation and reinforcement, abnormal behaviour is seen as a result of faulty learning, and therapy is based upon learning theory, focusing on overt behaviour, precise goals, treatment plans and objective evaluation. The emphasis is on present behaviour, with little concern for past history. The goals of therapy are to eliminate maladaptive behaviour patterns and to replace them with constructive ones. Within the therapeutic relationship, the therapist is active and directive, functioning as a teacher, and clients are also expected to be active in the process. The personal relationship is

[5] According to the Oxford Dictionary, psychology is "(a) the science of the nature, function, and phenomenon of the human soul or mind. (b) A treatise on, or system of psychology." Psychotherapeutic is given as "of or pertaining to the treatment of mental or psychic disease."

not emphasized. The main therapeutic techniques are operant conditioning, systematic desensitization and assertiveness training, all of which are based on principles of learning theory, and intended to effect behavioural change.

Behaviourism, with its scientific outlook and refusal to acknowledge introspection and personal experience had a stranglehold on academic psychology until recently, but has given way to Cognitive Psychology, allowing mind and consciousness back into consideration, and giving rise to Cognitive Behaviour therapies which pay more attention to cognitive factors in determining behaviour and effecting behavioural change. Yet the influence of the physical sciences and Behaviourism is still strong, with the result that much of Cognitive Science, a contemporary hybrid discipline drawing on psychology, philosophy, linguistics, neurosciences, evolutionary biology and computer science, is concerned with artificial intelligence, and betrays a continuing reluctance to engage with specifically human intelligence. Yet there are exceptions and there is now some extremely exciting work going on in this field.[6]

The classical Analytic school arises from the works of Sigmund Freud. Its basic philosophy is that human beings are driven by sexual and aggressive impulses, and that behaviour is largely determined by unconscious motives and conflicts. It stresses the importance of early development, suggesting that later personality problems come from repressed conflicts usually occurring in childhood. Normal personality development depends on the successful resolution and integration of stages of psychosexual development. Unsuccessful resolution of one or more stages results in faulty personal development. Key concepts include the theory of unconscious motivations, division of the structure of the personality into id, ego and super-ego, the arousal of anxiety as the result of repression of basic conflicts between impulses and socialisation, and the development of ego defences to control this anxiety.

The goals of therapy are to bring the unconscious elements into consciousness, so the client can relive early experiences and work through the repressed conflict. To this end the therapeutic relationship is relatively distant, the analyst remaining anonymous allowing the analysand to develop projections towards the analyst, and the focus is on working through this transference. Therapy is usually frequent and long-term. Key techniques are dream analysis, free association, analysis of resistance, transference and interpretation. Therapy is verbal and not concerned with the body.

[6] See particularly J. Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard, 1990; J. Searle, *The Rediscovery of Mind*, Cambridge, Mass, M.I.T., 1992; F.J. Varela, E. Rosch, E. Thompson, *The Embodied Mind*, Cambridge, Mass, M.I.T., 1991; G. Edelman, *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire, On the Matter of the Mind*, London, Allen Lane, 1992.

Since the time of Freud there have been many developments in Analytic Psychology. Developmental and interpersonal issues have been particularly stressed by the Object Relations school in England, and Ego Psychology in America, which have taken Analytic Psychology away from its narrow focus on drive issues, as also has Heinz Kohut's Self Psychology. Most lively have been recent French developments centring around the work of Jacques Lacan who has allied Psychoanalysis to linguistic studies, believing the unconscious is structured like a language.

Humanistic Psychology is based upon a phenomenological rather than theoretical approach, and maintains that humans have an inclination towards health and full-functioning. It is concerned with what one of its founders, Abraham Maslow called "Being needs", the higher needs of value and meaning which arise from the sphere of culture and are superimposed upon basic biological survival needs. It upholds the increase of awareness of previously ignored or repressed feelings to actualize potential and increase trust, self-awareness and self-direction. Normal personal development results in and from congruence between the self experience and self concept, and faulty development from discrepancy between them. The emphasis is on the present moment, on the experience and on the expression of feelings. The goal of therapy is to provide a safe space for self exploration so that blocks to awareness and growth may be recognised and aspects of self formerly denied or distorted can be experienced. Clients are helped to move towards openness to all experience, greater trust in self, greater awareness of ongoing experience and increased spontaneity. The therapeutic relationship is of prime importance, and is a real and direct relationship rather than one based upon transference or projection. The emphasis is on the therapist's warmth, empathy, genuineness, congruence and communication of these qualities to the client. Techniques are considered less important than the therapist's attitude. Main techniques are active listening, reflection, clarification and presence. All the above relates directly to Carl Rogers' Person Centred approach as the prime exemplar of this school, which includes many different therapies such as Gestalt, Body centred therapies and existential therapies which may also combine the humanistic approach with analytic techniques.

Building on Humanistic psychology, Transpersonal Psychology is the fourth and most recent school. Towards the end of his life, Abraham Maslow wrote:

> "I consider Humanistic, Third Force Psychology, to be transitional, a preparation for a still 'higher' Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, trans-human, centered in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interest, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualization, and the like."[7]

[7] A. Maslow, *Towards a Psychology of Being*, Princeton, Van Nostrand, 1962, iii.

Transpersonal psychology considers that impulses toward the spiritual are basic for full humanness, and attempts to

> "integrate spiritual experience with a larger understanding of the human psyche… it is a project that attempts a true synthesis of spiritual and psychological approaches to the psyche."[8]

To this end, traditional therapeutic techniques are allied with meditation and other awareness exercises derived often from Eastern disciplines, and what may be termed 'altered states of consciousness' are explored. The view of the school is of the necessary integration of man and cosmos rather than a pure emphasis on the individual subject. "What truly defines the transpersonal dimension is a model of the human psyche that recognizes the importance of the spiritual or cosmic dimension and the potential for consciousness evolution."[9] The therapeutic relationship is again of prime importance, the power structure between therapist and client is not highly defined, the therapist is a guide and companion in 'joint practice'. Techniques are also of less importance than the relationship and the presence of the therapist, and may include awareness practices, particularly in the training of the therapist.

Ken Wilber's Spectrum of Consciousness (Fig. 1) is a useful comparative model which sees different therapies as addressing different dualities arising from a unified base of consciousness which he terms Mind, and sees as identical to the reality of the universe. (Capital M to distinguish it from the plurality of individual minds.) The first level from the ground is that of the Transpersonal Bands, where man is no longer conscious of his identity with the whole, but neither is he confined within the boundaries of the individual organism. It is on this level that Jung's collective unconscious, and mystical experiences of unity would be located. Above this is the Existential level, the level of the total organism separated from its environment. The upper limits of this level contain what Wilber calls the Biosocial Bands, "the internalised matrix of cultural premises, familial relationships and social glosses, as well as the all pervading social institutions of language, logic, ethics and law."[10] Above this again is the Ego Level where rather than being associated with his total psychosomatic organism, man identifies with his ego or mental representation or self image.

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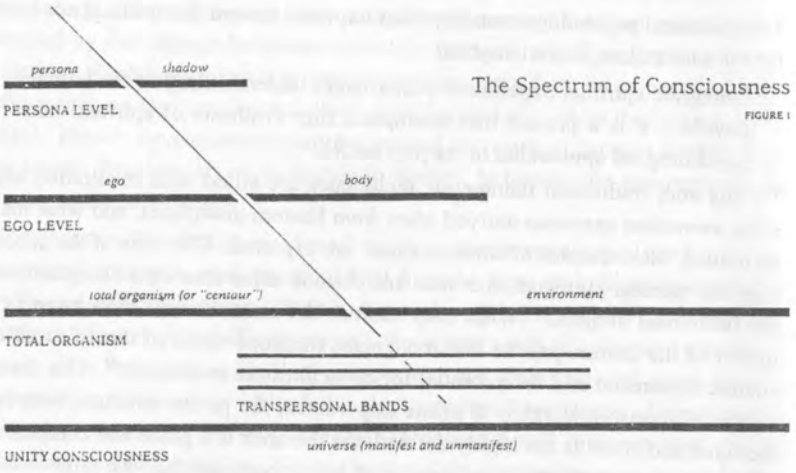
[8] M. Washburn, *The Ego and the Dynamic Grand*, Albany, New York, SUNY Press, 1988,

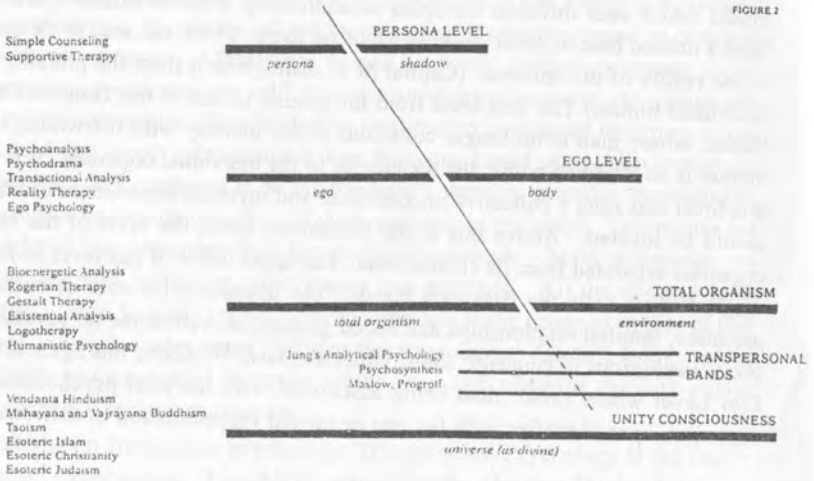
[9] S. Grof, *Beyond the Brain*, Albany, New York, SUNY Press, 1985, 197. There are also perhaps echoes here of Heidegger's later writings concerning "The Fourfold" of earth, sky, divinities and mortals. (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr., A, Hofstadter, New York, Harper, 1971, 173). Compare also "Psyche was for the Greeks an unbreakable relationship between men, gods and nature which even encompassed death." C. Hampden Turner, *Maps of the Mind*, New York, Collier, 1982, 14.

[10] K. Wilber in Vaughan & Walsh, *Beyond Ego*, Los Angeles, Tarcher Inc, 1980, 76.



The Spectrum of Consciousness

FIGURE 1



Therapies and the Levels of the Spectrum

FIGURE 2

Finally this identity is divided yet again at the Shadow Level, into persona versus shadow, those aspects of personality with which one identities and those which one cannot or will not own. Each level of the spectrum evolves from a perceived division or duality, which is accompanied by repression of the preceding unity, projection of that into two divided parts accompanied by identification with one part rather than whole, and rejection of the unidentified portion. In the Primary Dualism, Mind is divided, its non-duality is repressed and it is then projected as organism versus environment, with concomitant duality of subject and object, and the simultaneous creation of space. This first separation of organism and environment by the Primary Dualism creates the Existential Level where the Second major Dualism occurs, severing the unity of life and death, simultaneously creating time. In an attempt to flee death, the Ego Level is created with the occurrence of the Tertiary Dualism repressing the unity of the whole psychosomatic organism, projecting as the divided parts an idealized stable psychic image versus soma, and identifying solely with that mental representation, the ego or self image. Finally above the Ego Level is the Shadow level. Here is further division, the Quaternary Dualism, wherein the unity of ego is repressed and projected into persona versus shadow, the opposition of those aspects of personality with which one identifies, and those which one rejects.

In opposite order, the different schools primarily address different levels, and attempt to heal different dualities (Fig. 2). Analytic schools have addressed the intra-personal area, conflict between id and ego, conscious and unconscious, the embraced persona and the rejected shadow. Behaviourism dealing only on the level of overt behaviour fits less easily with this model as it is unconcerned with consciousness or Mind, but does deal with the inter-personal level. Humanistic Psychology is concerned with the total psychophysical organism in its interface with self and other, self and environment in the Biosocial Bands. It addresses the dualisms of body and mind, attempting to redress the modern Western imbalance in favour of mind, and of life and death, existence and non-existence. In terms of Existentialism, the prime repressed is not sexual impulse as with Psychoanalysis, but death. Finally, Transpersonal Psychology extends the territory still further to include levels of consciousness that are supraindividual, addressing the primary dualism of self and other, organism and environment. In the Transpersonal Bands, there is a way of looking *at* emotional and ideational complexes without being totally identified with them and thus looking *through* them. This is the state of witnessing, which is found in Buddhist meditation, and which is addressed by the disidentification exercises of Psychosynthesis. Recently David Loy has re-interpreted the Freudian Oedipal process yet again, suggesting that the prime repressed is neither sexual drive nor death but 'lack of being', in Buddhist terms '*anatta*'. Interpreted thus, the Oedipal project is the attempt of the developing self to

> "attain closure on itself, foreclosing its dependence on others by becoming autonomous. *To be one's own father is to be one's own origin.*

> Rather than just a way to conquer death, this makes even more sense as the quest to deny one's own groundlessness by becoming one's own ground: the ground (socially sanctioned but nonetheless illusory) of being an independent person."[11]

This is the attempt to heal the split of self from other, self from world, the repression of non-duality. In the Buddhist view the sense of self is considered a mental construct rather than a self existing reality. This constructed sense of self wants to make itself real, to ground itself:

> "the ego self is this *attempt* of awareness to objectify itself, by grasping itself—which I can no more do than a hand can grasp itself… The consequence of this is that the sense-of-self always has, as its inescapable shadow, a sense-of-*lack*."[12]

In Buddhist terms, the answer to this lack is to see that both the feeling of self and the feeling of lack are unnecessary and illusory, since the Prime Duality of self and other is itself illusory, and there neither is nor ever has been a self-existing self apart from the world. Here, already, we have a Buddhist interpretation of a psychological presentation. Let us look at the Buddhist teachings themselves.

Buddhism

The Buddhist view has a very long history of investigation into the mind and perception. It also has an ancient tradition of methods of practice designed to instantiate experientially the views which it presents. It offers a psychology of transformation, a definition of health and the possibilities of the human mind that goes far beyond anything available to a western psychotherapy, still struggling to liberate itself from a psychology of sickness, the deficiency model from which it arose. For both these reasons Buddhism presents a rich resource for western psychotherapy, a discipline which also attempts to be transformative and not merely descriptive.

After such a broad yet fundamental statement, I would like to look at some specific aspects of Buddhist philosophy which may underwrite such contention. One of the theories I consider to be of particular value to those living within the context of the contemporary Western world is that of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). In its simplest form it is stated thus:

> "When that is present, this comes to be; on the arising of that, this arises.
> When that is absent, this does not come to be; on the cessation of that,

[11] D. Loy, "The Nonduality of Life & Death, A Buddhist View of Repression", in *PEW*, 40.2, 1990, 157.
[12] *ibid.*

this ceases."[13]

In the longer form of the twelve links,[14] dependent origination is presented in terms of human life, of the unceasing wheel of saṁsāra or bound existence. This circular chain of dependent origination provides a theory of causality, which in direct contradistinction to most Western ways of thought, is not linear and substantive, but circular, reciprocal and interdependent, wherein the emphasis is shifted from things and events to process and relationship. Mind and body, belief and action, object and environment are seen to be in a reciprocal relationship, all constitutive parts of a dynamic mutually causative whole. The pivotal link, although the process is circular, is ignorance—ignorance of realisation that all is impermanent, unsatisfactory and without self or fixed essence. In the Mahāyāna, and in particular the Madhyamaka school, this lack of self or essence is expanded into the central doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Emptiness is grounded on, and indeed *is*, this very interdependence; the emptiness of inherent existence or self-sufficient essence of the mutually dependent parts. As Nāgārjuna wrote:

> "We declare that whatever is relational origination is *śūnyatā*. It is a provisional name (*i.e.* thought construction) for the mutuality (of being) and, indeed, it is the middle path."[15]

I suggest that it is this concept of the 'Middle Path' or 'Middle Way' between absolutism and nihilism that is of such value in the context of contemporary Western discourse[16] since it not only provides a view but equally importantly a 'way' of realising or instantiating such a view. It is also a view which upholds a transcendent function while not denying the actuality of everyday existence. This is explained in the doctrine of the Two Truths; the fundamental Buddhist view that there are two levels of reality or truth, the relative and conventional reality of phenomena, and the absolute reality of their ultimate emptiness of own-being or essence.

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[13] *Majjhima-nikāya* I, 262; *Samyutta-nikāya* II, 28, in D.J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1992, 56.

[14] Ignorance, dispositions, consciousness, psychophysical personality, six senses, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair. *Samyutta-nikāya* II, 16-17. D.J. Kalupahana, *op. cit.*, 58

[15] Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, XXIV, 18; tr., K. Inada, Tokyo, Hokuseido Press, 1970.

[16] For a discussion of the Middle, Way see M. Sprung, "Being and the Middle Way", in M. Sprung, ed., *The Question of Being*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978. He describes a 'way' as "not composed of a subject and a world. There is no dichotomy of subject and object, inner and outer." The Middle Way is "the practice of wisdom, not a means to it. It embodies knowledge but is not a knowing.", 136.

Here, ontology and epistemology are united; two levels of reality are, in fact, two ways of understanding. This is an important factor in the Buddhist psychology of perception. "From the common Buddhist outlook, we cannot really distinguish between an 'objective' and a 'subjective' world, we cannot really isolate 'facts' from 'judgements'."[17] In the Mahāyāna, these beliefs underlie all Buddhist theories of perception, wherein all mind states are seen to arise from the interaction of various interdependent causes and conditions, and pure non-conceptual clear mind comes to be veiled with obscurations, chief of which is ignorance of emptiness. Each moment of pure perception is obscured by accretions of ignorance, volitional dispositions and feelings. The aim in Buddhist practice is to train the mind in a gradual progression from false view to valid perception using different logical tools (consequence, syllogism, conclusive reasoning), and finally to achieve direct perception of reality as a result of meditative training. Through understanding emptiness and the processes of perception, the mind is trained to avoid the seemingly inbuilt commitment to hypostatization and substance ontology that Paul Feyerabend has called "the natural interpretation."

These Buddhist doctrines, I contend, can uphold value in an impermanent world, for the interdependence expressed by the apophatic negations of Nāgārjuna, the eight negative marks of all phenomena:

> "non-origination, non-extinction,
> non-destruction, non-permanence,
> non-identity, non-differentiation,
> non-coming (into being), non-going (out of being)",[18]

is also cataphatically expressed in the doctrine of the non-obstruction and interpenetration of the six characteristics of Fa Tsang's Hua Yen Buddhism, which observes the interdependency of three pairs of antitheses: universality and particularity, identity and difference, integration and disintegration.[19] Emptiness may be viewed not merely as negation, but also as possibility, indeed as that without which nothing is possible.

> "Any factor of experience which does not participate in
> relational origination cannot exist. Therefore any factor of
> experience not in the nature of *sunya* cannnot exist."[20]

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[17] C. Lindtner, *Nagarjuniana*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas, 1987, 270. A note appended to the above quotation refers to the ambiguity found in such key terms as *artha* = object or meaning, *upalabdhi* = exist or perceive, *prapanca* = universe or language, *satya* = reality or truth, *sad* = real or good.
[18] Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, dedicatory verse, tr., Inada, *op. cit.*, 1970, 39.
[19] see F. Cook, *Hua Yen Buddhism*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977, 48, 76ff.
[20] Nāgārjuna as note 16, XXIV, 19.

When emptiness is realised, what is seen is suchness, *tathatā*, the suchness of things as they are, freshly presented rather than represented through the veils of conceptuality and emotion. As described by David Loy:

> "If each link of *pratitya samutpada* is conditioned by all the others, then to become completely groundless is also to become completely grounded, not in some particular, but in the whole network of interdependent relations that constitutes the world."[21]

Experience and Meaning

These theories, I suggest, may be of great value in the West where the tremendous changes in recent science and philosophy have swept the ground from beneath traditional beliefs and led to a climate of nihilism and emotional vacuum, which must influence the approach of any contemporary psychotherapy. For the presenting symptoms of psychotherapeutic patients have changed considerably since Freud's time. As a contemporary philosopher has described:

> "It has frequently been remarked by psycho-analysts that the period in which hysterics and patients with phobias and fixations formed the bulk of their clientele, starting in their classical period with Freud, has recently given way to a time when the main complaints centre around 'ego loss,' or a sense of emptiness, flatness, futility, lack of purpose or loss of self-esteem… it seems overwhelmingly plausible… that the comparatively recent shift in style of pathology reflects the generalization and popularization in our culture of that 'loss of horizon', which a few alert spirits were foretelling for a century or more".[22]

Each of the schools of psychotherapy described earlier presents an attempt to find a field of meaning which will encompass and contain the dualities it addresses. A search for meaningful models for our lives is central to psychotherapy. Carl Jung believed that "psychoneurosis must be understood, ultimately, as the suffering of a soul which has not discovered its meaning"[23] and that "it is only meaning which liberates."[24] Victor Frankl, the creator of Logotherapy, also considered that man is "primarily motivated by the search for meaning to his existence, by the striving to fulfill this meaning and thereby to actualize as many value potentialities as possible. In short man is motivated by

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[21] D. Loy, "Avoiding the Void: The Lack of Self in Psychotherapy & Buddhism", *JTP*, 24, 2, 1992, 174.
[22] C.Taylor, *Sources of the Self, The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1989, 19. He describes "loss of horizon" as a "dissipation of our sense of cosmos as a meaningful order."
[23] C.G. Jung, l959, "Psychotherapists or the Clergy", in his *Collected Works*, vol. 11: Psychology and Religion East and West, trans. R.F.C. Hull, London, Routledge, 334.
[24] *ibid.*, 330.

the will to meaning."[25] Such meanings are no longer found objects but must be created:

> "A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives. Self-understanding requires unending negotiation and re-negotiation of the meaning of your experience to yourself. In therapy, for example, much of self-understanding involves consciously recognizing previously unconscious metaphors and how we live by them. It involves the constant construction of new coherences in your life, coherences that give meaning to old experiences. The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life stories for yourself."[26]

T.S. Eliot wrote: "We had the experience but missed the meaning."[27] There is, however, another way of looking at this—from the other pole. We have so many theoretical meanings which have lost their grounding in experience that we have in fact lost the experience itself. As the historian of mythology Joseph Campbell has said: "we let the concept swallow up the percept… thus defending ourselves from experience."[28] When previous sources of meaning and certainty are threatened, we tend to cling to the forms, in defense against the uncertainty of experience. It is my contention in this paper that Buddhism can help to provide views which can uphold meanings acceptable to the contemporary world, and methods of experiential praxis which instantiate these views; can, in short, unite meaning and experience. This is certainly the field of psychotherapy, for I would say of psychotherapy what Campbell states of art: "The function of art is to render a *sense of existence*, not an *assurance of some meaning*."[29]

Heidegger defined the modern period "by the fact that man becomes the centre and measure of all being… "[30] Today, far from such certainty decentred man is now in the postmodern world, defined by Lyotard by its "incredulity towards metanarratives",[31] those metanarratives upon which, in the past, we have founded our theories of meaning and value. I would like to look at five particular themes which reoccur in the contemporary Western discourse as

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[25] V. Frankl, *Psychotherapy & Existentialism*, London, Pelican, 1967, 74.
[26] G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1980, 233.
[27] T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages", *Collected Poems 1909–1963*, London, Faber & Faber, 1963.
[28] J. Campbell, *The Flight of the Wild Gander*, New York, Harper, 1990, 186.
[29] *ibid.*, 188.
[30] M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. IV, New York, Harper & Row, l982, 28.
[31] J.F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. G. Bennington & B. Massumi, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984, xxiv.

exemplars for our present purposes of both lost certainties and new views. It is my view that there is a great deal of commensurability between these new views in the West and traditional Buddhist views, and that Buddhism has much to offer because of the length and strength of its tradition, and most especially in its methods of cultivation, whereby such views are not merely descriptive, but realised experientially and embodied as Sprung has described in a 'way'. Indeed, the Buddhist 'Middle Way' may offer a middle path of movement and transformation between now unacceptable alternatives.

Interdependence

First, Buddhism offers an holistic world view of interdependence of man and the world. A viewpoint that can not only live with, but also be grounded in change and impermanence. In this century the sense of scientific certainty in the West, the Newtonian universe of space, time, matter and linear causation has been turned upside down, and even the ability of science to find the truth about an objectively existing real world has been challenged. In the astrophysics of vast distances and the micro world within the atom, discoveries have been made with implications for our intermediate human world that have still not become part of our experience, and which call into question the very possibility of pure, objective perception. A recent definition of perception as "a process in which meaning, motivation and emotional response all enter in at deeply subconscious levels… The 'outer world' and the 'inner world' are mutually fabricated in an active reciprocal process"[32] fits well with the Buddhist view. Such a view may provide a middle way of interdependence between the traditional Western dualities, a non-dual alternative to either/or, for "…in the Western tradition, when you doubt the existence of a real objective world, the only alternative you have is subjectivity. Everything is thrown back on the individual mind."[33]

This interdependence calls for an interdisciplinary approach, and is currently the field of exploration of various hybrid disciplines such as the Cognitive Science and General Systems Theory, on the fringes of which some very interesting dialogues have taken place with Buddhist thought.[34] Systems Theory

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[32] J. Hayward, *Shifting Worlds, Changing Minds*, Boston, Shambhala, 1987, 35.
[33] J. Hayward, in J. Hayward & Varela, eds., *Gentle Bridges, Conversations with the Dalai Lama on the Sciences of Mind*, Boston, Shambhala, 1992, 13.
[34] See J. Macy, *Mutual Causality in Buddhist and General Systems Theory*, Albany, New York, SUNY Press, 1991, and F.J. Varela, E. Thompson & E. Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, Cambridge, Mass., M.I.T., 1991. Also, two volumes of discussion between the Dalai Lama and Westerners concerning Mind Sciences; D. Goleman & R. Thurman eds., *Mind Science*, Boston, Wisdom, 1991, and J. Hayward & F. Varela, eds., *op. cit.*; also G.Watson, S. Batchelor & G. Claxton, eds., *The Fly & the Flybottle*, Sharpham, Devon, Sharpham Trust, 1992.

is perhaps the Western model which comes closest to the Buddhist world view.[35] Both are grounded in interrelationship. According to the Buddhist model perception arises from convergence of sense organ, sense object and consciousness, the last of which is, as we have discussed, causally affected by conditionings and tendencies of past perception, feeling and action. In the Systems Theory model input from environment arrives in terms of percepts which are interpreted in terms of the system's constructs which screen and order the data registered by the senses. As these constructs too are formed by past experience, perception here also is seen to be 'theory-laden'. Similarly in a reciprocal interplay of structure and process, body and mind, doer and deed, self and society are seen as mutually co-dependent. Each system or subsystem is embedded in a larger whole.

One result of such a view is an end to ego-centricity. When we can see that our normal understanding of self is an incorrectly separated and reified part of a larger process, a construct of the mind's grasping for identity to fulfil its perceived lack, we can give up this self, and the sense of lack too, will disappear, since neither lack nor separate self really existed. When we give up clinging to this constricted separated self, this template or label which we have superimposed on the flow of experience, we see that it has obscured our awareness of our own identity with that flow. Abandoning clinging to self, "only process remains and we are that process in its totality."[36]

Self

This Cognitive Science and Systems Theory view of the self as a small part of a larger system, a false reification of part of a process, is at least comparable to the Buddhist view of non-self. As the certainty of an objectively existent world has faded, so has that of a single unified self. Many works of literature, science and the discoveries of Freud all deconstructed this view, and though current theories are multifarious and come from many different angles, they all seem agreed that the self is, in fact, a construct of one sort or another, dependent on many things.

Out of the various disciplines I would like to give some examples. Philosopher Charles Taylor believes that the self is based on "an orientation to the good, that we essentially are (i.e. define ourselves at least inter alia by), where we stand on this."[37] Physicist Danah Zohar seeks the sense of self in quantum physics.[38] Ethologist John Crook sees a sense of self as developmentally dependent upon:

[35] For a detailed comparison see J. Macy, *op. cit.*.
[36] L.E. Olds, *Metaphors of Relatedness*, Albany, SUNY, 1992, 65.
[37] C.Taylor, *Sources of the Self, The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1989, 33.
[38] D. Zohar, *The Quantum Self*, London, Flamingo, 1991.

> "the growth of its (the child's) cognitive abilities in categorization, its experience of contingency and agency in interaction with care-givers, and its experience of the emotional quality of its own conscious states… 'Identity' is not some immutable property of the species but an often painfully constructed set of conceptualizations and attendant feelings that relate the individual to his transient experience of the world."[39]

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson also see the self as a conceptualization, for them the separation of the subject of experience is a product of language, of the coherent structure of metaphors, the cultural presuppositions in which our experience is embedded. They believe, as quoted earlier, that "a large part of self understanding is the search for appropriate metaphors that make sense of our lives."[40]

Language

There is a central concern with language in contemporary Western thought. Here again the picture is one of the ending of old certainties. As we saw that according to Buddhist psychology perception is not viewed as representation of an independently-existing world, so in contemporary discourse language is no longer seen as merely taking its meaning from being a faithful representation of an objective external reality, but rather as helping to create the very ways in which we experience the world. "Our concept of reality is a matter of our linguistic categories."[41] Wittgenstein's philosophy outlined the idea of language 'games' in which words take their meaning from their context, their relationship to other words rather than by virtue of their representative character. We can no longer uphold a referential view of language or a correspondence theory of truth, which is indeed the view found in Madhyamaka. Current Buddhist scholars have indeed reinterpreted Madhyamaka works in the light of recent linguistic philosophy.[42]

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[39] J. Crook, *The Evolution of Human Consciousness*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980, 254 & 276, (parentheses mine).
[40] G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, *op. cit.*, 233.
[41] J. Searle in B. Magee, ed., *Men of Ideas*, London, BBC, 1978, 184.
[42] see R. Thurman, *Tsong Khapa's Speech of Gold in the Essence of the Eloquence*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, 92. "These subtleties could not even be translated intelligibly into Euro-American philosophical discourse, were it not for the consummation of the enterprise of critical philosophy reached by Wittgenstein. The overthrow of dogmaticist privacy in his mature works provides for the first time in Western philosophy a texture of inquiry suitable to parallel that of Tsong Kha pa." See also C. Gudmunsen, *Wittgenstein and Buddhism*, London, Macmillan, 1977; C.W. Huntingdon, *The Emptiness of Emptiness*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii, 1989; F. Streng, Emptiness, *A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1967. For a study of Western philosophical interpretations of Nāgārjuna, see A.Tuck, *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship*, New York, OUP, 1990.

> "From the Mādhyamika's perspective, the meaning of a word or concept invariably derives from its applications within a context of sociolinguistic relations and not through reference to any self-sufficient and independently real object."[43]

Embodiment

Professor of Linguistics George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson believe that our language is based on metaphor and that the ground of many of our most basic metaphors come from embodiment, and propose embodiment as the origin of meaning.[44] Johnson suggests that our embodiment is essential to who we are, and to what meaning is, and in another view of interdependence, that our very "consciousness and our rationality are tied to our bodily orientations and interactions in and with our environment."[45] Neurobiologist Gerald Edelman agrees with this theory but feels that it fails to show *how* this comes to pass, and how symbolic idealized cognitive models of language arise as the result of the mechanisms of perceptual and conceptual categorization. For this he believes a biological theory of brain function and consciousness based on facts of evolution and development is necessary, and is supplied by his own theory of Neuronal Group Selection. Such a theory places mind and consciousness in brain function without reductionism, attempting to avoid the strict dualism of mind and matter. Edelman believes his theory "aims to provide a biological basis for the construction of meaning… With this foundation, we can see how consciousness based on evolved value systems and driven by language, leads to the extension and modification of those systems in a culture."[46] This provides a biological foundation for the view of a Cultural Psychology advocated by Jerome Bruner in his book *Acts of Meaning*.[47] Another philosopher John Searle, has a similar view:

> "Mental phenomena are caused by neurophysiological processes in the brain, and are themselves features of the brain… Both consciousness and

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[43] C.W. Huntingdon, *op. cit.*, 113.
[44] G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, *op. cit.*; M. Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987, xxxviii.
[45] M. Johnson, *op. cit.*, xxxviii.
[46] G. Edelman, *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire, On the Matter of the Mind*, London, Allen Lane, 1992, 175.
[47] J. Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, Cambridge, Mass., 1990. If the Cognitive Revolution was an overthrow of Behaviourism in favour of establishing meaning as the central concept of psychology, Cultural Psychology takes the view that the construction and usage of meanings are culturally influenced, and that no human nature is thus independent of culture.

> intentionality are biological processes caused by lower-level neuronal processes in the brain, and neither is reducible to something else".[48]

Western thought, caught again between the choice of Mind/Body dualism or monism of one alternative, finds itself in an impasse. As Searle states:

> "It is essential to show that both dualism and monism are false because it is generally supposed that these exhaust the field, leaving no other options."[49]

Again the middle way of emptiness and the two truths may offer a different hermeneutic.

Varela, Thompson and Rosch propose a dialogue between Buddhism and Cognitive Science, to bring about a change in the nature of reflection from

> "abstract disembodied activity to an embodied (mindful), open-ended reflection. By *embodied*, we mean reflection in which body and mind have been brought together. What this formulation intends to convey is that reflection is not just on experience, but reflection *is* a form of experience itself—and that reflective form of experience can be performed with mindfulness/awareness. When reflection is done in that way, it can cut the chain of habitual thought patterns and preconceptions such that it can be an open-ended reflection, open to possibilities other than those contained in one's current representation of the life space."[50]

The authors look to Buddhist traditions of mindfulness/awareness to act as a bridge between the descriptions of Cognitive Science and human experience, believing that these can provide the grounding in embodied experience, and the transformative power to enable us to live healthily and happily in a world without fixed foundation, for "the intimation of egolessness… opens up the lived world as path, as the locus for realization."[51]

Alternative to Nihilism

These foregoing topics arise mainly from the current scientific point of view but alongside, and sometimes as a result of the loss of scientific certainty, has gone a similar loss of the certainties of philosophy and religion. Starting with Nietzsche, through Heidegger, the Existentialists and Derrida, philosophies of presence and transcendence, 'ontotheologies' and 'logocentrism' have been attacked and deconstructed, and their underlying grounds of validity devalued. When meaning is seen to be merely a function of use within a particular discourse, philosophy can hardly be foundational or systematic, for any

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[48] J.Searle, *The Rediscovery of Mind*, Cambridge, Mass, M.I.T., 1992, 1 and xii.
[49] *ibid.*, 3.
[50] F. Varela, E. Thompson, E. Rosch, *op. cit.*, 27.
[51] *ibid.*, 234.

ahistorical, transcendent or extra-linguistic foundations upon which to build have been deconstructed and delegitimised. In the words of contemporary philosopher Richard Rorty, philosophy today can only be therapeutic or edifying. Rather than weaving an endless series of arguments in a futile attempt to establish some new absolute or justification for a presupposition of some metaphysical reality behind appearances, we should accept everyday pragmatic considerations as sufficient in themselves and find meanings in the very changefulness which lacks foundation. According to Rorty "the point of edifying philosophy is to keep the conversation going rather than to find truth."[52] That would seem to accord with Buddhist conventional truth but leaves out of account any possibly different truth. I believe that the Buddhist absolute truth—of emptiness—can offer both a different sort of truth and one which does not, as Rorty fears, attempt "to close off conversation by proposals for universal commensuration through the hypostatization of some privileged set of descriptions" resulting in "the dehumanization of human beings."[53]

Wittgenstein wrote that the aim of philosophy is "to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle",[54] and this idea of liberation is, of course, central to Buddhism, whose philosophy is pre-eminently at the service of soteriology. I would like to suggest that not only did Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka view of emptiness and dependent origination carry out the deconstruction of unjustifiable absolutism nearly two thousand years ago but that it also leaves an opening for value and for meaning which the contemporary West seems to find difficult or impossible in the absence of transcendental absolutes. The goal offered by Buddhism is transformation and liberation. The ground is seen not as an absolute nor a private object, or any reified concept or unfounded being outside of any system, but rather the totality of the dependently originated system itself. Questions of representation and correspondence, subject and object are dissolved into an inactive presentation,

> "leaving behind nothing other than a dramatic awareness of the living present—an epiphany of one's entire form of life. No form of conceptual diffusion remains, and no questions begging for answers that re-inforce a deep-seated resistance to acceptance that this life, as it is now lived, is the only arbiter of truth and reality."[55]

The Japanese philosopher Keiji Nishitani saw in emptiness the sole concept which could lead beyond the nihilism which he saw as 'relative nothingness':

[52] R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1980, 377.
[53] *ibid.*
[54] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford, Blackwell, 1967, 103.
[55] C.W. Huntingdon, *op. cit.*, 136.

> "the representation of nothingness in nihilism still shows traces of the bias of objectification, of taking nothingness as some 'thing' called nothingness."[56]

In contrast *sūnyatā*, having emptied itself of even this representation of emptiness is "to be realized as something united to and self-identical with being."[57] This field of *sūnyatā* becomes a third possibility, a non-duality beyond the many dualities that have constricted so many Western views. Beyond the field of reason and on the far side of nihilism which is to Nishitani a transitional state, one can reach absolute emptiness where in contrast to the nihilistic view one sees "not that the self is empty, but emptiness is the self: not that things are empty, but that emptiness is things."[58] Or, as in the *Heart Sūtra*, "Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is Form", and meaning and value can re-enter upon the very field of emptiness.

These necessarily brief notes may, I hope, illuminate the contention of this paper that dependent origination and emptiness may allow for a middle way between the eternalism of the old certainties and the nihilism which in the West has often resulted from their overthrow. It provides a path grounded in groundlessness and openness, a meaning which comes from the very freedom from fixed meaning, a dynamic holistic, ever-shifting meaning which creates itself as it evolves. Moreover, most importantly, within the Buddhist framework this view or ground is united with the experience of the practice of the path.

PATH

Buddhism, unlike other philosophies used as foundational for psychotherapy *e.g.* Existentialism, also provides a repertoire of practical methods. For psychotherapy is itself a discipline concerned with praxis, seeking methods both to access experience, to understand it and to transform it. The Buddhist path is generally grouped into three aspects: Discipline, Meditation and Wisdom. They are, of course, interdependent, but in so far as they are separable I believe the Wisdom aspect has been spoken of in the earlier part of this paper, and is most important in the training and in the understanding of therapists. I would like to quote here a statement from Medard Boss, the author of *Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychiatry*:

> "It is not necessary that the patient himself learn to recognize theoretically the ontological existential structure of being-in-the-world. His insight need not extend beyond the limits of his individual, directly perceptible, ontic ways of relating to the therapist. But it is the duty of

[56] Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, tr., J. van Bragt, Berkeley, University of California, 1982, 95.
[57] *ibid.*, 97.
[58] *ibid.*, 138.

> the latter to become thoroughly acquainted with, and clearly aware of, the ontological nature of being together in order to give his treatment a scientific foundation."[59]

I believe this holds good equally for a Buddhist approach.

Discipline or Morality, I suggest, is important to a Buddhist therapy. The tendency in Western psychotherapy is to ignore moral issues except insofar as they relate specifically to the therapeutic relationship itself, and while shying away from the more culturally specific and overtly disciplinarian approaches of some Japanese Zen-based therapies such as Morita, and upholding the importance of the non-directive stance of most Western therapy, I feel that this is an area which should, at the very least, inform the attitude of the therapist. However, discussion of this issue is outside the scope of this paper. Yet a way of life based on an understanding of dependent origination and emptiness must imply a compassion, a 'feeling-with' and non-separation from others, a striving to turn away from a totally selfish and self-centred existence. Such a view will support a sense of morality based on mutuality, responsibility and response-ability, the ability to respond to others. As Joanna Macy points out, in the mutually causal view the liberation of the individual and the health of society are inseparable.[60]

However it is with the path of awareness, with right mindfulness and meditation that Buddhism offers the greatest tools for psychotherapy, in particular insight meditation, watching the mind (*Vīpaśyanā*). Indeed most people expect any discussion about Buddhism and therapy to centre primarily on meditation. Varela, Rosch, and Thompson point to the Buddhist mindfulness/awareness tradition as a bridge between Cognitive Science and experience. And indeed, perhaps it is in meditation that we can take the step Heidegger called for: "the step back from the thinking that merely represents … to the thinking that responds and recalls."[61] However, while in no way denying the value of meditation as a therapeutic tool, I want to approach it in perhaps a rather different way, and to differentiate clearly between the use of meditation in a Buddhist context and in a therapeutic one. I see meditation as a formal practice in psychotherapy pre-eminently for the therapist, rather than for the client; for the therapist as a personal practice, as an aid in the exploration of, and familiarisation with, their own mind states. As training, it is a method for becoming aware of and understanding the number, quality, impermanence and change of mental states, and of building up the necessary 'balance' to enable one

[59] M. Boss, *The Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychiatry*, New York, Jason Aronson, 1980, 280.
[60] J. Macy, *op. cit.*, Chapter 11.
[61] M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr., A. Hofstadter, New York, Harper, 1971, 181.

to ride one's experience without being imprisoned in reaction. Having become comfortable and relatively unshockable in their own mental world therapists can extend that same ease to their clients. Meditation is also the path to the experience and embodied realisation of the view of emptiness and interdependence.

It can also be a vehicle for transformation. "Some form of contemplative or meditative practice that is able to bring awareness of non-duality and the inherent compassion that is inseparable from it, would provide the practical basis for the change of our belief context and our world."[62] Specific meditational practices such as *maitrī* and meditation on the Four Immeasurable States obviously help to foster and generate healthy mind states, conducive to healing. They may be ways to teach the generation of the 'unconditioned positive regard' put forward by Humanistic Psychologist Carl Rogers as one of the four pillars of his person-centred approach which is so influential in contemporary counselling and psychotherapy. Such meditative practices as 'exchange of self and others' are most useful in the generation of altruism, in the fostering of positive attitudes and in the combatting of negative attitudes. The present Dalai Lama speaks often of such uses, all of which are of inestimable value for a therapist, which is not to say that they are not so for everyone. What I would say is that I do not believe therapy should be confused with Buddhist teaching. If a client has an existent formal practice, so much the better and more helpful, but if, during therapy they wish to learn one, I believe it is better they should seek out a Buddhist or meditation teacher, rather than learning from their therapist, and confusing the two roles of teacher and therapist.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the meditative state lies in the extension of this to a way of being for the therapist with a client. In view of what has been discussed above relating to the interdependence of self and other, knower and known, it should make sense that a meditative state, or a state of open and unfixed attention, as far as possible from the normal focused state of reification is a state best able to penetrate into the intermediate state of relationship. One of the few Buddhist psychotherapy trainings refers to this as Joint Practice. Its founder Maura Sills has written:

> "Core Process psychotherapy is simply a joint enquiry into relationship. It seems that if one can abide in the imminent experiential moment, no suffering arises. Our reactive relationship to experience is the vehicle for confusion and ignorance with its concomitant suffering."[63]

[62] J. Hayward, *Shifting Worlds, Changing Minds*, Boston, Shambhala, 1987, 282.
[63] M. Sills, "Veils and Seals: A Reflection on Buddhism and Cognitive Science", unpublished paper.

John Welwood, an American clinical psychologist and one of the best writers about Buddhist psychotherapy has also described this, and I consider his description is worth quoting at length:

> "In the therapy situation, the client's problems or emotions are like the thoughts that arise when you are sitting. You, the listener, provide the space which coming back to the breath allows in meditation. You have to fully respect and bow to the form—the client's real problem—listen to it and take it in. If you don't do that, there isn't a connection between the two of you that can effect healing… The process of transformation that happens between two people in therapy is similar to what may take place inside a single person in meditation. In mindfulness practice, as painful thoughts and emotions arise, we note them, bow to them, acknowledge them, then let them go and come back to the break, which is a concrete manifestation of open space. This process of going into and out of form in meditation is what allows transformation to take place… the great challenge of working on oneself is in bringing our larger open awareness to bear on our frozen karmic structures… Our large awareness usually gets buried or stuck in problems, emotion, reactions, or else it may try to detach and fly away into the sky. But a third alternative is to stay with our frozen structures and transform them. That is the core of practice, I believe, in both psychotherapy and meditation."[64]

Indeed such a meditative non-focused state is close to the "evenly hovering attention" which was the state recommended for analysts by Freud. It is a state commonly recommended, though differently described by many different schools of psychotherapy.[65]

Similarly in an interview, a teacher of meditation speaks of his experience of teaching a meditation class for therapists from three perspectives. The first was the general human one,

> "the second was the advantage for the therapist of being in a meditative state while they conduct therapy. Such a state creates the attentional focus and emotional dispassion that is a good therapeutic milieu… The third thing I taught them was that *some* clients, but of course not all, could be guided by the therapist into a meditative state, talking about their issues and doing their therapy *within* the 'witness state'."[66]

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[64] J. Welwood, "Principles of Inner Work, Psychological and Spiritual", *JTP*, 16, 1, 1984, 71–2.
[65] see M. Lefebure, *Human Experience & The Art of Counselling*, Edinburgh, T.& T. Clark, 1985, 12; and J. Welwood, "Meditation and the Unconscious, A New Perspective", *JTP*, 1.1, 1977.
[66] C. Tart, "Adapting Eastern Spiritual Techniques to Western Culture, A Discussion with Shinzen Young", *JTP*, 22.2, 1990, 163.

All this emphasis on awareness and presence is of particular importance when one takes into account that as Jung wrote "the attitude of the psychotherapist is infinitely more important than the theories and methods of psychotherapy."[67] Recent research has corroborated this opinion.[68] Medard Boss also wrote

> "of the certainty that what our psychotherapy needs above all is a change in the psychotherapists. If our science of mental health is to become more effective psychotherapists will have to balance their knowledge of psychological concepts and techniques with a contemplative awareness… This will have to be an awareness that exercises itself day after day in quiet openness; it must address the inexplicable origin of all that is, of the healthy and the sick and also of all psychotherapeutic interventions. Then psychiatrists, in their own way, will be able to help people who are becoming increasingly alienated from their own roots."[69]

If formal meditation practice is primarily for the therapist, mindfulness is surely primary for the client. The aim of therapy is to bring awareness, and in its wake, space and choice, to the conditioned reactive responses with which we greet new experience. Such awareness allows us to experience the reality of the Buddhist models of perception.

Today Thich Nhat Hanh is perhaps the finest teacher of the benefits of mindfulness, and current interpreter of the basic practice of the Fourfold Mindfulness of breathing and body, feelings, mind and the objects of mind. Mindfulness encourages us to ground our experience in awareness rather than in accustomed forgetfulness through which we lose touch with ourselves and our environment. It serves to bring us into the present moment "the only moment we can touch life."[70] This can help to heal alienation from ourselves, our experience and our world, and can re-introduce lived meaning. He too emphasizes the transformative power of mindfulness.

> "Our mindfulness has the same function as the light of the sun. If we shine the light of full awareness steadily on our state of mind, that state of mind will transform into something better. The point of meditation is to look deeply into things in order to be able to see their nature. The nature of things is interdependent origination, the true source of everything that

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[67] C.G. Jung, "Psychotherapists or the Clergy" in *Collected Works*. Vol. 11: *Psychology and Religion East and West*, tr., R.F.C. Hull, London, Routledge, 1958, 346.
[68] See R. Russell, *Report on Effective Therapy and Legislative Testimony*, New York, RR Latin Associates, 1981; and George Mora, *Recent American Psychiatric Developments*, in American Handbook of Psychiatry, New York, Basic Books, 1960.
[69] M. Boss, "Eastern Wisdom and Western Therapy", in J. Welwood, ed., *The Meeting of the Ways*, New York, Schocken, 1978, 191.
[70] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Transformation and Healing*, Berkeley, Parallax Press, 1990, 40.

> is. If we look into our anger, we can see its roots, such as misunderstanding (and ignorance), clumsiness (or lack or skill), the surrounding society, hidden resentment, habit (or our conditioning). These roots can be present both in ourselves and in the person who played the principal role in allowing the anger to arise. We observe mindfully in order to be able to see and to understand. Seeing and understanding are the elements of liberation which allow us to be free of the suffering which always accompanies anger. Seeing and understanding bring about love and compassion. … our anger is a field of energy. Thanks to our mindful observation and insight into its roots, we can change this energy into the energy of love and compassion a constructive and healing energy."[71]

For the purposes of this paper the meditation spoken of in this passage would be instantiated in the transaction between therapist and client.

A comparable approach in Western terms is that of Eugene Gendlin who contends that practising mindfulness can open us up to non-ego experience that is not purely unconscious, and occurs in awareness, but of which, without practice, we remain unaware. He refers to this as "intricacy" or "felt sense"[72] and it is the object of his technique of "Focusing." Not only does "focusing", awareness of experiential intricacy, help us to extend openness and retrieve experience for consciousness, but in so doing it can actually change us. It is another example of embodied enactive experience.

So a therapist will first foster mindfulness and awareness, which allows emotions, feeling and thoughts to arise into consciousness, bringing the client into touch with their inner life, offering therapy as joint practice, a meditation shared with the therapist as guide and protector, to explore in a protected space issues which might be overwhelming if faced alone, or in an unprotected space.

GOAL

I should like to suggest that the goals of Buddhism and psychotherapy are similar in quality though very different in quantity. The quality in question is that of liberation through clear perception and experience, liberation from constriction, grasping and ignorance. In the case of Buddhism it is an unconditional liberation from *saṃsāra* itself and all its ills; in therapy the goal is far less. It is a more or less conditional freedom, ranging from liberation from specific ills which cause particular suffering, to an open-ended attempt to push back the limitations of our potential.

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[71] *ibid.*, 86.

[72] E. Gendlin, *Focusing*, New York, Bantam Books, 1978, 251; and "A Philosophical Critique of Narcissism", in D.M. Levin, ed., *Pathologies of the Modern Self*, New York University Press, 1987, throughout.

The incumbent Dalai Lama has been the most consistent advocate for the use and possibilities of Buddhist mind training in lesser contexts than that of the Buddhist path. In his address to the Oxford Union in 1991 he said:

> "Just as I believe it myself I often mention to others that it is possible for people to adopt various Buddhist meditative techniques or mental trainings without being a Buddhist. After all, adoption of a specific religion is the business of the individual whereas the techniques of training the mind can remain universally applicable."[73]

Elsewhere he has said of mind training: "The primary aim… is the attainment of enlightenment, but it is possible to experience even mundane benefits, such as good health by practising them." He states two reasons for the importance of understanding the nature of mind: "firstly for its intimate connection with *karma*; the other is that our state of mind plays a crucial role in our experience of happiness and suffering."[74]

Having stated that I advocate the claim that the goals of psychotherapy and Buddhism to be compatible, perhaps it is appropriate here to address briefly the topic which is often taken to show their crucial differences in both approach and end—the self. How can psychotherapy which is believed to be a work of strengthening and propping up the ego be compatible with a philosophy that declares as a major tenet the non-existence of the ego? As with emptiness, I suggest that such apparent contradictions melt in the light of a true understanding, and definition of terms, of non-self. The Buddha displayed a pragmatic ego, a distinct personality, operating conventionally within the *saṃsāric* world. This is necessary and acceptable. What is to be abandoned is the belief in this conventional and functional ego as being intrinsic, partless or permanent, and the egocentric self-cherishing that results from such a view.

Jack Engler, an American psychologist and *vipassanā* meditation teacher has written most convincingly on this subject:

> "Though they value ego-development differently, both Buddhist psychology and psycho-analytic object relations theory *define the essence of the ego in a similar way* as a process of synthesis and adaptation between the inner life and outer reality which provides a sense of personal continuity and sameness in the felt experience of being a 'self', a feeling of being and ongoingness in existence… In both psychologies then, the sense of 'I', of personal unity and continuity… is conceived as something which is not innate in personality, not inherent in our psychological or spiritual makeup, but as *evolving developmentally out of*

[73] H.H. The Dalai Lama, "Tibet's Contribution to the Future", Oxford Union Address, 2/12/1991, London, Office of Tibet.
[74] H.H. The Dalai Lama, in D. Goleman, R. Thurman, eds., *op. cit.*, 16.

> *our experience of objects and the kinds of interactions we have with them*… In fact, the self is viewed in both psychologies as a representation which is *actually being constructed anew from moment to moment*."[75]

The developmental task is to acquire a coherent functioning sense of self, and then to see through the illusion or construct. In fact "you have to be somebody before you can be nobody",[76] and the issue is not, self or no-self but self *and* no-self. There are dangers here too from a Western psychological perspective. Ken Wilber has delineated what he calls the pre/trans fallacy, the danger of mistaking an early state of undeveloped and undifferentiated ego, with a later state of transcended or 'seen-through-ego'. There are many cases of those with borderline personality problems or problems of ego-stability being drawn to meditative experience, which is unhelpful to their prior need to strengthen their conventional ego boundaries. John Welwood has called this the problem of "spiritual bypassing" However, through all of this a clear distinction between ego as functioning sense of self, and ego-clinging or self-cherishing must be maintained. Interestingly, from the Western approach it is only Jacques Lacan who underlines the negative aspects of ego.

CONCLUSION

Bearing in mind the above discussion are there any constructive suggestions we can make about a Buddhist-inspired psychotherapy? I suggest there are. The first thing is that the Buddhist philosophy of dependent origination and emptiness allows for a way of being that without relying on any hypostatized transcendent outside our experience, can yet provide meaning and value in a groundless, impermanent world. In 1960 Abraham Maslow, the founding father of both Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychologies, wrote that what our fast-changing world needed was a new type of human being, that he called

> "'Heraclitian'—people who don't need to staticize the world, who don't need to freeze it and to make it stable… who are able confidently to face tomorrow not knowing what's going to come,… with confidence enough in ourselves that we will be able to improvise in that situation which has never existed before."[77]

Jeremy Hayward points out that only such

> "a profound examination of the dynamic creative perceptual process, by which worlds and selves are made and re-made every moment, will provide the clarity and confidence within uncertainty that is needed".[78]

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[75] J. Engler, "Therapeutic Aims in Psychotherapy and Meditation Developmental Stages in the Representation of the Self", *JTP*, 16.1, 1984, 28.
[76] *ibid.*, 51.
[77] A. Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, London, Pelican, 1973, 61.
[78] J. Hayward, *op. cit.*, 2.

This examination will not give us certainty or permanent foundation, that is not the point, but a balance that will allow us to ride the wave.

> "We must turn the conversation from talk of resolution… to discussion of an insight or attention—a refined purified love of *this world* that never ceases to illuminate, destablize and simultaneously affirm differences which are themselves supported by other, suppressed forms of illusory differences."[79]

The Buddhist view allows us to go beyond a limited version of self, soul, ego and even no-self. It is an open-ended search, a non-clinging to any ultimately deceptive and empty structure. Each new model may be more or less meaningful, more or less useful, but in time will be outgrown and transcended. Only a belief in the ultimate emptiness of all models allows for continuing growth and a paradoxical kind of balance in a world or impermanence and change.

Thus a Buddhist psychotherapy will be primarily open-ended exploration, without specific expectations and goals, attempting and daring to work with whatever comes up within a field of unknowing. The role of the therapist is to hold open this space of unknowing, this emptiness for the client, and to stay with and in it with her.

Secondly, Buddhist therapy is based on a profound belief in 'basic sanity' of each person, in the clear light mind or Buddha nature, unhindered by the adventitious veils and obstructions imposed upon it. Expression of this basic sanity are the four immeasurable states of friendliness, compassion, joy and equanimity. In turn both of the above characteristics will lead to a different way of being with the client, a 'joint practice' in which there is no highly defined power structure, or rigid parameters of theory, and, if the therapist has done her own work successfully, little therapist contamination. At the same time the relationship is seen as being of central importance to the healing process, and should be warm and nurturing though not collusive.

Thirdly, Buddhist therapy is based on perception and awareness practices of mindfulness and meditation, and from this basis I would suggest that a Buddhist psychotherapy may well be less cathartic than some others, a middle way between repression and continual expression—

> "rather than suppressing emotions or indulging in them, here it is important to view them, and your thoughts, and whatever arises, with an acceptance and generosity that are as open and spacious as possible."[80]

[79] C.W. Huntingdon, *op. cit.*, 142.
[80] Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, London, Rider, 1992, 61.

Thich Nhat Hanh too believes that over-expression of negative emotions will only water the *karmic* seeds for a similar future. He places great emphasis, as does the Dalai Lama on the cultivation of healthy mind states of appreciation and joy in the daily events of life mindfully engaged in for their own sake, rather than unremitting concern with the suffering of the past.

Fourthly, the path of mindfulness and meditation will underline the fact that there is no ultimate undivided self or world apart from our experience, and that healing and value both lie in the present, in being as open as possible to our embodied experience in a way that is clear, without defence or hindrances of grasping either in the positive form of desire, or its negative form of aversion and fear. This is the arena of the Buddhist psychotherapist; what is going on in the very present moment of therapeutic encounter. For in being entirely present in the present moment, value unfolds, and meaning is created. They will never be present elsewhere.

Finally, one last possibility. As Buddhism changed in each new country and culture, I question whether it is not from the psychological field that Buddhism will take its Western form. Certainly there might seem to have been more fruitful meetings between Buddhism and the sciences of mind than with philosophy or religion. From the early days of popular Buddhist diffusion in the West there has been conversation between Buddhism and psychologists, particularly since the spread of Tibetan knowledge after 1959, and in the recent discussions with the Dalai Lama already mentioned. In one of these he stated recently:

> "There are two general areas for which dialogue or cross-communication between Buddhism and psychology could be very valuable. One is the investigation of the nature of mind itself, of the thought processes, conceptualization—simply straight investigation into the nature of mind. The second one is investigation of the nature of mind specifically in relation to therapeutic purposes, dealing with people who are subject to some mental imbalance or dysfunction—how to bring them to better health."

The main purpose or objective of Buddhist theory and practice of psychology is to utterly dispel the mental distortions, or *kleśas*, most importantly, attachment or anger. Mental imbalance, dysfunction, and so forth arise principally as a result of the mental distortions of attachment and/or anger. So, while on the one hand the major project in Buddhism is to utterly eradicate the *kleśas*, "there is a kind of secondary therapeutic side project. I feel that a lot from Buddhism could be of use in therapy."[81]

[81] J. Hayward, F. Varela, eds., *op. cit.*, 115.

Perhaps this mutual interest of psychology and Buddhism comes about because "If one allows that philosophy's concern is with being, one must also recognise that the concern of psychoanalysis is with lack-of-being"[82] which might bring us back to *śūnyatā* and dependent origination.

[82] M. Sarup, *Jacques Lacan*, London, Harvester Press, 1992, 43.