A Cybernetic Approach to Dzogchen

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DZOGCHEN (Tib. *rdzogs-chen*)—usually translated "Great Perfection"—is a philosophical and meditative tradition of Tibet. Many Tibetan Buddhists consider it to be the most advanced form of Buddhist practice.[1] Dzogchen is distinguished from other forms of Tibetan Buddhism by its unique doctrines and meditative approach. For example, Dzogchen posits innate and natural perfection as the individual's "ever-present" and permanent condition and maintains that the simplicity of immediate awareness, unconditioned by any concept, symbol, practice, etc. constitutes a direct path to realizing this perfection.[2] From a Dzogchen perspective, "Everything is naturally perfect just as it is, completely pure and undefiled…. With no effort or practice whatsoever, enlightenment and Buddhahood are already fully developed and perfected."[3]

Though the meaning of these doctrines is apparently straightforward, their significance as part of a lived religious path is less clear. Among other things, there is no necessary or obvious correlation between a doctrine's meaning and its function in the psychological life of a practitioner: what a doctrine means and how that doctrine affects the practitioner's consciousness—are different issues. Since familiarity with doctrinal formulations does not necessarily entail understanding their cognitive effects, an adequate approach to Dzogchen must address both areas—it must combine a descriptive account of doctrines and practices with an analysis of how both affect the consciousness of the practitioner and potentially generate the mystical[4] states valorized by the tradition. It must also include a third element: an explicitly formulated theory or model of mind or consciousness. In order to investigate Dzogchen's cognitive and experiential effects, one first needs a model of what is being affected, i.e., consciousness itself. This model functions as the indispensable interpretive framework for addressing the specifically psychological processes at stake.

This article is an interpretation of Dzogchen using the approach outlined above. Accordingly, it addresses the cognitive and experiential effects of Dzogchen doctrine and practice based on a specific model of consciousness. The article is divided into three major parts. The first presents a cybernetic theory of mind or consciousness—the interpretive framework for a psychological analysis of Dzogchen. Part two is a descrip-

tive overview of Dzogchen doctrine and practice (the data to be inter-preted[5]). The final section of the article applies the cybernetic theory discussed in part one to the doctrines and practices presented in part two. This analysis provides new insights into Dzogchen by showing in explicit psychological terms how its doctrines and practices affect, and ultimately transform, the consciousness of the practitioner.

A CYBERNETIC MODEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Cybernetics is a subfield of systems theory concerned with identifying general principles governing the regulation and evolution of system steady states. The application of cybernetics to mind naturally inspires some suspicion and controversy. Cybernetics seems to stand well outside the mainstream of current psychological discourse. How is a cybernetic ap-proach to mind justified?

The psychological and methodological issues raised by this question are, however, beyond the scope of this article. Despite this, the value of a cybernetic approach to mind (and then Dzogchen) is indirectly demon-strated by its results, i.e., the insights it generates about the tradition. Nevertheless, in defense of a cybernetic approach to mind, two specific points are worth noting. First, the impression that cybernetics is radically non-conventional is somewhat misleading. Cybernetic-type thinking is implicit in some traditional psychological theory.[6] The theories of person-ality of Sigmund Freud, Henry Murray, and Karl Menninger are all "cybernetic" in nature, particularly the emphasis on maintaining and restoring mental (egoic) equilibrium in the face of internal and external conflict.[7] Freud's pleasure principle functions as a "hydraulic," equilib-rium-seeking process that is essentially homeostatic.[8] The concept of equilibrium is at the heart of psychoanalysis in general, where "regulatory mental mechanisms" are explained as "equilibrium-seeking *systems*."[9] Second, a significant number of psychologists and cognitive theorists currently (and explicitly) advocate systems-based theories of mind (i.e., theories that draw upon general systems theory, cybernetics, dynamical systems theory, and chaos theory). These psychologists and cognitive scien-tists find systems-based approaches attractive because they seem best suited to modeling the apparently "systemic" nature and behavior of the mind.[10]

The credibility of a cybernetic approach to mind automatically lends it some validation as a theoretical framework for interpreting religious and mystical experience. But given the existence of more mainstream psycho-logical and epistemological theories, why choose cybernetics over the alternatives? In response to this question I will make only one point. Two approaches currently dominate theory about the nature and causes of mystical experience: perennialist philosophy and psychology, and

constructivism (or contextualism). Both approaches have been subjected to extensive critiques in the philosophical literature on mysticism; both have been shown to be fundamentally inadequate.[11] In this context, new, even controversial, approaches deserve serious consideration, especially when they may avoid or resolve the very issues that render other approaches problematic.[12]

Before addressing the details of the cybernetic model itself, it is best to begin with a few stipulative definitions of terms central to any psychological discussion: awareness, consciousness, and mind.[13] The term *awareness* is used here to connote sentience itself (or "sentience-as-such"). *Consciousness* is awareness constrained by a system of cognitive and emotional variables or events. This system as a whole may be referred to as *mind* or the *cognitive system*. Consciousness, then, refers to a specific mode of awareness (i.e., a *state* of consciousness) supported by an interdependent network of cognitive and affective factors or events (the cognitive system or mind). In slightly different terms, awareness is constrained by mind, creating a particular state of consciousness. Note that these definitions make a distinction between sentience-as-such—awareness as "primary and irreducible"[14]—and sentience as it is expressed according to specific sensory, neural, cognitive, and environmentally conditioned constraints (i.e., a state of consciousness).

A state of consciousness (what Charles Tart calls a d-SoC, "discrete state of consciousness") is not to be confused with the immediate and changing content of consciousness but represents an overall pattern of stabilized psychological organization that abides regardless of fluctuations in psychological subsystems or environmental input. Though a state includes such fluctuations, a state of consciousness is the abiding frame of reference that constitutes the implicit, semantic background within which such fluctuations occur. For example, the essential characteristic of the state of consciousness identified with ordinary experience is duality, which is expressed on two levels: perceptual and spatial (a self situated in a world of apparently real and distinct objects) and evaluative (the content of experience viewed as either attractive, i.e., "good" or repellant, i.e., "bad"[15]). This duality, as an abiding context of experience, persists with greater or lesser degrees of intensity regardless of whether or not one happens to be angry, joyful, distracted, etc.

The mind is the entire system of mental, emotional, and behavioral variables that construct and defends such a state, both at the level of unconscious cognitive processes and conscious, fluctuating phenomenal experience. In the case of ordinary experience, these variables include: (1) a ceaseless, self-oriented, and only partially controllable internal narrative; (2) the absorption of attention on this internal narrative (phenomenologically experienced as an "abstraction" of experience out of the stream of felt sensation or perception); (3) distraction-seeking and addictive behavior; (4) both unconscious and conscious concepts and beliefs encompassing

substance-based ontological presuppositions, self-image, conditions of worth and belonging, and linguistically-constructed conceptual categories; (5) the mediation of experience according to such concepts and beliefs; and (6) defense mechanisms to preserve and protect the self-image. These variables themselves represent fluctuating and mutually reinforcing processes, all constrained within a critical range in order to maintain the integrity of the system as a whole.

Since a state of consciousness is generated by a particular cognitive system (or mind), the cognitive system and its corresponding state are functionally interdependent. In other words, a change in state necessarily implies a change in the cognitive system, and vice versa. Furthermore, the relation between system and state is not one way. The cognitive system constrains awareness (generating a state), but a state in turn reinforces the system of variables that created it. For example, the underlying presuppositions of an emotion like anger tend to depend on, as well as support, a dualistic perspective on life (feeling "one" with others would tend to promote empathy and so undermine getting angry at them). As will be discussed below, Dzogchen doctrine and practice initiates a transformation of consciousness as both system and state in the specific sense described here.

This cybernetic model of mind entails a normative claim about states of consciousness: particular states of consciousness constitute more or less veridical attunements to Reality[16] as such. In other words, some states are more transparent "windows" on Reality than others. The state of consciousness associated with ordinary experience constitutes a particularly opaque or obscured "window." This obscured or deluded quality is reflected in the intuitive ontology of ordinary experience, where "substance" is taken for granted as an object of experience when in fact "substance" is never experienced at all (an insight of Kantian epistemology). Rather, we experience an ongoing stream of sensations (color patches, tactile resistance, etc.) that, because of certain patterns of regularity in their occurrence, support the formation of a perceptual construct of "substance." "Substance" is a mental construction or interpretation.

The fact that ordinary experience is so fundamentally linked with the presupposition of substance confirms Herbert Guenther's observation (inspired, it would seem, primarily by Heidegger and Dzogchen) that human beings have radically strayed from any sensitive appreciation for their own experience. The ongoing "mind-body" problem of philosophical and cognitive discourse is a good illustration of this experiential and existential insensitivity. The only incontrovertible fact of our predicament is experience itself. Yet many philosophers of mind and cognitive scientists consider "matter" to be the basic given of our experience and see "consciousness" as a problem to be explained in relation to matter. The extreme, almost perverse outcome of this view is the claim that consciousness is an

epiphenomenon of material processes. A phenomenologically sensitive appreciation of our predicament suggests a different conclusion: sentience is the given (though still a mysterious given) while "matter" is a cognitive construction and ontological fallacy.

These reflections on the primacy of experience and the constructed nature of substance lend some support to a monist understanding of Reality, in opposition to the dualistic, Cartesian model suggested by ordinary experience. From this perspective, Reality may best be described as a single, meaning-saturated, "energetic"[17] field, which devolves through processes of mental reification and objectification into the subject and object poles of experience. The "objects" of experience are best explained as "objectified meaning,"[18] though the process of objectification constitutes an extreme impoverishment of the semantic dimension of experience. This model provides an elegant solution to the mind-body problem, in the sense that it negates the presuppositions that create the problem initially. From a monist perspective, there is no mind-body problem, since the dualism of "mind" and "body" is an erroneous interpretation of a single, dynamic field.

Processes of Mind

In the context of the ordinary state of consciousness, the diverse processes of mind together perform two basic functions. First, the mind constructs ordinary experience and interprets that experience as a world.[19] In particular, it constructs the two forms of dualism that characterize the fundamental structure of ordinary experience: perceptual and evaluative. Second, the mind homeostatically maintains and defends that state of reference in the face of stresses and perturbations. Because the constructive processes of mind result in the intelligible world of ordinary experience, perception and mentation are generally described in information-processing terms, i.e., the mind synthesizes a perceptual whole (our experienced world) and constructs meaning out of a chaotic melange of sensory inputs. An alternative position is suggested by the recognition that the intelligibility of ordinary experience does not necessarily entail that sense data (the raw input processed by the mind) is inherently unintelligible or meaningless. Intelligibility in the context of ordinary experience may actually constitute a radical loss of potential meaningfulness. Rather than synthesizing a meaningful whole out of chaotic multiplicity, the mind may instead collapse an inherently meaningful Unity (the Real) into the meaning-impoverished dualistic perspective that characterizes ordinary consciousness. From this perspective, meaning is a given, not a construction.

The constructive processes of mind (the processes that generate ordinary experience) depend on the set of cognitive categories, maps, concepts

and beliefs[20] that function as the template for our ordinarily experienced world. This map is comprised of (1) those constructs that establish the background and focal dimensions of the perceptual field (i.e., concepts of substance, inherent existence, temporality, spatial orientation, etc.,[21] as well as the linguistic and conceptual inventory of the "things," qualities, and experiences comprising the world), and (2) the evaluative associations linked to every thing and experience within that perceptual context—the conditions that define desirability versus undesirability (I will refer to these as perceptual and evaluative constructs respectively). The first category of constructs functions to reify or objectify experience and construct perceptual duality.[22] The second generates the evaluative interpretation of experiences and objects as attractive, i.e., desired or aversive, i.e., repellent, providing the basis for our essentially dualistic, affective responses to life.

These levels are functionally interdependent since evaluative associations only occur in relation to a self (i.e., what the self wants and does not want) and a localized self in turn presupposes the perceptual duality of self versus object. In addition, the localization of awareness as a self (one pole of perceptual dualism) is in part constructed by a network of identity-defining concepts bound together because of the evaluative associations linked to those concepts. For example, I may define myself as "nice" because of the positive, evaluative associations linked to that concept (i.e., the correlation between being nice and feelings of safety, belonging, and love), and this in turn functions as one factor within a larger system that defines or constructs the boundaries of personal identity that localize experience and so perpetuate a dualistic perceptual context.

Perceptual and evaluative constructs are also mutually reinforcing, since an evaluative response to some "thing" first requires being able to experience or perceive that thing, while the judgment about it reinforces relating to life in terms of things. Evaluative judgments as a whole reinforce the self-concept and therefore the duality of self versus object: all inputs are processed in terms of how they affect the self, reinforcing the self as the organizing locus of mental life. The sense of being a "self" in turn generates some degree of attendant vulnerability, and therefore a need to manipulate people and the "objects" of one's world and mind (thoughts) to be safe. This strengthens an object-oriented engagement with the world (internal and external) and objectifying thinking in general. Self and object become further "solidified," perpetuating efforts to "deal with life" based on this dualistic perspective. In general, these interconnected variables hold our attention within a dualistic perceptual context, which in turn reinforces the mind's categories and concepts.

Evaluative responses occur on two levels: (1) those that are derived from innate drives or needs (survival, food, safety, etc., are innately good; death, pain, abandonment, etc., are bad) and (2) those learned through socialization and empowered through their association with innate needs.[23]

The following example illustrates this connection: I may strive to own a red Corvette (because a red Corvette is good), but the motivating power of that image is based on a learned association between it and more basic drives, e.g., for sex or belonging. In general, the second, learned level comprises a complex system of images and concepts that carry emotionally charged, positive or negative associations.

Once established, these conditions set up a semantic context in which inputs become potential signals of safety and belonging or abandonment and death. This context generates the continuous "dis-locating" processes of ordinary consciousness. Once the desirable is defined in terms of a specific set of conditions, the mind has to continuously "seek" the desirable, straying from the immediacy of awareness as it grasps at thoughts, feelings, and circumstances. Depending on environmental conditions, this ongoing "dis-location" may be accompanied by a close and obsessive monitoring of self-image and environment. According to Paul Gilbert, "All stimuli must be evaluated for the degree of threat or potential reward present in a situation."[24] For example, when interacting with others,

> individuals are very sensitive to how others *attend and regard them*…. The sense of self… is constantly in tune with the degree to which one is able to elicit investment from others and find an acceptable and secure place in relationship. Put simply, we live more than one life. We live our own lives in our own heads, but also we wish to live a positive life in the minds of others.[25]

The motivation to live "a positive life in the minds of others" is egocentric, however, and therefore orients attention back on the self. In this sense, attending to the other is self-referential, as suggested by Harold Sackeim and Ruben Gur's observation that "in normal conversation individuals can be said to be continually self-monitoring."[26]

Since evaluative associations all concern the well-being of the self, they exercise their strongest cognitive effects in relation to creating and maintaining a self-image. Evaluative conditions define an ideal self-image and then constrain cognitive processes to support that image. For example, any aspect of the self that matches negative associations is experienced as a threat and must therefore be repressed. Functioning in a somewhat analogous way to Jung's shadow, this repressed material is projected, making any aspect of the environment that represents the shadow equally threatening. In other words, external threats mirror internal denial. In systems terms, Glenn Perry describes this projection as psychic "waste," which accumulates in the environment leading to eventual toxicity.[27] Such external representations of the shadow have the power to generate intense states of anxiety and fear, though in many cases these emotions are suppressed in the wake of the anger at what is perceived to be the "cause" of discom-

fort. This "cause" must then be attacked, in either subtle or overt ways. Attacking the external representation, however, in fact expresses efforts to maintain denial within the self. In general, "Projective and transference distortions operate in such a way that one's core assumptions about the nature of the self and reality remain relatively intact into adulthood, even in the face of mildly threatening conditions."[28]

The Homeostatic Processes of Mind

Because conceptual constructs constitute the template for how the cognitive system experientially manifests, system homeostasis depends on preserving and defending those concepts through an array of cognitive and psychological processes. What is the nature of these processes? To some degree, homeostasis is a function of the inherently self-reinforcing nature of the system itself. As Allan Combs explains, consciousness is stabilized by the "tendency of the whole experience to support its constituents, and for them in turn to create the whole."[29] The perceived world automatically confirms the system's structure since it is to some degree constructed by the system.

At the perceptual level, the mind's self-reinforcing nature means that anomalies are rarely, if ever, experienced. We may encounter an unidentifiable object, for example, but this object is still intelligible as a substantial "thing" existing within the larger context of a sensible world. In general, the "reality" of what we experience as "the world" is taken for granted and seldom if ever challenged. In this context, homeostasis does not require negotiating anomalies (except perhaps during extreme drug-induced experiences) since perceptual constructs, experience, and world generally interact as a seamless, self-reinforcing process.

The requirements for homeostasis shift at the evaluative level. Evaluative responses to particular qualities, experiences, things, and circumstances are a quite different type of process than establishing the global parameters of experience itself. As illusory as appearances may be, they are continuous with the Reality that supports them (the construction of appearances actually depends on this continuity),[30] and emerge as a hermeneutically circular frame of reference that in ordinary circumstances is immune to perturbations. This is not the case with evaluative constructs—a person's overarching categorization of appearances as desirable or repellant. Here homeostasis requires processes aimed at maintaining ideal images of "the desirable" (to feel safe and experience positive affective states) as well as avoiding negative images of "the repellant" (to avoid negative affective states, especially feelings of abandonment). This demands unique cognitive processes compared to those associated with perceptual constructs, since evaluative judgments are correlated with

specific conditions, yet actual conditions change. Matching (or not match-ing) inputs with constructs is therefore a continuous effort to hold a set of static patterns against a continuously transforming flow. The human psyche is essentially an ongoing locus of resistance requiring continuous maintenance and monitoring.

Any discrepancy between static, ideal images (evaluative constructs) and internal and external conditions constitutes a threat to the system. Such threats represent perturbations or fluctuations in the system that may destabilize its structure by contradicting positive evaluative associations (accompanied by varying degrees of emotional stress).[31] If sufficiently intense, such threats may precipitate a crisis of meaning—the world becomes "unintelligible" in terms of its felt capacity to support and nurture one's life, expressed as one of a variety of mild to extreme psychological disorders (from low self-esteem, depression, or debilitating anxiety to psychotic breaks with "reality"). The intensity of the threat or stress is determined by both the quality and quantity of the stress itself and by how experientially open or closed the system is. These three factors are inter-dependent, and ultimately, system openness is most important, since the conditional perspective intrinsic to ordinary consciousness (i.e., clinging to idealized, static images) sets up a corresponding unlimited number of potentially perturbing inputs (since the actual conditions of life are never static).

Rather than adjust or evolve its structure to accommodate perturbing inputs, the cognitive system, as homeostatic, tries various strategies to preserve its conceptual constructs—especially constructs defining the self-image. Generally speaking, homeostasis or "self-stabilization" is main-tained through negative feedback. The content of the experiential stream (a blur of both thought and sensation) is monitored by the system in terms of its correspondence with system constructs (i.e., its confirmation of positive evaluative associations). Inputs that contradict evaluative constructs (ex-pressed as values, attachments, desires, etc.) initiate processes to adjust the content of the input so that it matches those constructs. The "essential variable" of this process "is the *difference* between an 'observed' or 'recorded' value of the maintained variable and its 'ideal' value. If the difference is not zero the system moves so as to diminish it ."[32] Applied to cognitive systems, the mind seeks to match experiential content (the "recorded value") with system constructs (the "ideal value"). Through this process constructs are confirmed, stabilizing the system's structure.

Matching constructs with experience is achieved in two basic ways: (1) by acting to change the self, the environment, or both, (2) by regulating the experiential stream (independent of the environment). Cognitive homeo-stasis is generally realized through both strategies. Acting to change one's self and one's environment may be considered the psychologically healthier response, though it can never be adequate by itself since circumstances and

self (as ego) will never be "perfect" (and even if they are, they are bound to change). Psychological health (as ordinarily understood) is more accurately a balance of both, with the first predominating. More commonly, however, the second predominates, since direct manipulation of experience (through fantasy, addiction, etc.) is an easier and safer way to cope with dissonance and pain than acting to change one's self and environment.

"Regulating the experiential stream" itself includes a whole range of processes which together function to manipulate the "stream of experience to stabilize itself in the steady state of its actual cognitive organization."[33] This experiential regulation takes two basic forms: (1) the active shaping of internal experience to confirm concepts, and (2) the inhibition of inputs that contradict concepts. In the first case, "self-stabilization… involves the use of conations to structure the stream of percepts to progressive correspondence with the set of constructs already evolved in the system."[34] For example, the internal narrative functions as a reinforcing mechanism, by continuously "telling the story" of self and world as defined by our conceptual constructs. This involvement in the internal narrative simultaneously accomplishes the second function, reducing dissonance by inhibiting awareness of contradictory or threatening inputs (from either internal or external sources). For example, mental reiteration of the self-image may be used to suppress input contradicting that self-image. Kicking one's dog in a fit of anger might be followed by a flash of discomfort at being confronted with information that conflicts with one's self-image (i.e., "I am nice" or "I am an animal lover"). This discomfort may in turn be followed by a variety of responses functioning in some way to suppress the threatening input. For example, attention may be diverted to some other activity (distraction) or substances may be ingested to numb or distract awareness. Conflicting input may also be rationalized away (the dog was bad and therefore deserved to be kicked) or suppressed through attempts to reinstate the self-image by obsessively replaying the event over and over in one's mind as it "should have happened."

The unspoken rules of appropriate social behavior may also function as a mechanism of denial maintenance—in this case, a preventative measure to minimize image-threatening inputs before they occur. A covert agreement of polite, adult interaction is to avoid making excessive demands on others. One possible reason for this is an unconscious understanding that asking too much of another forces her to experience the dissonance between her naturally selfish impulses ("I don't want to do it") and her self-image of being good or nice. Asking too much threatens the other's denial. For the person experiencing the discomfort of such dissonance, the source of the request is experienced as the cause of this discomfort, and therefore becomes a threat who must be attacked (subtly through judgment, or not so subtly through more overt forms of aggression). *Not*

asking too much of others may in turn reflect an unconscious request to enter into a covert agreement, i.e., "I won't threaten your denial if you won't threaten mine." "Niceness" in general may function in a similar way: a strategy to provoke reciprocal responses in others in order to confirm one's self-image.[35] The ultimately egocentric nature of this behavior surfaces when the other does not respond as desired. He or she then becomes a threat, initiating a range of potential responses depending on the intensity of that threat (ignoring, judging, verbally attacking, physically attacking, and in the most extreme cases, murder).

Since the circumstances of one's predicament rarely coincide with idealized images, these types of constructive and inhibiting processes are not limited to specifically threatening inputs. As Combs points out, "Anyone who is awake and alive is regularly treated to demonstrations of the inadequacy of their formulas and protocols, whether these concern specific skills or life in general."[36] More specifically, we are continuously confronted by information that challenges our concepts of belonging, acceptance, and love—information either about the self specifically, or about the environment that reflects back on the self. The fact that there is always some degree of discrepancy means that the system is always subject to some degree of stress: when acceptance and abandonment becomes tied to conditions, life itself becomes a threatening input. For example, the inherently egocentric nature of ordinary consciousness is a continuous threat to the ideal image most of us hold about ourselves as being "good or nice."[37] Homeostasis therefore requires *continuous* denial, correlated with a tendency to increasingly withdraw from life and immerse attention in the internal narrative.[38] In such a state, experience becomes "abstracted" out of the unpredictability of external sensation and into the more manageable world of fantasy.[39] By disassociating from sensory input, experience becomes more malleable and therefore easier to conform to one's constructs.

In general, constructive-type processes involve focusing attention on fantasized, desired conditions or circumstances, either internally (through the internal narrative as described above) or externally (e.g., by seeking out confirming inputs through popular entertainment). Such processes are simultaneously inhibiting and may therefore be distinguished from those processes that function solely as inhibitors. This latter type may take two basic forms: (1) numbing and distracting consciousness to dampen awareness of dissonance and the pain associated with that dissonance, and (2) selective attention and other types of perceptual "filtering" or mediation. The first would include any type of substance reliance, substance abuse, or addiction (including the "benign" substances and distractions that help many people get through their day: alcohol, tobacco, sugar, caffeine, and television). Regarding the second, James Miller lists several cognitive mechanisms that inhibit information input, which may also—extending

Miller's analysis—function to help stabilize the cognitive system in the face of perceived threats:

Omission: failing to transmit certain randomly distributed signals in a message

Error: incorrectly transmitting certain signals in a message

Queuing: delaying transmission of certain signals in a message, the sequence being temporarily stored until transmission

Filtering: giving priority in processing to certain classes of messages

Abstracting: processing a message with less than complete detail

Escape: acting to cut off information input

Chunking: transmitting meaningful information in organized "chunks" of symbols rather than symbol by symbol[40]

To escape threatening inputs, for example, we may simply ignore (consciously or unconsciously) information that contradicts our beliefs or self-image. Some degree of filtering also seems to be built into the cognitive system, since inputs that do not fit cognitive maps will tend to simply go unregistered.

Important in the functioning of all the above homeostatic processes is object-oriented attention. Homeostasis involves a defensive posture towards life, and as Gilbert points out, "The attention structure in defense is focused rather than open."[41] This "focusing" correlates with an object-oriented engagement with the world, reflecting the cognitive system's attempts to manipulate "things" in order to maximize safety. Such attention may be directed either externally (on "objects") or internally (on thoughts). It takes the form of a non-reflective immersion in a world of objects that rarely focuses on anything in particular (i.e., it is not concentrative). Instead, it involves a rapid shifting of attention among objects. Fluctuating between the mental and the external and driven by whatever egocentric agenda is at the forefront of consciousness, object-oriented attention is accompanied by a loss of any felt, existential appreciation for the moment.

Directed externally, this type of attention reinforces perceptual dualism and the presumption of an ontological distinction between subject and object. As discussed above, one of the self-reinforcing aspects of the mental system is the perceived world itself—being a construction of conceptual constructs, it reflects those constructs back to the system. Object-oriented attention is a central factor supporting this involvement in a constructed world. In doing so, it also operates in conjunction with conceptual con-

structs that define the "objects" of attention, thereby reinforcing those constructs and the dualistic mode of experience they help generate. Directed internally, it involves attention on the internal narrative (and the forms this narrative may take, such as fantasy) and becomes one of the primary mechanisms regulating evaluative constructs and the self-image in particular.[42]

Integral to all of these various processes is an overriding self-obsession,[43] reflecting once again the self-reinforcing dimension of the system: the concept/experience of self creates an inevitable sense of vulnerability, which encourages self-obsession and the need to protect the self through the processes described above. This in turn reinforces a "self," exacerbating the sense of vulnerability and therefore strengthening attempts to defend the self in a continuous and self-perpetuating cycle.

Evolution through Positive Feedback

To the extent that safety/meaning is construed according to a conceptual system, disconfirmation is inherently threatening and therefore will tend to be suppressed. However, if disconfirmation (stress) crosses a critical threshold, the cognitive system's ordinary homeostatic mechanisms may be inadequate to suppress the threat. System organization therefore becomes dysfunctional (felt as some form of emotional discomfort) since it is no longer able to maintain a sense of safety or belonging in relation to self-image or environmental circumstances. In response, the system may take one of two courses. Typically, the system will intensify efforts "to rigidly adhere to dysfunctional patterns in an attempt to accommodate the crisis without having to actually change."[44] To preserve its constructs, the system may dissociate and close its boundaries even more, either by intensifying constructive processes to support a sense of "personal grandiosity" or by intensifying inhibiting processes (such as increased "emotional withdrawal").[45] This initiates the devolution of the system into what may eventually become psychopathological states. The other option is to change constructs—specifically, to evolve one's understanding of life toward a less conditional, less dualistic perspective.[46] This takes place through positive feedback, which reorganizes "the existing construct sets to fit the actual stream of sensory experience."[47] As Ervin Laszlo explains, "Negative-feedback stabilizing cycles give way to positive-feedback motivated *learning* cycles when the input fails to match the constructs of the system, or matches then insufficiently."[48]

Through positive feedback, constructs are allowed to deviate from their steady state in an attempt to evolve a conceptual model that can accommodate threatening inputs. This deviation may increase chaos and stress within the cognitive system, yet ultimately it makes it possible for

new "cognitive organizations [to evolve] which map the relevant states of the environment with increasing precision and range of prediction…. They enlarge the horizons of the system and provide it with increasingly wide ranges of progressively more refined meanings."[49] Such new constructs simultaneously represent the release (to some degree) of evaluative conditions, accompanied by less defensiveness, more openness, and therefore an enhanced sensitivity to one's environment.[50] Knowing becomes less conceptual and more felt/intuitive while emotional upset subsides as fluctuating external conditions no longer carry the same semantic associations.[51] From this perspective, learning is not simply the incorporation of new data within an existing set of constructs, but involves the reorganization of conceptual maps, experienced on an existential level as a deeper and more satisfying appreciation of life's meaning. As Erich Jantsch explains, an evolutionary, systems perspective suggests that learning is not simply "adaptation to a specific form into which knowledge has been brought…, but [represents] the formation of new and alive relationships with a multifaceted reality which may be experienced in many forms—learning… become[s] a creative game played with reality."[52] Learning, in this sense, represents a *qualitative* change in one's engagement with life.[53]

Summing Up the Model

From a cybernetic perspective, mind is as an interdependent network of cognitive variables or events that functions to (1) constrain awareness within the dualistic frame of reference represented by ordinary consciousness and (2) defend that state of reference against any perturbing influences. The first is a constructive process in two senses: perceptual and evaluative. The second function—defending the dualistic state once it has been constructed—reflects the homeostatic nature of mind. As described above, this encompasses a whole range of mental and behavioral strategies and behaviors that serve to reiterate and reinforce established constructs and processes or dampen threatening input.

In addition to these two functions, the cybernetic approach recognizes a third: the mind's capacity to "self-organize" or evolve its structure. In this case, cognitive variables may be disrupted, boundary conditions may change, and the entire cognitive system may evolve toward more aware, more environmentally adaptive, and more existentially satisfying modes of experience. The contrast between ordinary and evolving states of consciousness highlights the normative claim of the cybernetic model of mind described here. The ordinary state of consciousness represents an impoverishment of awareness, a loss of one's felt sense of life's meaningfulness, and a denial of one's full, human potential (often in association with a variety of unpleasant affective states).[54] The self-organizing

processes of mind, on the other hand, constitute an increasing realization of one's human potential and an enrichment of emotional and semantic appreciation.

AN OVERVIEW OF DZOGCHEN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE[55]

An investigation of Dzogchen's cognitive effects requires the interpretation of its doctrines and practices based on a model or theory of mind—in this article, the cybernetic model of mind described above. It also requires a familiarity with the data to be interpreted, i.e., the doctrines and practices themselves. The section below addresses this second topic through an overview of Dzogchen view (doctrines) and path (practices). Due to the complexity of the tradition, my comments here are necessarily selective.[56] Dzogchen has been practiced in Tibet for at least eleven hundred years. Its views and practices evolved over time, while at any particular time the various groups and lineages that identified themselves with Dzogchen did not necessarily present or interpret its doctrines in identical ways. This complexity is exacerbated by the fact that in actual practice Tibetan traditions are never insulated entities. In a traditional Tibetan context Dzogchen is never practiced in isolation. All forms of Tibetan Buddhism are thoroughly integrated with what Tibetans refer to as the Sūtrayāna (stressing renunciation, compassion, and emptiness) and the intricately ritualized complexities of tantric practice. Still, alongside this variation and complexity certain key themes have remained more or less constant throughout Dzogchen's history, and it is these that are focused on here.

Introductory Remarks on Dzogchen

The historical origins of Dzogchen are obscure. According to the tradition's own sources, Dzogchen originated as a fully articulated Buddhist teaching in Uddiyana (in some sources, Oddiyāna) or India and was transmitted directly from India to Tibet late in the eighth century primarily by Padmasambhava and, to a lesser degree, by Vairocana and Vimalamitra. Scholars tend to reject the traditional account, viewing Dzogchen as an indigenous Tibetan movement that emerged sometime between the eighth and tenth centuries through the combined influences of Indian Mahāyoga tantric traditions and Ch'an, with secondary contributions from Bön, Indian Mahasiddha traditions,[57] Yogācāra and *tathāgatagarba* theory,[58] and perhaps even Hindu Śaivism and Gnosticism.[59]

Among Tibetan Buddhists, Dzogchen is primarily associated with the Nyingma school, where it is considered the most advanced of the "Nine Paths" or Yānas (Tib. *theg-pa*) of Buddhism.[60] The Nine Paths are a

hierarchical systemization of Buddhist paths arranged according to soteriological efficacy and level of spiritual capacity required by the practitioner. Listed in order from "lowest" to "highest" they are: Śravaka, Pratyekabuddha, Bodhisattva, Kriyātantra, Caryātantra, Yogatantra, Mahāyogatantra, Anuyogatantra, and Atiyogatantra.[61] In general terms, the first two ("Hearer" and "Solitary Buddha" respectively) are based on the Nikāya sutras and emphasize renunciation and a realization of non-self with respect to persons. The third refers to the sūtra-based path of the Mahāyāna, emphasizing purification in association with the Six Perfections (*pāramitā*-s) and placing particular stress on compassion and analytical reflection on emptiness (*śūnyatā*). The next six paths represent progressively more advanced levels of tantric practice, culminating in Atiyogatantra, another name for Dzogchen.[62]

Within this framework, Nyingmapas describe and define Dzogchen in different (though usually overlapping) ways. As stated above, it is claimed to be the highest path, with respect to either its view or its practices. In the first sense, Dzogchen doctrines are considered the ultimate expression (possible in words) of the true nature of Reality, the individual, and the state of awakening. In the second sense, "highest" refers to the special directness or uncontrived nature of Dzogchen "practice." In the context of the Nine Paths, Dzogchen is also described as (1) the culmination of all Buddhist paths, (2) the "essence" or "condensation" of all previous paths, or (3) the culminating stage of a single path or awakening process. In this final sense, the first eight "paths" are considered preliminary stages of realization leading to an ultimate state of realization called "Dzogchen." In addition, some presentations of Dzogchen describe it as an "all inclusive" path—a tradition that includes all Buddhist paths as means of "provok[ing] … the awareness (Tib. *rig-pa*[63]) of the true nature of reality in its ultimate purity and perfection."[64]

In many of these formulations, Dzogchen is identified with the goal of Buddhism, i.e., the enlightened state, nirvana or buddhahood. This view underlies Namkhai Norbu's claim that Dzogchen is the "essence" of all Buddhist paths. As he puts it, Dzogchen is "The recognition of our true State and the continuation of its presence," and as such, "really is the essence of all paths, the basis of all meditation, the conclusion of all practices, the pith of all the secret methods, and the key to all the deeper teachings."[65] In general, "Dzogchen" may be used as a term for ultimate Reality (identical with the true nature of the individual) and the ultimate experiential state that realizes Reality. As a term for the Real, Dzogchen "connotes a natural and effortless unity underlying and pervading all things,"[66] often described as an empty, yet luminous "Ground" (Tib. *gzhi*) out of which all phenomenal appearances arise. As a label for the realization of the Real, Dzogchen indicates "a higher-order level of thought, … the peak of a person's endeavor to fathom the depth of his being [and] gain an

unobstructed view."[67] Dzogchen constitutes "the direct introduction to and the abiding in [the] Primordial State of enlightenment or Buddhahood,"[68] or, as Sogyal Rinpoche puts it, "*the* primordial state of…total awakening that is the heart-essence of all the buddhas and all spiritual paths."[69]

From the above perspectives, some Dzogchen teachers deny that Dzogchen is either a school, a path, or an articulatable set of doctrines. As John Reynolds notes, "the Nyingma Lamas do not regard Dzogchen as just another set of beliefs, or a system of philosophical assertions, or a collection of texts, or some sect or school."[70] They point out that if Dzogchen is already ineffable enlightenment as well as the "primordial state of the individual,"[71] it cannot also be a "path" for attaining enlightenment. Sapan Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan (1181–1282) states: "The theory of Atiyoga is Gnosis, not a means. To make a subject—that can not be expressed in words—an object of discussion, is not a thought of the learned."[72] These points notwithstanding, Dzogchen texts and teachers do attempt to explain through language the nature of Reality, and they recommend a particular type of contemplative approach. It is in this sense that Geoffrey Samuel characterizes Dzogchen as "a formless and nonconceptual system of meditation conceived of…as the final stage of Tantric practice,…going beyond the transformational techniques of Tantra itself to the goal of the Enlightened state."[73] Though Dzogchen may ultimately be much more than a view and path, these categories are still legitimate and helpful ways of approaching the tradition.

Dzogchen's placement as the final of the Nine Yānas raises an additional issue. Is Dzogchen essentially tantric (as the name Atiyogatantra suggests), or does it constitute a distinct, non-tantric tradition? Even though the framework of the Nine Yānas locates Dzogchen as the highest tantric path, it is common for both Tibetan Buddhists and scholars to contrast tantra and Dzogchen as being fundamentally distinct in approach. For example, tantra may be described as a path of "transformation" based on highly ritualized, structured, and symbolically rich meditative practices, in contrast to Dzogchen, which aims at "self-liberation" (Tib. *rang-grol*) through the "formless" practice of "letting be."[74] While this distinction is valid (and will be elaborated on below), it would not seem to override the fundamental continuity between tantra and Dzogchen, and the sense in which Dzogchen is the completion or culmination of tantric practice. Like tantra (and Mahāyāna Buddhism in general), Dzogchen stresses the unqualified continuity of Absolute Reality and mundane appearances, though tantra represents this continuity symbolically through the forms of the maṇḍala while Dzogchen tends to subvert (at least as an ultimate ideal) any form of symbolic representation (especially in the context of meditative practice). Dzogchen also shares one of tantra's fundamentally defining characteristics: the identification of path and goal.

In advanced tantric practices, one visualizes oneself as already being a tantric deity, fully enlightened with all attendant buddha-qualities. In Dzogchen, inherent perfection or buddhahood is considered one's primordial condition from the very beginning. Again, this common theme takes either a symbolic or non-symbolic form depending on the path: in tantra the identification is accomplished through symbolic visualization while Dzogchen bypasses symbols altogether (one's current predicament *is* the maṇḍala). Put another way, both tantra and Dzogchen are means of "tuning in" to the here and now, one through symbols and one non-symbolically through the experience of immediate presence. This non-symbolic approach is directly correlated by Nyingmapas with Dzogchen's ultimate superiority as a path, since from the Nyingma perspective any type of condition imposed on experience is necessarily an obscuration of one's true, primordial nature.[75]

Dzogchen View: Ultimate and Conventional Reality

Reality, according to the Indo-Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, may be understood from two different perspectives: "ultimate" (*paramārthasatya*) or "conventional" (*saṃvṛtisatya*). Conventional reality is usually identified with the ordinary cognition of things as "inherently existing." Ultimate Reality, on the other hand, refers to emptiness (*śūnyatā*): the absence of inherent existence in any "thing" and therefore the ultimate illusoriness of "reality" at the conventional level.[76] In the Tibetan context, however, the meaning of ultimate Reality is more complex. Tibetan Buddhism is essentially tantric. And though an apophatic understanding of emptiness (associated with Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamaka) represents the official position on ultimate Reality held by many Tibetan Buddhists (especially Gelugpas), the pervasively tantric character of Tibetan Buddhist practice lends itself to a more cataphatic approach. From the tantric perspective, emptiness is "a radiant presence full of vivid imagery" that constitutes "the source of [the] … primordial energy that brings all possible forms, even the universe itself, into manifestation."[77]

Tibetan Buddhism is also influenced by other, more cataphatic forms of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as Yogācāra and the concept of *tathāgatagarbha*—the innately pure and luminous Buddha-nature residing within all sentient beings. Yogācāra has been particularly important for the Nyingma school. According to Samuel, Nyingmapas have historically tended to emphasize "Yogācāra [i.e., positive] conceptualizations of the path" rather than the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka approach of strict negation.[78] The result is that Tibetan, and particularly Nyingma, presentations of ultimate Reality often sound much more positive than the term "emptiness" suggests.

This willingness to describe Reality in more positive terms is particularly evident in Dzogchen. In the Great Perfection, ultimate Reality is referred to as *gzhi* (literally, "ground"), variously translated as "Ground," "Base," "Foundation," "Primordial Basis," and "Being." In its most general sense, *gzhi* refers to an eternal, pure, and luminous Reality that is the source of all phenomenal appearances. *Gzhi* is considered equivalent in meaning to standard Mahāyāna and tantric terms for the Ultimate, such as "dharma-body" (*chos-sku*, *dharmakāya*), "intrinsic-nature" (*chos-nyid*, *dharmatā*), or "drop" of subtle energy (*thig-le*, *bindu*).[79] It is used more or less interchangeably with the terms the nature of mind (*sems-nyid*) and the great universal Ancestor (*spyi mes chen-po*). *Gzhi* is also equated with terms associated with qualities or states of realization that contact Reality: intuitive awareness born of oneself (*rang-byung-gi ye-shes*), non-conceptual (*rtog-pa*), intrinsic awareness (*rig-pa*), and intuitive awareness (*ye-shes*). In Dzogchen, Reality and the state of consciousness that realizes Reality are identical.[80] Ontology, epistemology, and realized experience ultimately become indistinguishable, in the sense that the experience of awakening is pure, experiential identification with Reality itself.

The nature of the Ground is generally described as ineffable. From a Dzogchen perspective, language is "a deviation from the principle [i.e., the *gzhi*]" and a "lie."[81] Any attempt to predicate something of pure Being constitutes a "going astray" from Being itself. For this reason, "the Absolute (*dharmatā*) has, from the beginning, never been pronounced."[82] Ultimately, it remains nameless.[83] This ineffability, however, did not prevent Dzogchen thinkers from describing it, beginning with the unequivocal insistence that it *does* exist.[84] Though it is invariably described as "empty," this is the positive emptiness inspired by tantra, Yogācāra, and possibly the Jonangpa school.[85] In Dzogchen, emptiness is anything but an "inert void."[86] As Guenther explains, Being's nothingness "is not some abstracted and lifeless emptiness, but an utter fullness that … is vibrant with energy and hence a meaning-mobilizing potential (Tib. *nyid*)."[87] And because it exists, it naturally has qualities. Among other things, the Ground is described as unchanging, invulnerable, indestructible, authentic, perfect, complete in itself, non-modifiable, incorruptible, unborn, eternal, atemporal, non-localized, one, non-dual, unobstructed, all-pervasive, invincible, permanent, pure from the beginning, spontaneous, luminous, and motionless. In addition to these abstract qualities, Dzogchen texts use more personalized, symbolic, or tangible representations of the Ultimate. The *gzhi* is referred to as a "cognitive being" or "subject" (Tib. *yul-can*), symbolically represented as the "primeval grandmother," the "mother of all Buddhas," and the "great universal grandfather." It is often identified with Kun-tu bzang-po (Skt. Samantabhadra), the tantric personification of the *dharmakāya* who assumes the role of teacher or Buddha in many

Dzogchen and Nyingma tantras. In some sources, the *gzhi* is described in even more concrete terms. As Karmay explains, "in tantras chiefly associated with Dzogchen, the *gzhi* is conceived as having a form which resembles a vase and its intellect is likened to a butter-lamp. The overall presentation of the three components, viz. the body, its intellect, and light, is in the form of a 'light ball' … [with] the components [being] on top of each other…. This effulgent body knows no old age, hence its name 'The Young Vase-like Body'."[88]

In more technical language, the qualities of Being may be explained with reference to what Guenther calls the "triune dynamics of Being": essence or facticity (Tib. *ngo-bo*), nature or actuality (Tib. *rang-bzhin*), and energy, compassion or resonance (Tib. *thugs-rje*).[89] Guenther describes the first as "the [non-material] 'stuff' the universe including ourselves is made of," considered by the tradition to be both "diaphanous" (Tib. *ka-dag*) and "nothing," or "empty" (Tib. *stong-pa*). Dzogchen discussions of Being's essence usually emphasize emptiness as its decisive characteristic, though again this emptiness is never simply a void. According to Guenther, Longchenpa's (Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa) explanations of Being's essence use *stong-pa* as a verb, and so nothingness, "far from being empty or void, is a void*ing*."[90] Longchenpa also states that "nothing exists" in the Ground's essence only in the sense that "nothing is distinguishable."[91] Nothing exists as a distinguishable entity—an entirely different claim than "nothing exists at all." The positive nature of Being's essence is emphasized by Dilgo Khentse's translation of *stong-pa* as "openness," referring to the "open," "unobstructed," and "mutually interpenetrating" nature of everything in the universe.[92]

The term *rang-bzhin*, the Ground's "nature" or "actuality," literally means "own itself," "continuance," or "face," implying that Being's nature is the "lighting up" (Tib. *gzhi-snang*) or "showing its face" (emptiness).[93] This "lighting-up" is suffused with the qualities of spontaneity (Tib. *lhun-grub*) and luminosity or radiance (Tib. *gsal-ba*) and represents an intermediate phase between pure potential and actuality (what Guenther characterizes as a "becoming-an-actuality").[94] At this level, the Ground is described as a "primordial glow": the "utmost subtle appearances" of Being's qualities as a rainbow of "lights, forms, [and] rays… in the ultimate sphere" of its expression.[95]

The final of Being's "triune dynamics," *thugs-rje*, is variously translated as "energy," "compassion," or "resonance." According to Reynolds, *thugs-rje* is simply the unity of the above two facets (i.e., Being's essence and nature).[96] Guenther's choice of the term "resonance" evokes a richer sense of what this unity involves: a coordinated, vibrational harmony between all levels and facets of Being's energetic expression or play. In other words, one of Being's fundamental qualities is its own resonance

with itself.[97] Describing *thugs-rje* as "ceaseless," Jigmed Lingpa further considers it "the basis of [Being's] various manifestations."[98] It is associated with two basic qualities: *kun-khyab* ("all-encompassing") and *rig-pa* ("excitation").[99] The second quality refers to the excitation or cognitive intensity of Being as a whole that "breaks away from Being" and becomes the "seed" for Its consequent evolutionary options.[100]

The Four Kāyas

Another framework for describing the multilevel processes of Being is the four kāyas[101] or "buddha bodies": essential-nature body (Tib. *ngo-bo-nyid-kyi sku*, Skt. *svabhāvakāya*), dharma-body (Tib. *chos-sku*, Skt. *dharmakāya*), enjoyment body (Tib. *longs-sku* Skt. *sambhogakāya*), and transformation body (Tib. *sprul-sku*, Skt. *nirmānakāya*). The four kāyas are a tantric and Dzogchen elaboration of the standard three kāyas of Mahāyāna Buddhism: *dharmakāya, sambhogakāya,* and *nirmānakāya*. As generally explained in Mahāyāna sources, the ultimate "Dharma Body" of the Buddha is identified with Reality, i.e., emptiness. The *sambhogakāya* is the compassion-motivated manifestation of the *dharmakāya,* symbolically represented as a celestial form of a buddha enthroned in his Pure Land and surrounded by hosts of bodhisattvas and other divine figures. The *nirmānakāya* is identified with any "physical" form the *sambhogakāya* may take in order to aid sentient beings, Śākyamuni Buddha being the foremost example.

According to Guenther, these standard explanations utterly fail to convey the intended meanings of these terms, at least as they are used in Dzogchen. He translates *sku* ("body") as "gestalt," explaining that "a gestalt is an unbroken whole, a complete pattern that cannot be arrived at through an accumulation of parts, but rather imbues the parts with meaning…. In the Buddhist context gestalt refers to the wholeness of experience where the subject-object split has not yet occurred and the field of experience has not been dissected into isolatable units of interest."[102] The kāyas, then, are a way to understand Being's varying levels of expression in relation to (or *as*) an individual's experience.

The first level, *svabhāvakāya*, Guenther describes as "the gestalt of Being-in-its beingness," referring to the ultimate, ontological Ground of experience.[103] According to Longchenpa, the three other kāyas "are all incorporated into this [fourth kāya], which is permanent, all pervasive, unconditioned, and without movement or change."[104] The next three kāyas all represent experiential manifestations of this ultimate ontological Ground. The *chos-sku* (Skt. *dharmakāya*) refers to "Being's meaningfulness" or "meaning-rich gestalt"—the *svabhāvakāya*'s "excitation" as self-under-

standing.[105] The epistemological connotations of *chos-sku* are specifically suggested by its synonyms, *rig-pa* ("ec-static intensity" or intrinsic awareness) and *ye-shes* (pristine or primordial awareness).[106] Its basic characteristics are emptiness and radiance, as well as "primordial purity" due to its freedom from any trace of "reflexive representational thinking."[107] This ecstatic intensity manifests as Being's "autopresencing," giving rise to *longs-sku*: "Being's coming-to-presence as a 'world'-engagement" or "gestalt as a world-spanning horizon of meaning."[108] *Long-sku*'s "manifold … projections" in turn constitute *sprul-sku*, i.e., "Being's presencing as cultural guiding images."[109] Guenther elaborates on the three experiential kāyas in the following passage:

> The triple gestalt experience [represented by the three kāyas] … shows the connectedness of what might be spoken of as focal settings within the gestalt experience of Being. These gestalt experiences account for the embeddedness of the individual in the multidimensional reality of which he is both a particular instantation and the expression of the whole itself. Within the field of experience these gestalt settings range from the holistic thereness of Being's sheer lucency as the proto-patterning of the contextual horizon of meaning [*dharmakāya*] to the presencing of the cultural norms and guiding images that express and serve the individual's aspiration for meaning [*nirmānakāya*]. Yet though these gestalts are spoken of as if they existed independently, they are interconnected inasmuch as they are all of one fabric—roughly, they are all experience.[110]

In other words, the "gestaltism of Being" represents "a process of 'embodying' the meaningfulness of Being in its multiple nuances."[111]

In Dzogchen thought, these four kāyas are correlated with the three aspects of the Ground discussed above (though how they are correlated may vary depending on the source). As Dudjom Lingpa explains, the Ground's "essential nature as emptiness is dharmakaya; its inherent nature as lucidity is sambhogakaya; its innate compassionate responsiveness as natural freedom is nirmanakaya; its pervasiveness and extension throughout all of samsara and nirvana are svabhavikakaya."[112] Longchenpa links the aspects and the kāyas in a similar manner, though he is not entirely consistent. Being's essence (or "intensity 'stuff'") is identified with either (or both?) the *svabhāvakāya* or the *dharmakāya,* as well as with *ye-shes* (pristine cognition or primordial awareness).[113] *Sambhogakāya* and *nirmānakāya* are identified with Being's third aspect (energy or resonance), both emerging through Being's nature or actuality (i.e., emptiness "lighting up").

The Gzhi as "Creator"

The relation of *dharmakāya* to *sambhogakāya* and *nirmānakāya* is often presented as a process of emanation, corresponding with the general understanding of Being as the primordial Source or Creator of all phenomenal appearances. The *gzhi*, metaphorically speaking, "gives birth."[114] In a general sense, It emits a radiance that congeals into the phenomenal universe as its own "adornment," displaying through this process such qualities as intelligence, compassion, primeval spontaneity, creativity, and playfulness. In the *Kun byed rgyal po'i mdo,* the universe is considered to be "an outflow of the primordial ground,"[115] personified as the "All-Creating King." As asked in the text, "Who else if not the Mind of Pure Perfection (*byang chub sems; bodhicitta*[116]) would create the entirety?"[117]

The ultimate source of creation is commonly referred to as the "youthful vase(-like) body": a symbol for Being's essence as pure, unconditioned, and unmoving. It is called "vase-like" because "its outer covering … is not (yet) broken"—it has "not appear[ed] outwardly"[118] but is still "contained" within its own freedom from conditions or distinguishable characteristics. But as stated above, it is the nature of the Ground to "light up."[119] As Guenther explains, "the whole's ec-static intensity … prevents it from ever becoming static and constantly seems to push it over the instability threshold into the world of actuality."[120] Metaphorically, the "vase breaks" and manifests as the "externalized glow" of Being's qualities as "lights" and "rays."[121] This ultimate sphere of Being's activities in turn sets the stage for two possible evolutionary trajectories. The first trajectory—Being's "emancipatory mode" (Tib. *grol-lugs*)—is initiated by the self-recognition of all appearances as nothing other than the Ground itself. This, from a Dzogchen perspective, is nirvāṇa or buddhahood, understood as a return to one's Source.[122] The second—Being's "errancy mode" (Tib. *'khrul-lugs*)—is the failure to make this recognition, being the fundamental ignorance (Tib. *ma-rig-pa*) that initiates a process of "going farther astray" (Tib. *'khrul-pa*) from the authenticity of Being.[123] This dimming of Being's pristine intelligence is poetically described in the *lTa ba klong yangs* as follows:

> The immovable moved slightly,
> The unquivering quivered slightly.
> Although there is no motion in the Basis,
> The motion comes out of the versatility of the Intellect [*rig-pa*].
> This versatility is called the Mind.
> It is also that of spontaneous compassion.
> Just like the wind of the breath of a small bird.
> Or the movement of the unborn cock.

> Or one hundredth part of a hair from a horse's tail split into a hundred,
> Such is the quivering which joins intellect to mind.
> This is called the Innate Nescience.[124]

In other words, ignorance is the "joining" of Being's pristine intelligence and the dichotomizing, obscuring processes of ordinary mentation (Tib. *sems*; Skt. *citta*), a joining in which *sems* is privileged and Being is occluded. In the more technical accounts of the *gzhi*'s errancy mode, ignorance establishes the "ontic foundation" or "site" (Tib. *kun-gzhi*[125]) for the limiting/obscuring thought processes (Tib. *sems*; Skt. *citta*) more directly associated with human experience. Mind itself is constituted by eight "perceptual patterns" (Tib. *rnam-par shes-pa*; Skt. *vijñāna*) and the fifty-one "co-operators" (Tib. *sems-byung*; Skt. *caitta*), the latter including a variety of cognitive and affective "pollutants" (such as passion, conceit, jealousy, etc.) that "specify processes of wandering farther and farther away from that which existentially matters, of a continual being off course, and of straying deeper and deeper into obscurantism and self-deception."[126] In this context, *sems* is described as a "lost child" who has strayed from his mother's (i.e., the *gzhi*'s) side.[127]

As indicated above, ignorance is generally identified as the cause of the errancy mode. Based on his own personal visionary experience, Dudjom Lingpa attributes these words to Vajradhara: "The obscuring of the ground of being by non-recognition of intrinsic awareness is indisputably the ground of all ordinary experience (*kun-gzhi*)."[128] But ignorance is also a general and pervasive characteristic of the entire "straying" process, including its end product, the person.[129] Mind (Tib. *sems*) and ignorance are functionally equivalent in Dzogchen.[130] And because ignorance constitutes the experiential alienation from Being, it is in turn identified with duality: a localized subjectivity (the "I") over against the object. The close association of all these aspects means that any or all may be described as the "basis" of samsara. In some sources, samsara is "rooted" in subject-object duality.[131] Others may emphasize that duality is founded on the "I,"[132] which may in turn be considered to include the concept of "self-nature" in general. According to Dudjom Lingpa (reporting, he claims, the words of Śrisimha experienced in vision), "Just as water, which exists in a naturally free-flowing state, becomes frozen into ice under the influence of a cold wind, so the ground of being exists in a naturally free state, yet the entire spectrum of cyclic existence is established solely due to the underlying conception of an individual self and a self-nature of phenomena."[133]

It is important to emphasize that, from a Dzogchen perspective, the unfolding of the errancy mode never compromises Being's essentially pure nature. With respect to the individual, this invariant purity is referred to by various terms: the nature of mind (Tib. *sems-nyid*), the awakened mind (Tib. *byang-chub-kyi sems*, Skt. *bodhicitta*), Buddha-nature (Tib. *bde-*

gshegs snying-po, Skt. *tathāgatagarbha),*[134] etc. All express the idea that regardless of how far one strays, one's primordial nature remains Being itself. *Sems-nyid* in particular is used to signify the view that our own "innermost being" is itself Being's "lighting-up," and as such has lost "nothing of its connectedness with the 'wider ownmostness' of Being."[135] In other words, our "innermost being" is nothing other than the *gzhi* in its utter completeness: "As the *garuda* when still in the egg has already developed its wings and other parts of its body so is *chos sku* in us."[136] *Sems-nyid* goes unrecognized because *sems* (ordinary mind) "creates … the world of illusion and through its activities it has obscured its own real nature (*sems-nyid*) from time immemorial."[137] Nevertheless, the "'real nature' of the *sems*" (i.e., *sems-nyid*) remains "immaculate … and luminous."[138] Within this framework of *sems* and *sems-nyid,* buddhahood is described as their reuniting, symbolically "described as the meeting between the mother and her lost child."[139] It is also described as the liberation of *sems-nyid* from the obscuring power of the *sems*, or as "the return of the *sems* to the Primordial Basis" (Tib. *mas ldog,* or "return from below").[140] Whichever metaphor is used, the general sense is that "one arrives back where one has been originally and was from the [very] beginning."[141]

Being's invariance is not only identified with a person's true nature (Tib. *sems-nyid*) or the pure state of consciousness that realizes this nature. In addition ignorance, mind, and subjectivity are considered continuous with Being as well, such that even the mind's "pollutants" are nothing but the "concrete presence" of pristine modes of awareness (Tib. *ye-shes*).[142] The errancy mode itself is correlated with Being's essence, nature, and energy "metaphorically described in terms of 'resting' and 'surging'."[143] So whereas Being's essence at rest is *chos-sku,* when "surging" it "becomes the closed system potential of one's primordiality-(constituted) existentiality," i.e., the *kun-gzhi.*[144] As surging, Being's nature or actuality is identified with the mind's unconscious cognitive and affective propensities (Tib. *bag-chags*; Skt. *vāsanā*) while energy or resonance is expressed as the joining of *kun-gzhi* with these propensities.[145]

This implies that in "going astray," self and world have "never departed from the vibrant dimension of (Being's) originary awareness mode."[146] As Shabkar Lama puts it, "No matter how large or violent the rolling wave, it cannot escape the ocean for a moment."[147] Though a person's finiteness does represent the dimming of Being's radiance or intelligence, this dimming is itself viewed as part of Being's "play of obscuring and clearing."[148] Dzogchen therefore proposes the "grandiose idea … that Being conceals and obscures itself by 'immersing' itself in us as a kind of camouflage, but also reveals itself through us; and what is so revealed is Being itself that is our humanity."[149] This in turn becomes the basis for Dzogchen's basic claim that the "spiritual domain … is nowhere

else than in an individual's body as experienced in the immediacy of its lived concreteness."[150]

Being's invariance extends to the world of phenomenal appearances. In Dzogchen texts, the *sems* (rooted in ignorance, duality and ego) is often identified as the immediate cause of illusory phenomenal appearances. This "illusoriness," however, does not mean that appearance is hallucination. Rather, ordinary appearances represent a fundamental misperception of Reality, especially the failure to recognize and experience the unbroken continuity between appearances and Ground. Dzogchen texts tend to assert that all phenomena are nothing but the *gzhi*. As Longchenpa puts it, "know everything thought or attended to be the substance of the unborn ordering principle itself."[151] Or, as the *Kun byed rgyal po'i mdo* states, "each individual [phenomena] is in some respect My nature, My identity, My person, My word, My mind."[152] In other words, creation only "appears to be distinct from its origin."[153] The "ontological ground" is both "immanent and transcendent at once," and "not essentially different" from its creations.[154]

Being, then, remains invariant both as an abiding presence immanent within all things and as the things themselves (the expressions of that presence). Even though Being has in some sense "gone astray" as mind and the phenomenal world, It "has never parted from the vibrant dimension of [its] originary awareness mode"; what has been "built up" by mentation is still considered "perfect and complete."[155] Everything is, as Dzogchen teachers often express it, primordially pure and enlightened from the beginning.

Dzogchen Practice

Dzogchen practice is a direct extension of its view. Since we, as well as everything else, already are Being, to know Reality and attain buddhahood is nothing other than being naturally and spontaneously present in a state of "immediate awareness." As Longchenpa advises, "Seek for the Buddha nowhere else than in … the pure fact of being aware right now."[156] Though the means of doing this may include the cultivation of specific types of mental attitudes such as non-discrimination and non-attachment, generally speaking, Dzogchen "practice" is described as an effortless non-striving, letting be, relaxing in the natural state, or even "doing nothing" (Tib. *bya bral*). Since one's true nature is unfabricated and already perfect, "there is nothing to correct, or alter, or modify."[157] And since the Ground is "spontaneously present from time immemorial," there is no need to seek It.[158]

This implies the remarkable proposition that to do anything—such as a spiritual practice—is to stray from Reality. Why? Because seeking auto-

matically imposes a condition on one's experience, and therefore represents an inherent betrayal of the nature of Reality itself. According to Dudjom Lingpa (he attributes the statement to Hungchenkara, heard in visionary experience), "to think of the goal as gaining freedom in some other place or realm … is to think that the pervasive, extensive panorama of space is an object or agent of coming and going. What an extremely bewildered and deluded state of mind!"[159] Since one already *is* the Ground, "aiming at something" through an activity or practice is like "the sun look[ing] for the light of the glow worm."[160]

In general, the conditions inherent in structured contemplative practices—or in even trying to "look for" something—are considered a limiting and obscuring influence.[161] The immediacy of awareness is "beyond all mental constructs and fixation"[162] while structured contemplative practices simply "feed … [the *sems*] with the mental discursiveness (*rtog pa*) for creating its own delusion (*'khrul ba*) still further."[163] As one early Dzogchen source puts it, "The activities of accumulation of merit, both physical and spiritual, the practice of contemplation, and purification of samsaric traces, all are a 'fixing stake.'"[164] Being goal-oriented, such practices perpetuate a dualistic frame of reference by specifying a "doer" on the way to some destination; all promote the localization of consciousness within the "bounded domain" of egocentric mentation.

Understanding what Dzogchen means by "letting be" or "doing nothing," however, depends on understanding the mind in its ordinary condition (usually through some type of structured meditative or contemplative practice). As discussed in part one above, experience is shaped by unconscious and conscious beliefs that define an essentially conditional and dualistic relationship to life. In a subtle or not so subtle way, the background assumption of every moment is that there is something, somewhere better than the here and now. Driven by this assumption, the ordinary mind tends to be engrossed in an internal narrative and abstracted out of the immediacy of felt sensation. The mind tends to grasp and identify with passing thoughts and emotions in an almost frantic effort to capture a "somewhere else" that corresponds with our concepts and conditions of acceptance, safety, and survival. In this way, the ordinary mind is a deeply habitualized and generally unconscious process of constant "dis-locating" from the present moment. In the terminology of Dzogchen, *sems* has "through its activities … obscured its own real nature (*sems-nyid*) from time immemorial."[165]

This understanding of mind is the basis for appreciating the cognitive and experiential significance of Dzogchen's view and practice. The concept of *gzhi* encourages a perspective on the world that stands in direct opposition to the ordinary point of view and the dualistic concepts that support that view. Rather than the conditional "good" of ordinary experience, the Good as *gzhi* is unconditional, entailing that there is nowhere to go and

nothing to accept or reject. In addition, the practice of "doing nothing" as a resting in the immediacy of the moment is diametrically opposed to the mind's habitual tendencies of grasping and distraction. It requires constant, non-wavering mindfulness, and therefore involves a very *active* and *effortful* "holding" to the immediacy of present awareness.[166] "Doing nothing" turns out to be an extremely difficult psychological feat.[167]

Given the difficulty of the practice, Dzogchen texts emphasize that it is a path only suitable for advanced practitioners. Telling a beginner to simply "let the mind be," with no prior training in mental quiescence and no acquaintance with a sense of presence, does nothing but encourage the habitual, non-present processes of the mind. According to Longchenpa, without the preliminary use of at least some "meditative references (*dmigs pa*) or specific icons such as visualization (*mtshan bcas*) … one will not have the slightest meditative experience and thus will not be able to stabilize one's mind."[168] He therefore emphasizes "the importance of beginning with meditative objects, and only subsequently releasing them into non-referential (*dmigs med*) meditation."[169] Longchenpa, in fact, characterizes those "who [attempt] … to directly meditate on the [Dzogchen] path without … [certain] preliminaries … as deviant or mistaken."[170] In a general sense, preliminary practices are considered necessary for the "energization of … [Dzogchen's] contemplative techniques."[171] More specifically, they serve to refine and pacify consciousness to the point where "letting be" functions as a means of settling even deeper into the here and now, rather than as a sanction for ordinary, egocentric mentation. In all phases of Tibetan Buddhist history, these preliminaries[172] are subsumed by practices and attitudes associated with mainstream Mahāyāna and tantric traditions—practices that a student would have already mastered before ever being initiated into Dzogchen by his or her lama. By Longchenpa's time at least (fourteenth century), some of these preliminaries (especially tantric practices) were also incorporated within Dzogchen itself. Either way, these preliminaries and Dzogchen proper are functionally inseparable.

Dzogchen Preliminary Practices

Longchenpa specifies three types of practices that need to be performed before one should engage in Dzogchen practice.[173] These three are "correlated to the three vehicles: the general preliminaries on impermanence and renunciation of cyclic existence (the Lesser Vehicle); the special preliminaries on compassion and … engendering a compassionate motivation (the Great Vehicle); and the supreme preliminaries, which are identified as the generation phase, perfection phase and guru yoga [associated with tantra, or Vajrayāna]."[174]

The nature of these preliminaries can only be touched upon here. Briefly, all Tibetan Buddhist practice is founded on an understanding of the pervasiveness of suffering (the First Noble Truth) and a concomitant attitude of renunciation toward all things in the world. The practices associated with this are generally sustained contemplations on suffering in all its variegated and wide-ranging forms, not only in this human realm, but also in the other five realms of existence into which a sentient being may be born. By establishing an evaluative orientation of pervasive unsatisfactoriness, an attitude of renunciation helps to disengage attention from the ordinary concerns of the ego and thereby pacifies the mind by weakening the attachments that formerly preoccupied it. Associated with this practice is reflection on the inexorable law of karma (the cause-effect relationship between one's present thoughts and actions and one's future circumstances), designed to encourage ethical (i.e., ego-subverting) behavior (or else face the consequence of possible rebirth in one of the many different hell realms).

Having realized some degree of renunciation, further preliminaries are specifically associated with the Mahāyāna and take various forms. Perhaps the most important involves the cultivation of compassion and an altruistic motivation for enlightenment (*bodhicitta*). A common practice for generating *bodhicitta* begins with the premise that all beings have been one's mother in a previous lifetime. With this in mind, one reflects on all of one's "mothers" in their present conditions of suffering. By sustained meditation on this "fact," strong feelings of compassion arise toward all beings followed by the desire to relieve their suffering. This desire then becomes one's motive for striving for enlightenment, since enlightenment is a state of power and omniscience best suited to help others. Included here are practices associated with the bodhisattva path: basic virtues such as giving, patience, etc. (the *pāramitās*) as well as other thematized contemplations which seem to encourage compassion by cultivating attitudes and behaviors that counter any tendency to protect a self. For example, in any circumstance in which one would be inclined to assume a defensive posture, bodhisattva practice requires action or attitudes directly counter to one's natural inclinations. According to Ngulchu Thogme, "if, in the midst of a large gathering, someone exposes your hidden faults in an insulting way, perceive him as your spiritual teacher and bow to him respectfully."[175] More generally, one imaginatively seeks to embrace the suffering of others rather than erect protective boundaries against it, based on the insight that it is the very tendency to protect the self against suffering (and the dualism inherent in that posture) that is the basis of suffering. Essentially, this attitude functions to uproot deep-seated conditional associations of acceptance and rejection that drive the egocentric processes of ordinary mind.

Additional Mahāyāna practices ("preliminaries" from the Dzogchen perspective) include meditation focused on calming and pacifying the mind (Tib. *zhi gnas*; Skt. *śamathā*) and analytical contemplation aimed at gaining first a conceptual and then a non-conceptual insight into emptiness (Tib. *lhag mthong*; Skt. *vipāśyana*).[176] For Longchenpa, insight meditation "involve[s] no specific techniques beyond analytical or poetic shaping of a preexisting contemplative state, with a focus on directed inquires into emptiness."[177] By undermining the concepts of inherent existence of both subject and object, insight practice may not only weaken evaluative associations (since there is nothing to evaluate or cling to), it may, with enough practice, weaken perceptual dualism as well. Longchenpa also presents two practices integrating *śamathā* and *vipāśyana*. David Germano's description of these practices hints at what they involve. The first he describes as a "thematic type of contemplation focused on finding the valorized state of awareness while sitting in the standard posture" while the second ("an 'enhancer' … to the first") utilizes "specific postures and gazes to contemplate a lucent cloudless sky… ."[178]

Tantra introduces the next level of preliminary practices.[179] The core of tantric practice is meditative visualization. Usually this involves visualizing oneself either residing in a tantric deity's pure realm, or (in more advanced tantric practices) *as* the deity in his or her pure realm, with the aim of awakening in the practitioner an awareness of whatever "energy," aspect of Reality, or aspect of one's own mind the deity represents.[180] Other aspects of tantric practice include (1) embracing one's embodied situation (particularly all associated feelings and passions) as the vehicle of awakening, (2) de-conditioning dualistic evaluative associations by imaginatively superimposing the maṇḍala over ordinary appearances, and (3) gaining control of the subtle energy (Tib. *rlung*; Skt. *prāna*) of the body through nadi-prāna yoga.[181] More generally, tantra seems to serve the additional function of beginning (through symbols) to acquaint the practitioner with the experience of immediate presence.

Though these practices may be quite structured and formalized, they tend to become less so as preliminary methods of Dzogchen. As Germano notes, most of the preliminary practices described by Longchenpa involve "no techniques beyond the standard lotus posture, and are … poetically thematized styles of contemplative inquiry attempting to evoke and/or pinpoint such key dimensions as emptiness, clarity, awareness and primordial freedom."[182] Most of the "practices" outlined by Longchenpa in his *Sems-nyid ngal gso*, for example, remain "technique-free, exhortatory and evocative in nature."[183] Furthermore, the structured practices that are utilized are modified according to Dzogchen ideals: "though they draw upon tantric practices and other normative Buddhist meditative techniques, the guiding principle is extreme simplicity (*spras bral*), and always priority remains on the mind's state, not the imported practice's specific

details."[184] Tantric practices in particular are simplified, with focus being on "the generation of concentration rather than any quality of the technique in and of itself."[185]

Dzogchen Practice Proper

The various preliminary techniques of Dzogchen are generally considered essential means of turning the mind from its habitual egocentric tendencies, and as Dzogchen evolved historically (especially from the eleventh century onwards) they became increasingly important based on the recognition that holding to simple awareness requires prior practice in stabilizing the mind.[186] From the perspective of Dzogchen, however, at some point in one's spiritual maturation such practices stop being an aid to awakening and instead become an obstacle. Reality (the Ground) is unconditioned, while these practices are themselves conditions that by definition must conceal the Ground, through both the structures of the practices themselves and the dualistic presupposition of path and goal. From a Dzogchen perspective, an additional "practice" is necessary: "a technique free immersion in the bare immediacy of one's own deepest levels of awareness,"[187] transcending the dualistic conditions of "path and goal," "meditation and non-meditation," and "quiescence and activity."[188] In a sense, the "method" becomes liberation itself, since the only way to realize a non-dual state is through non-duality itself.[189] At this level, practice becomes non-practice. As Dilgo Khentse states, "One must realize that to meditate is to pass beyond effort, beyond practice, beyond aims and goals and beyond the dualism of bondage and liberation."[190] Paradoxically, this non-dual, non-practice constitutes the complete severing of one's ties to the mundane through the radically non-ordinary state of uncontrived presence.

Dzogchen rhetoric notwithstanding, its rejection of practice (at least as an ultimate ideal), valorization of goalessness, and entire cosmology turn out to function *as* practice. The Dzogchen view constitutes an orienting frame of reference that actively shapes contemplative (and non-contemplative) experience and uproots the more subtle levels of conceptual duality (the persistent sense that one is a "practitioner" going somewhere) that are still active as one approaches the threshold of enlightenment: the point where practice leaves off and pure awareness is realized. As noted above, to existentially embrace the idea that everything, including ourselves, represents the presencing of Being and is therefore primordially perfect and already enlightened has direct implications on one's relationship to life and one's own experience. First, it encourages a non-discriminating attitude toward the world of phenomenal appearances. Since "whatever arises has arisen as the play (*Rol-Ba*) of the ultimate nature," one

neither has to grasp or reject, but can simply "enjoy all phenomena" without discrimination.[191] Second, by identifying all standard Buddhist terms for the Absolute (buddhahood, *dharmakāya, dharmatā,* etc.) with one's own mind or experience, the Dzogchen view functions to constantly redirect attention back to the here and now. Holding the view of oneself as already a buddha, one does not stray from immediacy. And this "non-straying" (or non-duality) *is* buddhahood. As Longchenpa explains, "By first having the certainty that one's Mind is spontaneously the real Buddha from primordial time, later one realizes that there is no need of aspiration for Buddhahood from any other source. At that very time one dwells in Buddhahood."[192]

The practice of "letting be" has a pacifying and purifying effect on consciousness (another apparent paradox); if one simply allows thoughts (neither accepting or rejecting them), thoughts are "liberated." Again, view plays a central role in this process. According to Longchenpa, "by saying that this present mind is the buddha itself [contemplating the view], and by attending to its intrinsic clarity, incidental conceptualizations are clarified in the dimension of mind as-it-is, just as we clear up muddy water" (i.e., by doing nothing but letting the water sit).[193] A mind that has developed some familiarity with the state of immediate presence (supported by the Dzogchen view) remains undistracted.[194] In this state of presence, "allowing" undermines the dualistic and conditional framework that generates thought. And so "without having to be eliminated, [thought] is released. Remaining with that state of contemplation, the thoughts release themselves right away like a drawing on water."[195] The "stains" of mentation (Tib. *sems*) being removed, the Ultimate is then automatically realized.[196] This meditative approach contrasts with the more conventional attempt to suppress thoughts, which some Dzogchen sources claim has exactly the opposite of its intended effect. As Shabkar Lama explains, "Trapped by the thought of desiring thoughtlessness, conflicting thoughts multiply, and in mounting frenzy you run aimlessly hither and thither." To quiet the mind, one must instead relax, and "merge into the primal space of knowledge…. Cut loose and just let it be."[197]

The element of "calming" that can be found in these types of practices echoes standard *śamathā* practices, and Germano asks if there is any significant difference between the two approaches.[198] As he points out, the Great Perfection argues that there is a difference, in that "its [own] meditations are not fixated or exclusionary as calming practices generally are—instead they allow a vibrant and ceaselessly active type of awareness to come to the fore, which is then integrated into everyday life."[199] Though *śamathā* and certain Dzogchen practices appear similar in some respects, Dzogchen's "'formless' contemplations cultivate not only an alert, vigilant, eyes-open awareness, but are also shaped in [distinctively Dzogchen] styles of psychological inquiry by poetic thematization."[200] Guenther also

points out that Dzogchen practice promotes a "self-centering" process fundamentally different from ordinary *śamathā/vipāśyana* practices, which are "object-oriented" and therefore perpetuate a dualistic frame of reference.[201]

CYBERNETICS AND DZOGCHEN

As noted above, an adequate understanding of Dzogchen requires more than a descriptive approach to its doctrines and practices. It requires an additional step: its doctrines and practices have to be interpreted in order to understand how they impact and possibly transform the consciousness of the practitioner. This final section of the article focuses on this issue using the cybernetic model of consciousness described in part one. It reviews in turn various processes and variables of the cognitive system, and then considers how specific aspects of the Dzogchen path might effect those variables.

A core variable of the cognitive system is the set of unconscious perceptual constructs that provide the template for the "world" as ordinarily experienced—both the background dimensions of experience (for example, spatial and temporal orientation and the concept of substance) as well as the focal aspects of the perceptual field, e.g., "objects," "persons," and "self." Certain aspects of Dzogchen doctrine and/or practice may function to undermine these constructs and so destabilize the cognitive system by presenting views of the world that counter the taken-for-granted assumptions and perceptions of ordinary experience. This may occur in one of two basic ways: (1) by internalizing concepts that conflict with the constructs of the cognitive system, and (2) analytical methods intended to directly deconstruct reifying projections. In the first sense, Buddhism has a long tradition of considering this world (especially the self and "things" in the world) as illusory, in direct opposition to the presupposition of ordinary experience that the objects of perception are real. In the second sense, Buddhism also encompasses philosophical traditions (abhidharma and Madhyamaka) that seek to analytically deconstruct the mind's ordinary reifying tendencies. For the Mahāyāna, this is particularly reflected in the doctrine of emptiness, which Dzogchen (as a Mahāyāna tradition) inherits.

Evaluative constructs are another important aspect of the conceptual inventory that generates ordinary experience. The experience of an "object" as either desirable or repellant is ordinarily caused by the semantic overtones of safety and belonging, or abandonment and death associated with that object and rooted in unconscious evaluative constructs. Dzogchen doctrine and practice constitutes a sustained challenge to evaluative constructs, thereby undermining the cognitive system as a whole. In terms of

doctrine, Dzogchen is founded on the concept of an unconditioned Good (Tib. *gzhi*) that constitutes the Real itself (in fact, the only "thing" that is Real). The concept of Ground (Tib. *gzhi*) in Dzogchen entails that the Real (and therefore, the Good) is unconditionally present, in the world and as a person's own being. This view not only contradicts the concepts that define the Good in conditional terms, it also encourages a re-orientation of awareness to the present moment that directly opposes the continuous dislocating processes of ordinary consciousness. The Dzogchen understanding of the Good as unconditioned—in conjunction with contemplative and meditative practices aimed at immediacy or goalessness—functions to counter the dualizing grasping intrinsic to ordinary consciousness. View and practice function together to redirect awareness back to a state of non-dual immediacy in radical opposition to the dualistic structure of ordinary cognition.[202]

Evaluative constructs are also undermined by attitudes and practices emphasizing detachment. As discussed above, evaluative constructs are the basis for the emergence of attachment and aversion, as well as the highly charged emotional reactions that operate in the wake of attachment. Based on evaluative constructs, cognitive and psychological processes become oriented around an ongoing attempt to regulate experience in order to satisfy positive images (representing safety, etc.), avoid negative ones (representing abandonment), and numb or distract consciousness in the face of the inevitable dissonance between ideal images of the desirable (in relation to both self-image and environmental circumstances) and actual conditions. This entire process is inextricably associated with the construction of a self (the self-image is defined based on evaluative associations) and maintenance/protection of a self (evaluative conditions link self-image to a semantic/affective context of safety or abandonment). For the Dzogchen practitioner, this conditional and self-referential way of experiencing life is undermined by simply believing in a "Ground," understood as unconditional Goodness (in an evaluative sense). To the degree this idea is internalized, it has radical repercussions on consciousness because it conflicts with the evaluative conditions that define the self and support attachment, aversion, and much of a person's ego-generated, emotional life. In this context, deep and abiding belief in the Ground becomes a transformative or mystical practice. On the other hand, to *live* according to the conditions that ordinarily distinguish the desirable from the undesirable becomes a form of radical ignorance or alienation from the Ground, regardless of a person's intellectual convictions.

Dzogchen addresses the problems of selfhood and attachment (the most immediate expressions of duality and alienation from the Ground) in other ways. Like all Buddhist traditions, Dzogchen insists on the self's lack of inherent existence—a direct attack on this central manifestation of the cognitive system. In addition, meditative practices tend to involve some

detachment from self: calming the internal narrative undermines the self, since the self is to some degree an ongoing construction of that narrative.[203] Attachment is directly opposed by the general Buddhist emphasis on detachment. In the case of Dzogchen, however, detachment is a natural by-product of the Dzogchen view; the more deeply one internalizes the conviction that everything constitutes the unconditional presencing of Being (Tib. *gzhi*), the more this subverts the discriminating tendencies that support attachment and self. In Dzogchen, detachment is not just a matter of trying to "be detached" (though this is part of it), but of constructing a conceptual framework that reorients attitudes and behaviors in ways that deconstruct the ordinary, conditional perspective that is at the root of attachment. On the bodhisattva path, for example, the suffering of being publicly insulted (generated by one's attachment to a self-image) is reframed as a precious opportunity to practice one's bodhisattva vows toward the achievement of enlightenment. The entire bodhisattva path encourages (among other things) an attitude of embracing the discomfort created by dissonance, which ultimately functions as a way to deconstruct the conditions and attachments that cause dissonance. The Buddhist (and therefore Dzogchen) emphasis on compassion may also function as a means of undermining evaluative conditions. Because evaluative conditions are externally represented by judgment and hostility toward others (through the projection of the shadow), to cultivate compassion toward those persons is to undermine one's own evaluative conditions, and in the process allow the re-integration of repressed material back into the psyche.

An important variable of the cognitive system is the internal narrative. By continuously reiterating various aspects of the mind's conceptual inventory, it helps to construct the self-image as well as our perception of "things" in a "world." The internal narrative also functions as a homeostatic process by regulating dissonance in order to preserve cognitive constructs. In this respect, the internal narrative inhibits awareness of dissonant inputs, or may function to "load" (to use Charles Tart's term) consciousness with images and concepts to counteract dissonant inputs. Both processes are aspects of the more general tendency to be mentally abstracted, i.e., removed from the immediacy of the present moment and engrossed in fantasy and the ongoing plots and plans of the ego. Dzogchen meditation directly undercuts this cognitive variable by involving efforts to pacify and empty the mind and reorient attention to the present moment.

Another element of the Dzogchen path functions to further subvert homeostatic processes. A common dissonance-reduction strategy is to "numb" awareness or dampen the pain associated with dissonance through distraction-seeking behaviors, or ingestion of mood-altering substances. The ideal lifestyle of a Dzogchen practitioner would tend to minimize, if not eliminate, both these strategies. Subverting dissonance avoidance in turn increases dissonance or stress on the cognitive system. In other words,

undermining the processes or variables that constitute the system is not only a process of direct subversion. It is also a process of increasing awareness of stresses already at hand. Either directly or indirectly, Dzogchen tends to encourage enhanced awareness of one's current condition and the pain inherent in a dualistic approach to life that limits the desirable to a narrow range of egocentrically defined conditions (in contrast to an unconditioned appreciation of Reality or the Good itself). This awareness may be cultivated in meditative practice, or it may be an outcome of minimizing ordinary distractions. Given the distinction between awareness and consciousness introduced above, being fully in the moment ("resting" in awareness) through meditation bypasses the mind. But the initial stages of cultivating this state often involve the discomfort of encountering the more or less constant subliminal pain associated with the ongoing dissonance between our dreams, ideals, fantasies, etc., and actual conditions (both internal and external).[204] This enhanced awareness of dissonance and pain adds yet another factor to the totality of system-subverting processes initiated by the Dzogchen path.

According to John Collins, "The great variety of spiritual disciplines practiced in the various religious traditions have at least one thing in common—the intentional stressing of the organism."[205] As the above discussion shows, this statement applies to Dzogchen. Dzogchen encourages attitudes and practices that function in direct opposition to the ordinary processes of the cognitive system. Since ordinary experience is essentially marked by dualism, Dzogchen's doctrines and practices "stress the organism" by deconstructing the most important manifestations of this structure, i.e., "self" and "object" related through attachment (the desirable) and aversion (the repellant). The Dzogchen path introduces fluctuations into the egocentrically-organized cognitive system and so undermines the variables that constrain awareness into the dualistic frame of reference of ordinary experience. Since, from a cybernetic perspective, "instability" is the occasion for "new structure,"[206] upsetting the cognitive system has transformative implications. By destabilizing the mind's structure, Dzogchen creates the conditions for the emergence of new patterns of cognitive organization, experientially manifested as new states of consciousness[207] and a deepening attunement to the interconnected dynamics of life.[208]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Dzogchen constitutes a sustained assault on the system of factors and processes that construct ordinary consciousness. This assault is founded on the doctrine of the *gzhi*. As the ultimate and only Good, *gzhi* entails the concept of spiritual goal (even if realizing this goal ultimately requires

goalessness). The two concepts (the Real and the goal) are linked since the goal is nothing other than experiencing or knowing the Real (also identified with knowing one's true nature). The identification of the Real as goal entails a specific way of interpreting any aspect of one's perceptual, mental, and emotional life that manifests duality—since the Real is unconditioned Unity, all forms of duality represent separation from the Real. If one's goal is to realize the Ground, the concepts, behaviors, attitudes, etc., that support duality must be eradicated. The goal, then, establishes a context for defining a "path": the active cultivation of certain attitudes (i.e., "virtues") and the performance of certain practices and behaviors that function to deconstruct the duality and separation that opposes experiencing the Real.

Dzogchen's assault on the cognitive system begins with its preliminary practices, which initiate the process of deconditioning the mind of its dualistic constructs. Calming and insight practices make the practitioner aware of the nature of ordinary mind—an essential achievement given (1) the difficulty of seeing beyond one's ordinary, taken-for-granted perspective and (2) the necessity of a firsthand understanding of the problem to affect a final solution. Through calming the meditator acquires some capacity to still the mind, upsetting the constructive and homeostatic functions of the internal dialogue, while tantric practice redirects one's attention from the abstract attitude of ordinary consciousness to an aesthetically rich, symbolically-mediated experience of the immediacy of Reality. Dzogchen view and practice completes this destabilization process by undermining dualistic constructions inherent in the path itself.

According to Dzogchen, the Buddha is one's own mind, and recognizing this mind requires only that one "effortlessly" reverse the direction of all one's ordinary cognitive and emotional tendencies and settle into the immediacy of one's experience here and now. The result is an automatic or spontaneous recognition of Reality. Dzogchen's view functions to encourage this settling in the here and now (when everything is the *gzhi,* there is nowhere to go). But understanding the transformative value of the view depends on some appreciation for the larger Buddhist context that Dzogchen presupposes. Inherent in the concept of nirvāṇa is the view of ultimacy as Other. The Mahāyāna approach, on the other hand, undermines that Otherness (epitomized by Nāgārjuna's statement that samsāra is nirvāṇa). Dzogchen would seem to be an extension of the Mahāyāna approach, expressed in more cataphatic language (and without the rigorous analytical method of Madhyamaka). The important point to recognize, however, is that this identification is not an attempt to reduce the Ultimate to the level of the mundane. Rather, Otherness and Identity stand as two conceptually irreconcilable poles, and it is the tension between them that generates the transformative potential of Dzogchen contemplation. The Ultimate as here and now encourages a "non-straying" from immediate awareness, countering all evaluative dualism and deconstructing conditional constructs of

the desirable. "Otherness" counters fixation on anything within the known, undermining the mind's tendency to "grasp" and thereby set up a dualistic experiential context. The result is a state of presence that in its openness stands poised to go beyond itself—a state so diametrically "other" than ordinary mind as to constitute the ultimate destabilization of the cognitive system. Destabilized and open,[209] the cognitive system evolves and a new state of consciousness emerges, one that resonates with the open or empty dimension of Being and its meaning-saturated field. In Dzogchen, the more one is here, the more one realizes the Other. Relative to ordinary consciousness, complete hereness *is* the Other, which is only realizable through the "antidote" of doing nothing and going nowhere.

NOTES

1. Dzogchen is not exclusively Buddhist; it is also practiced in Tibetan Bön. Some Tibetan Buddhists claim that Dzogchen is not Buddhist—that it is really a disguised form of Hindu theism. While Dzogchen is a departure from more conventional Buddhist teachings associated with Nikāya and Mahāyāna Buddhism, and may even have elements interpretable as theistic, this is completely irrelevant to the fact that Dzogchen has been (and is) practiced by Buddhists *as* a Buddhist tradition.

2. Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche, "Maha-Ati," in *Psychology 107 Class Reader*, compiled by Eleanor Rosch (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1993), p. 379; John Myrdhin Reynolds, trans., *The Golden Letters: The Three Statements of Garab Dorje, the First Teacher of Dzogchen* by Garab Dorje, with a commentary by Dza Patrul Rinpoche entitled, "The Special Teaching of the Wise and Glorious King" (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), p. 22.

3. Dilgo Khentse, p. 379.

4. Scholars have yet to agree on a definition of *mysticism* and its cognates *mystical* and *mystic*. The definition I propose here more or less follows that of Denise and John Carmody and William Alston: *mysticism* and *mystical* refers to those experiences and aspects of religious traditions which are claimed by members of the traditions (generally, the mystics themselves) to reflect or constitute "direct" experience or knowledge of "Ultimate Reality" (however that "Reality" might be construed by a given tradition). It is important to note that this definition is based on identifying a cross-cultural commonality in religious *claims*; it presupposes nothing with regards to the veridicality of these claims, the ontological status of any given tradition's "Ultimate Reality," the phenomenological similarity or dissimilarity of mystical experiences across traditions, or the epistemological plausibility of "direct" experience (these are issues best addressed within the context of fully developed theories of mysticism). Those traditions may be described as "mystical" which facilitate the occurrence of this experience, either as the goal of a self-consciously pursued path or as the unsought result of extreme paths of self-abnegation. The term "mysticism" therefore includes all the various doctrines, practices, rituals, etc., encompassed by such traditions as well as the experiences realized through those practices. A "mystic" may be defined as a religious practitioner who deliberately seeks and has an experience of "Ultimate Reality" (the exception being individuals who have spontaneous mystical experiences).

5. Even though the distinction between "data" and interpretation is hermeneutically problematic (the mere perception of data already involves some

degree of interpretation), the distinction still seems justified since interpretation varies by degree, from relatively weak to explicit and strong.

6. Linda E. Olds, *Metaphors of Interrelatedness: Toward a Systems Theory of Psychology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 87–8; Jeffrey Goldstein, "Unbalancing Psychoanalytic Theory: Moving Beyond the Equilibrium Model of Freud's Thought," in *Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences*, eds. Robin Robertson and Allan Combs (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), p. 242ff; Ludwig von Bertalanffy, "General System Theory and Psychology," in *Toward Unification in Psychology*, ed. J.R. Royce (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 222; Günter Schiepek and Wolfgang Tschacher, "Applications of Synergetics to Clinical Psychology," in *Self-Organization and Clinical Psychology: Empirical Approaches to Synergetics in Psychology*, eds. W. Tschacher, G. Schiepek, and E.J. Brunner (Berlin; New York: Springer-Verlag, 1992), p. 4.

7. James G. Miller, *Living Systems* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1995), p. 457.

8. Goldstein, p. 245; Goldstein considers this a symptom of "physics envy" by early psychologists (Goldstein, p. 243). See also Roy Ginker, ed., *Toward a Unified Theory of Human Behavior: An Introduction to General Systems Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), p. vii.

9. Goldstein, p. 240.

10. In the field of cognitive science, for example, strong arguments are now being made in favor of dynamical rather than computational models of cognition. See, for example, Tim van Gelder, "What Might Cognition Be, If Not Computation?" *Journal of Philosophy* 91/7 (1995): pp. 345–81; Timothy van Gelder and Robert F. Port, "It's About Time: An Overview of the Dynamical Approach to Cognition," in *Mind as Motion: Explorations in the Dynamics of Cognition*, eds. Robert F. Port and Timothy van Gelder (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), pp. 1–44.

11. One of the most cited and forceful critiques of the essentialist or perennialist approach to mysticism is Steven Katz's "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 22–74. See also Katz's "Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning," in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 3–41; "The 'Conservative' Character of Mystical Experience," in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 3–60. Other persuasive critiques of essentialism or perennialism are Hans H. Penner's "The Mystical Illusion," in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 89–116 and Robert M. Gimello's two essays,

"Mysticism in Its Contexts," in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 61–88; and "Mysticism and Meditation," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 170–99. For an entire anthology of essays critical of the constructivist or contextualist approach, see Robert K.C. Forman's, ed., *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). See also Randall Studstill, "Systems Theory and the Unity of Mystical Traditions: A Comparative Analysis of rDzogs-chen and Rhineland Mysticism" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2002), pp. 48–109.

12. Peter Fenner uses a cybernetic approach to interpret Madhyamaka in his *Reasoning into Reality: A System-Cybernetic Model and Therapeutic Interpretation of Buddhist Middle Path Analysis* (Sommerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1995). For in-depth discussions of all these points, as well as extensive references to the relevant literature, see Studstill, pp. 34–42 and 132–48.

13. These definitions are stipulative because at present there is little consensus about their meaning. "Consciousness" alone has been construed in many different ways, even within specific disciplines like cognitive science. See Harry T. Hunt, *On the Nature of Consciousness: Cognitive, Phenomenological, and Transpersonal Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 13ff; Ned Block, Owen Flanagan, and Güven Güzeldere, eds., *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 8–9.

Among cognitive scientists consciousness is variously described as (1) non-existent, (2) "an incidental by-product of computational capacity" (Hunt, p. 26; see also p. 59), or (3) "a formal system or capacity involving the direction, choice, and synthesis of nonconscious processes" (Hunt, p. 26). Hunt defines consciousness as (among other things) "a capacity for sensitive attunement to a surround" (Hunt, p. xiii), while for Steven Pinker the real problem of consciousness is the fact of immediate sentience or subjective awareness. Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 135. Echoing Pinker, Allan Combs describes consciousness as "perfect transparent *subjectivity*" that is (almost) always intentional. Allan Combs, *The Radiance of Being: Complexity, Chaos and the Evolution of Consciousness* (Edinburgh, UK: Floris Books, 1995), pp. 19–20. On the claim that consciousness does not exist, see John R. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 4–5 and 7.

Hunt claims that "consciousness is not a 'mechanism' to be 'explained' cognitively or neurophysiologically, but a categorical 'primitive' that defines the level of analysis that is psychology" (Hunt, p. xiii). I would agree, though I consider this statement to apply more properly to awareness. It is sentience-as-such that is the true mystery—as Pinker puts it, "a

riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" (Pinker, p. 60). On the other hand, the forms that sentience takes as consciousness can, to some degree, be "explained" by the particular factors that support and maintain them.

"Mind" I will use in the broad sense (more or less synonymously with "cognitive system") to refer to both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the personality/ego, encompassing "all those inner processes and conditions that shape and color consciousness, producing the unique landscapes of experience that characterize each moment of our lives" (Combs, *Radiance*, p. 23).

14. See Hunt, p. 51.

15. In Buddhist thought, human affective response includes a third, neutral category. I would argue that this is more a symptom of ordinary consciousness than indicative of a cognitively active category of associations. In other words, anything not labeled "good" or "bad" becomes neutral by default. An interesting (and existentially tragic) consequence of this is that most of life becomes irrelevant.

16. Following John Hick, "Reality" and "the Real" (with a capital "R") are used to refer to reality *as it is* (Kant's noumenal), as opposed to as it is experienced from the perspective of ordinary consciousness.

17. I use the term "energy" not in a scientific sense, but simply to refer to "whatever is" viewed without conceptual projections identifying it as a particular thing imbued with substance.

18. See Herbert V. Guenther, *From Reductionism to Creativity: rDzogs-chen and the New Sciences of Mind* (Boston: Shambhala, 1989), p. 203.

19. Describing the world as "construction" is not meant to imply that it is mere projection or hallucination. As Daniel Dennett points out, the mind does not have the information-processing capacity to generate an illusion as richly nuanced as the world of ordinary experience. Daniel Clement Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1991), p. 7ff. In addition, pure solipsism is difficult to reconcile with the uncontrollable, unpredictable, and unpleasant aspects of life. Perception *is* radically misleading, but at the same time it is constrained by a noumenal Reality ("noumenal" from the perspective of ordinary consciousness). Perception primarily functions to "skew" (through objectification, or reification) the experience of that which is already given.

20. Below I use "concept" or "construct" as inclusive categories for all these terms.

21. These more or less correspond to Kant's categories. See Combs' comments on L.R. Vanderrvert and the construction of our sense of "space/time" (Combs, *Radiance*, p. 66).

22. "Perceptual duality" refers to the experience of a spatially localized

subject distinct from spatially localized objects, and includes the implicit presumption that this dualistic mode of experience is ontologically grounded. See Ben Goertzel, *Chaotic Logic: Language, Mind, and Reality, from the Perspective of Complex Systems Science* (New York: Plenum, 1994), p. 108. On the linguistic component of perceptual construction, see Goertzel, *Chaotic Logic*, pp. 90, 96–7, 105–6.

23. According to Paul Gilbert, "Learning theory shows clearly that previously neutral stimuli can come to trigger defensive responses." Paul Gilbert, "Defense, Safe(ty) and Biosocial Goals in Relation to the Agonic and Hedonic Social Modes," *World Futures* 35 (1992): p. 37. Culture may "tag" stimuli with positive associations of safeness as well—what Gilbert refers to as "social attention holding power" [SAHP] (Gilbert, pp. 61, 41).

24. Gilbert, p. 35.

25. Gilbert, pp. 49, 57.

26. Harold A. Sackeim and Ruben C. Gur, "Self-Deception, Self-Confrontation, and Consciousness," in *Consciousness and Self-Regulation: Advances in Research and Theory*, vol. 2, eds. Gary E. Schwartz and David Shapiro (New York: Plenum Press, 1978), p. 166.

27. Glenn A. Perry, "A Systems / Perennial Approach to the Evolution of Psyche," *World Futures* 36 (1993): p. 239.

28. Perry, p. 238. The "high stakes" of self-image maintenance (survival versus death) may explain the autonomic and affective arousal caused simply by hearing one's own voice or watching a videotape of oneself in an innocuous interview. See Sackeim and Gur, pp. 152–5.

29. Combs, *Radiance*, p. 69.

30. Elsewhere I have attempted to explain this continuity, inspired by Herbert Guenther's presentations of Dzogchen: "At the ultimate level, all that exists is Being's dynamics, which have nothing to do with 'things' or 'substances.' Yet within the context of an hypostasized self that somehow separates itself off from Being, these dynamics take on certain meanings. These meanings [are] concretized by the mind, becoming at that point symbols of Being's qualities and dynamics. In our current situation, however, these symbols have lost their meaningfulness through the mind's activity of labeling and its tendency to interpret the entire field of experience in terms of completely taken-for-granted concepts, these symbols have become reduced to the status of things." Randall Studstill, "Being and the Experience of Being in Heidegger and rDzogs-chen," (unpublished paper, 1994), p. 19.

31. See Michael R. Bütz, "Chaos, An Omen of Transcendence in the Psychotherapeutic Process," *Psychological Reports* 71 (1992): p. 830. It should be emphasized that most "threats" are defined in relation to prior

conditions of worth and belonging. In other words, most inputs are not inherently threatening, but become threatening by contradicting internalized standards.

32. Kenneth E. Boulding, "General Systems Theory—The Skeleton of Science," in *Modern Systems Research for the Behavioral Scientist,* ed. Walter Buckley (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968), p. 7; see also Charles T. Tart, *States of Consciousness* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1975), p. 5; Arnold Powell, Joseph R. Royce, and Burton Voorhees, "Personality as a Complex Information-Processing System," *Behavioral Science* 27 (1982): pp. 345–6; K.H. Pribram, "The Role of Analogy in Transcending Limits in the Brain Sciences," *Daedalus* 109/2 (1980): pp. 22–3.

33. Ervin Laszlo, *Introduction to Systems Philosophy: Toward a New Paradigm of Contemporary Thought* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1972), p. 127.

34. Ibid.

35. Hunt would extend this analysis to the culture at large. As he puts it, "much of 'everyday' and 'high' culture can be seen as a socially endorsed, communal attempt to contain and control this potential for unexpected openness and novelty"—in other words, as a way to maintain the status quo (Hunt, pp. 29–30).

36. Combs, *Radiance*, p. 272.

37. See Sackeim and Gur on the inherent, anxiety-producing dissonance associated with self-confrontation. They state, "In every study that we are aware of arousal levels were higher after presentation of the self…. The [experimental] evidence indicates that feedback of the self leads to autonomic arousal, negative self-evaluations, defensive reactions, and constrictions on ideational content" (Sackeim and Gur, pp. 153–4, 159). This may reflect an inherent dissonance between the egocentric reality of the self and the idealized self-images most of us hold. Paradoxically, positive self-image tends to coexist with low self-esteem. In Twelve-Step Programs, this paradox is often expressed by the remark, "We're all egomaniacs with an inferiority complex."

38. As Pope and Singer report, "A recent unpublished study by Catherine McDonald indicated that subjects averaged 43% of reports of stimulus-independent or daydreamlike thought during a given day." Kenneth S. Pope and Jerome L. Singer, "Regulation of the Stream of Consciousness: Toward a Theory of Ongoing Thought," in *Consciousness and Self-Regulation: Advances in Research and Theory*, vol. 2, eds. Gary E. Schwartz and David Shapiro (New York: Plenum Press, 1978), p. 131. See also Arthur J. Deikman, "Deautomatization and the Mystic Experience," in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1980), p. 248. On the "abstract attitude," see Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson,

and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 24–5.

39. Pope and Singer point out that the demands of perceptual processing "can monopolize channel space and severely attenuate if not interrupt entirely, the processing of private material" (Pope and Singer, p. 113). I would argue that the general predictability of our routine external environments makes this kind of interruption rare.

40. Miller, *Living Systems*, p. 123. See also pp. 61, 121ff, 149, and 152. Contra Miller, I would argue that in many cases, stress is not caused by the information overload itself, but by anxiety created by dissonance between task performance and self-image.

41. Gilbert, p. 36.

42. See Tart's discussion of attention and self-awareness (Tart, p. 15) as well as Deikman's distinction between the "action mode" and "receptive mode." The action mode specifically overlaps what I have described as object-oriented attention. As Deikman points out, the goal of such attention (manipulating the environment) makes the "reference point" of such attention "the experience of a separate, personal self" (Deikman, pp. 261, 267). To some degree, these processes also correspond with what Tart calls *loading stabilization*, i.e., "keeping attention/awareness and other psychological energies deployed in habitual, desired structures by loading the person's system heavily with appropriate tasks" (Tart, p. 5). My emphasis is not on the "task," but on the objectifying mode of attention itself, which may be internalized as well as externalized.

43. As Varela, et al. observe, one of "the first insights of the meditator who begins to question the self [is] the discovery of total egomania" (Varela, et al., p. 62).

44. Perry, p. 238; see also p. 239.

45. Hunt, p. 24.

46. Hunt states that, if "we are willing to entertain the idea that conscious awareness in itself is a 'system,' and that that system can be selectively impaired, we ought to be prepared to consider the possibility that it can be selectively enhanced and developed as well" (Hunt, p. 34).

47. Laszlo, *Introduction to Systems Philosophy*, p. 127.

48. Ibid., p. 130.

49. Ibid., p. 132; see also Fenner, p. 104; Perry, p. 224.

50. Inputs are not innately threatening, but become threatening by contradicting system conditions. Letting go of conditions therefore involves a re-integration of formerly repressed or denied aspects of the self and environment. Perry seems to make the same point when he explains that as the cognitive system evolves, "That portion of the environment which per-

turbed the system and drove it beyond its stability threshold quite literally in-forms the system. This, in turn, allows new properties to emerge which enable the system to process information previously exported as waste" (Perry, p. 240).

51. On cognitive reorganization and anxiety reduction, see Perry, p. 238.

52. Erich Jantsch, *The Self-Organizing Universe* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980), p. 284.

53. Tart, p. 55.

54. As R.D. Laing puts it, "The *ordinary* person is a shriveled, desiccated fragment of what a person can be." R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1967), pp. 25–6.

55. In the discussion below, identical Tibetan terms may appear somewhat differently due to the different transliteration styles of the authors being quoted.

56. For a comprehensive scholarly discussion of Dzogchen, see Samten Gyaltsen Karmay's *The Great Perfection (Dzogchen): A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching in Tibetan Buddhism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988). See also David Germano, "Architecture and Absence in the Secret Tantric History of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*)," *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17/2 (Winter 1994): pp. 203–335.

57. See Reynolds' comments on Tucci, in *Golden Letters*, p. 220. The case for Dzogchen's origins being in the Indian Mahasiddha traditions is strengthened if Anuyoga is considered part of Dzogchen, as Dargyay maintains. Eva K. Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), pp. 38–43.

58. Mañjuśrīmitra's *rDo la gser zhun* ("Gold Refined from Ore") is cited by Reynolds as one of the primary indications of Yogācāra influence on Dzogchen. Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, pp. 205–6.

59. Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, pp. 215, 205, and 220.

60. The esteem accorded Dzogchen is by no means universal among Tibetan Buddhists. Some non-Nyingmapas (i.e., members of either the Kagyupa, Sakyapa, or Gelugpa Schools) have been highly critical of Dzogchen, claiming that it is either not really Buddhism or that it is a covert form of Ch'an. Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, pp. 218, 220, and 263; see also Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), p. 463. On the other hand, some of Dzogchen's greatest advocates have been non-Nyingmapas. See Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, p. 280; Samuel, pp. 463–4.

61. Non-Nyingma schools list four tantric paths: *kriyātantra, caryātantra, yogatantra*, and *anuttarayogatantra*.

62. Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, pp. 30–1. Atiyoga in turn encompasses three sub-categories of teachings, translated by Eva Dargyay as the Section of Mind (*sems-sde*), the Section of the Unending Dynamic of Being (*klong-sde*), and the Section of Instructions (*man-ngag-gi sde*). See Dargyay, *Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 43–4. The nuanced distinctions between these three divisions of Dzogchen will not be addressed here. On this topic see Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, trans., *Buddha Mind: An Anthology of Longchen Rabjam's Writings on Dzogpa chenpo*, Buddhayana Series (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1989), pp. 47–76.

According to Dargyay, the final three *yāna*-s—the *mahāyoga, anuyoga,* and *atiyoga* tantras—are subcategories of *yogatantra*, and all three together comprise levels of The Great Perfection (*atiyoga* simply being the highest of the three) (Dargyay, *Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 17, 43). Non-Nyingma Schools list only four tantric paths: kriya, carya, yoga, and anuttarayoga tantras. In this list, Dzogchen is not formally recognized as a path, though non-Nyingmapas may still practice it (See Samuel, p. 463). In addition, Anuttarayoga tantra is often considered to culminate in Mahāmudrā, which has close affinities to Dzogchen; see Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, p. 221; Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, *The Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen* (Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1986) and Karma Chagmé, *Naked Awareness: Practical Instructions on the Union of Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2000).

63. Other translations of *rig-pa* (Skt. *vidyā*) include "intrinsic awareness," "knowledge," "intellect," "pristine cognition," "pure presence," or "intelligence." Guenther variously translates *rig-pa* as "ec-static intensity," "cognitive intensity," or simply "excitation" in order to specify *rig-pa*'s expression through the individual as an "ongoing" existential pressure to transcend "all limits set by the prevalent 'unexcited' state of one's everydayness…." Herbert V. Guenther, *Meditation Differently: Phenomenological-Psychological Aspects of Tibetan Buddhist (Mahamudra and sNyingthig) Practices from Original Tibetan Sources* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992), p. 27. Along these lines, Longchenpa describes *rig-pa* as "[one's] mind intending and suffused by (the whole's) pellucidity and consummation" (quoted in Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. xv).

64. Samuel, pp. 541, 550. Samuel associates this understanding of Dzogchen with the Rimed movement (See Samuel, p. 535). This inclusivist approach may be directly contrasted with the sectarian, clerical (i.e., non-shamanic) systemizations of Buddhism by the Gelugpas (Samuel, p. 543).

65. Namkhai Norbu, *The Mirror: Advice on the Presence of Awareness* (Barrytown, NY: Barrytown, Ltd., 1996), pp. 32–3.

66. Gareth Sparham, trans., *Dzog Chen Meditation* (Delhi, India: Sri Satguru Publications, 1994), p. 1.

67. Guenther, *Reductionism*, p. 185.

68. Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, pp. 21–2.

69. Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 151.

70. Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, p. 21.

71. John Myrdhin Reynolds, trans., *Self Liberation Through Seeing with Naked Awareness* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1989), p. 4.

72. Quoted in Karmay, p. 147. See also Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, vol. 1., trans. and ed. by Gyurme Dorje (Boston: Wisdom, 1991), pp. 300, 907.

73. Samuel, p. 464.

74. See Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, 31; Kennard Lipman, preface to *Dzog Chen and Zen* by Namkhai Norbu (Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin Publishing, 1984), p. 9.

75. As I will explain below, tantra exercises such a pervasive influence on all forms of Tibetan Buddhism that in actual Dzogchen practice symbolic and non-symbolic approaches tend to be inseparably enmeshed. Nevertheless, a tendency to undermine symbolic representation is in most cases still discernable even in the more tantric expressions of Dzogchen.

76. Properly speaking, emptiness is not "emptiness of" anything, since in the cognition of emptiness no "thing" has ever existed to be negated. Ultimately, emptiness neither affirms nor negates anything, the basis for the Madhyamaka claim to be the "middle way" between the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism.

77. Lipman, p. 8; Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, p. 281.

78. Samuel, p. 465.

79. Karmay, pp. 108 and 118. See Samuel on the conflation of terminology for the Ultimate in *The Tibetan Book of Great Liberation* (Samuel, p. 504). *Bindu* is generally translated as "drop" in tantric contexts, though in Dzogchen, Karmay argues that "(Great or Single) Circle" is closer to its intended meaning. The first two terms of this list—*dharmakāya* and *dharmatā*—are common to Mahāyāna Buddhism as a whole, though the Dzogchen understanding of these terms may be somewhat different from that found in other Mahāyāna traditions. *Dharmatā*—literally "Dharma-ness"—is generally translated as "Reality," "Ultimate Reality," or "the Absolute."

80. Dilgo Khentse, p. 379; *Kunched Gyalpo tantra*, in Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 95.

81. Commentary to *Tun-huang* Manuscript 647, in Karmay, p. 54.

82. Ibid., p. 55; see also Karmay, pp. 65 and 72.

83. Karmay, p. 118.

84. Karmay, p. 177; see also p. 215 and Eva K. Dargyay, "The Concept of a 'Creator God' in Tantric Buddhism," *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 8/1 (1985): pp. 44–45.

85. The Jonangpas distinguished two types of emptiness: "self-emptiness" (*rangtong*) and "emptiness of other" (*shentong*). The first represents the standard Madhyamaka negation of inherent existence, applicable to the phenomenal appearances of ordinary, samsaric consciousness. The second, "emptiness of other," applies to Reality itself, which is "empty" only in the sense that it lacks anything other than itself. In other words, emptiness in the shentong sense affirms that there is a positively existing, pure and luminous Reality that is "empty" of adventitious obscurations or defilements. For more on the Jonangpa school and the shentong approach to emptiness, see S.H. Hookham, *The Buddha Within: Tathagatagarbha Doctrine According to the Shentong Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhaga* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1991). See also Keith Dowman, trans., *The Flight of the Garuda: Teachings of the Dzokchen Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1994), p. 199.

86. Dudjom Lingpa, *Buddhahood without Meditation: A Visionary Account Known as Refining Apparent Phenomena (nang-jang),* trans. Richard Barron (Junction City, CA: Padma Pub., 1994), p. 91. See also Samuel, p. 510; Guenther, *Reductionism*, pp. 228–9; Longchenpa, *The Four-Themed Precious Garland: An Introduction to Dzog-ch'en, the Great Completeness*, with explanation and oral commentary by Dudjom Rinpoche and Beru Khyentze Rinpoche, trans. and ed. Alexander Berzin in conjunction with Sherpa Tulku and Matthew Kapstein (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, [c1979] 1993), p. 33.

87. Guenther, *Reductionism*, 203. Emptiness is often explained specifically in relation to mind, where it is again emphasized that it is not a mere vacuity or void. Though emptiness involves the "complete cessation of all [mental] elaborations," this is a positive state "with all the auspicious attributes of knowledge, mercy, and power spontaneously established." Khetsun Sangpo Rinbochay, *Tantric Practice in Nying-ma,* trans. and ed. by Jeffrey Hopkins; co-edited by Anne Klein (London: Rider, 1982), p. 191; see also p. 186. As Shabkar Lama states, "The emptiness of the mind is not just a blank nothingness, for without doubt it is the primal awareness of intrinsic knowledge, radiant from the first" (Dowman, p. 95). Chetsangpa Ratna Sri Buddhi describes the "emptiness" of mind as "clear, shining, fresh, sharp, lucid…. In the real nature of emptiness, clarity is present like a manifesting essence" that is "pure and all-pervading." In James Low, trans., *Simply Being: Texts in the Dzogchen Tradition* (London: Vajra Press, 1994), pp. 62, and 56. See also Low, pp. 77–78; Samuel, p. 535.

88. Karmay, p. 185.

89. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, pp. 25–26. I have juxtaposed conventional translations with Guenther's translations as a way to better evoke the meaning of the original Tibetan terms.

90. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 26.

91. Longchenpa, in Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 61.

92. Dilgo Khentse, p. 379.

93. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, pp. 25–26.

94. Ibid., pp. 25–27.

95. Longchenpa, in Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 61.

96. Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, p. 282.

97. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 27.

98. In Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 52.

99. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 26.

100. Guenther, *Reductionism*, p. 22; Longchenpa, in Guenther, *Reductionism*, p. 196.

101. Sometimes five are listed. See Dudjom Lingpa, who adds a fifth *kāya* transcending the *svabhāvakāya*: the "unchanging vajra kāya." Dudjom Lingpa, *Buddhahood without Meditation: A Visionary Account Known as Refining Apparent Phenomen* (*nang-jang*), trans. by Richard Barron (Junction City, CA: Padma Pub., 1994), pp. 119–120. Longchenpa adds a fifth *kāya* at the other end of the spectrum, so to speak, the "gestalt experience of mystery" (*gsang-ba' i-sku*), corresponding with ordinary deluded experience (Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 45).

102. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 37.

103. See Ibid., pp. 44–47; Longchenpa, *Four-Themed Precious Garland*, pp. 57–58.

104. Longchenpa, *Four-Themed Precious Garland*, pp. 57–58; see also Guenther, *Meditation Differently* , p. 44.

105. Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, p. 239; Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, pp. 37–38 and 45.

106. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 45; Herbert V. Guenther, *Tibetan Buddhism in Western Perspective* (Emeryville, CA: Dharma Publishing, 1977), p. 238.

107. Guenther, *Western Perspective*, p. 39; Reynolds, *Golden Letters*, p. 239.

108. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, pp. 37 and 40; *rDzogs-pa-chen-po lta-ba ye-shes gting-rdzogs-kyi rgyud*, quoted in Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 45.

109. *rDzogs-pa-chen-po lta-ba ye-shes gting-rdzogs-kyi rgyud*, quoted in Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 45; Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 37.

110. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, pp. 37–38.

111. Ibid., p. 28.

112. Dudjom Lingpa, p. 89; see also Shabkar Lama, in Dowman, p. 107.

113. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, pp. 36–37 and 44.

114. Karmay, p. 190.

115. Dargyay, "Creator God," p. 41; see Samuel, p. 465.

116. In this text, *bodhicitta* (Tib. *byang chub kyi sems*) and *gzhi* are used synonymously. (On the identification of *bodhicitta*, Samantabhadra [Tib. Kun-tu bzang-po], *dharmakāya* [Tib. *chos sku*], *gzhi*, and *sems-nyid* in Dzogchen, see Karmay, pp. 45–46, 128, 131 and 176.) Dargyay argues that *bodhicitta* is used here as a synonym for mind (*citta*) in the Yogācāra sense. The problem with this interpretation is that "mind" as the creator of the phenomenal world for the Yogacarins is essentially defiled. The "Creator" as identified in this text, on the other hand, represents a pristine and absolute principle, which may be identified with "awakened mind" (*bodhicitta*) or *gzhi*. Though Dzogchen texts may echo Yogācāra by describing the illusory appearances of ordinary experience as mental constructions, from the Dzogchen perspective, mind and objects are ultimately the presencing of a pure Ground.

117. Dargyay, "Creator God," p. 43.

118. Longchenpa, Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 60.

119. Guenther, *Reductionism*, pp. 189–191.

120. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 29.

121. Pema Ledral Sal, in Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 58. For more on the emanation from the Basis, see Guenther, *Reductionism*, pp. 189–91.

122. This "return" is purely experiential, since ontologically, "straying" is impossible.

123. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, pp. 30 and 36–37; see also Longchenpa, in Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 62; Chetsangpa Ratna, in Low, p. 57; Guenther, *Western Perspective*, p. 153.

124. In Karmay, pp. 189–190.

125. The term *kun-gzhi*, the "ground of everything," is borrowed from Yogācāra, and in the sense used above (following Longchenpa) refers to the Yogācāra concept of *alāyavijñāna* (Tib. *kun-gzhi rnam-shes*): the "container" of all cognitive/affective habitual tendencies, the basis of the deluded mental processes associated with *citta* and therefore the basis of

samsaric experience in general (Karmay, pp. 179–180). The difference, of course, is that in Dzogchen, *kun-gzhi* is grounded in an inherently pure basis (*gzhi*), an idea that is not as explicitly articulated in Yogācāra. It should be pointed out, however, that some Dzogchen sources use *kun gzhi* as a synonym for the *gzhi* (Karmay, p. 178), in which case its meaning departs significantly from the Yogācāra sense (Karmay, p. 179). Longchenpa rejects this position since his view of *kun gzhi* follows Yogācāra. From this perspective, *kun gzhi* can not be equivalent to *gzhi* (as *chos sku*) since "*kun gzhi* is the root of *samsāra* contain[ing] the samsāric traces (*bag chags*)" while *chos sku* is free of all samsāric traces. (Karmay, pp. 178–180). See also Longchenpa, in Guenther, *Reductionism*, pp. 214–215 and 217; Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, pp. 210–211.

126. Guenther, *Reductionism*, p. 225; see also pp. 209, 227.

127. Karmay, pp. 175–176.

128. Dudjom Lingpa, p. 97.

129. Guenther, *Reductionism*, pp. 195, 199, 216.

130. Ibid., p. 226.

131. See Vimalamitra, in Guenther, *Reductionism*, p. 211; Shabkar Lama, in Dowman, pp. 96–7.

132. Dudjom Lingpa, p. 29; Chimed Rigdzin Lama, in Low, pp. 43, 45.

133. Dudjom Lingpa, pp. 157, 159; see also p. 29.

134. Literally, *tathāgatagarbha* translates as "the womb (or embryo) of the thus gone one." Guenther translates it as "Being's optimization thrust."

135. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 28.

136. Karmay, p. 185.

137. Ibid., p. 175.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid., p. 176.

140. Ibid., p. 190.

141. Ibid., p. 189.

142. Guenther, *Reductionism*, p. 320.

143. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 35.

144. Ibid., p. 36.

145. Ibid.

146. Longchenpa, in Guenther, *Reductionism*, p. 187; see also p. 234.

147. Shabkar Lama, in Dowman, p. 114.

148. Guenther, *Reductionism*, p. 243.

149. Ibid.

150. Ibid., p. 227.

151. Longchenpa, *The Jewel Ship: A Guide to the Meaning of Pure and Total Presence, The Creative Energy of the Universe*, trans. Kennard Lipman and Merrill Peterson under the title *You Are the Eyes of the World* (Novato, CA: Lotsawa, 1987), p. 43.

152. In Dargyay, "Creator God," p. 41.

153. Ibid.

154. Ibid., pp. 41–42.

155. Longchenpa, in Guenther, *Reductionism*, p. 187.

156. Longchenpa, *The Jewel Ship*, p. 47.

157. Namkhai Norbu, foreword to *Naked Awareness* by Reynolds, p. x; Namkhai Norbu, *Dzog Chen and Zen* (Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin Publishing, 1984), p. 27.

158. Longchenpa, *Four-Themed Precious Garland*, p. 39.

159. Dudjom Lingpa, p. 113.

160. Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, in Karmay, p. 113.

161. See Dudjom Rinpoche, p. 900; Shabkar Lama, in Dowman, p. 121. This rejection of formalized practices is particularly emphasized in early Dzogchen, though even here it may have been somewhat rhetorical. See Germano, p. 239; Karmay, p. 213.

162. Germano, p. 229.

163. Karmay, p. 175.

164. *Tun-huang* Manuscript 594 (v.9–11), in Karmay, p. 72; see the *bSam gtan mig sgron* on the same page and also Karmay, p. 84.

165. Karmay, p. 175.

166. See Hanson-Barber's comments on *rig-pa* as non-straying or "no-movement" from "pure awareness." A.W. Hanson-Barber, 'No-Thought' in Pao-T'ang Ch'an and Early Ati-Yoga," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 8/2 (1985): pp. 67–70. See also Chetsangpa Ratna, in Low, p. 58.

167. See Low, p. xxiii. In Zen, "just sitting" (*shikan taza*) is so strenuous that after "half an hour you will be sweating, even in winter in an unheated room…." Hakuun Yasutani, in Philip Kapleau, *The Three Pillars of Zen: Teaching, Practice, and Enlightenment* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), p. 54.

168. Germano, p. 259.

169. Ibid. See also Longchenpa, in Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, pp. 282–283. In at least one source, Longchenpa does state that one can skip

preliminary practices if one has no difficulty quieting the mind or if one simply finds such practices too difficult (Germano, p. 225). Since few practitioners meet the first criteria at least, this did not significantly call into question the importance of preliminary practices.

170. Germano, p. 255.

171. Ibid., p. 260.

172. The practices below are described as "preliminaries" from the perspective of Dzogchen. Depending on the school or tradition, these preliminaries may be viewed as the central and ultimate practice itself.

173. Germano, p. 260.

174. Ibid., p. 255; material in brackets my addition. See also p. 260.

175. Precept 15 of Ngulchu Thogme's *Thirty-Seven Precepts of the Bodhisattva*. I have been unable to identify the translator. For other translations of the *Thirty-Seven Precepts*, see Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, trans. Ruth Sonam (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1997), p. 47; Geshe Jampa Tegchok, *Transforming the Heart: The Buddhist Way to Joy and Courage* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1999), p. 211.

176. Generally, *śamathā* is considered a prerequisite for *vipāśyana*.

177. Germano, p. 253.

178. Ibid.

179. Longchenpa lists tantric practices as calming techniques. Germano, pp. 252–253.

180. In some presentations (particularly Gelugpa), this awareness is considered a more direct means of realizing emptiness.

181. These include practices in which one visualizes energy flowing along various channels (*nadi*) in the body as well as practices of breath retention or alternate-nostril breathing.

182. Germano, p. 253.

183. Ibid., p. 254.

184. Ibid.

185. Ibid., p. 253.

186. On Dzogchen's shift from an early rejection of all formalized, structured practices to an increasingly structured (especially tantric) approach, see Germano, pp. 205–209, 216, 234, and 266.

187. Germano, pp. 254 and 240.

188. In the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, the concept of emptiness seems to have also been an attempt to refer to or evoke an unconditioned approach to

enlightenment, though the Tibetan Buddhist tradition has tended to emphasize the analytical, Madhyamaka method of realizing emptiness.

189. See Lipman, p. 7. The non-duality of uncontrived awareness is itself buddhahood. As is stated in the *All-Accomplishing King*: "The realization of the buddhas of the three times is gained in the sole determination that two are not seen." In Dudjom Rinpoche, p. 897.

190. Dilgo Khentse, p. 379.

191. Lochen Dhamaśri, in Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 86.

192. Longchenpa, in Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 282.

193. Longchenpa, *The Jewel Ship*, p. 50.

194. Reynolds, *Naked Awareness*, pp. 39 and 56.

195. Longchenpa, *The Jewel Ship*, p. 37. On the "self-clarifying" nature of mind, see also Mathew Kapstein, "The Amnesiac Monarch and the Five Mnemic Men: 'Memory' in Great Perfection (Rdzogs-chen) Thought," in *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Janet Gyatso (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 244.

196. Longchenpa, *Four-Themed Precious Garland*, pp. 56–57; Dudjom Rinpoche, p. 907; Longchenpa, in Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 289.

197. Shabkar Lama, in Dowman, p. 121.

198. Germano, p. 225.

199. Ibid.

200. Ibid., p. 226.

201. Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, pp. xii–xiv.

202. The Buddhist emphasis on the unsatisfactoriness of "worldly" life helps support this process as well. See Deikman and Forman on the deconstructive effects of renunciation. Deikman, 251; Robert K.C. Forman, "The Construction of Mystical Experience," *Faith and Philosophy* 5/3 (1988): pp. 262–263.

203. See Jack Engler, "Therapeutic Aims in Psychotherapy and Meditation," in *Transformations of Consciousness: Traditional and Contemplative Perspectives on Development*, eds. Ken Wilber, J. Engler, and D.P. Brown (Boston: Shambhala, 1986), pp. 21–22, and 42.

204. On the stress-inducing nature of meditation, see Mark Epstein and Jonathan Lieff, "Psychiatric Complications of Meditation Practice," in *Transformations of Consciousness*, pp. 54–55.

205. John Collins, *Mysticism and New Paradigm Psychology* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1991), p. 197. See also Short's

analysis of mystical practices as ways to "'crash' our linguistic system" leading to an experience of the "non-linguistic." L. Short, "Mysticism, Mediation, and the Non-Linguistic," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63/4 (1995): p. 665.

206. Jantsch, *Universe*, p. 73.

207. Janstsch, *Universe*, p. 73; Erich Jantsch, "From Self-Reference to Self-Transcendence: The Evolution of Self-Organization Dynamics," in *Self-Organization and Dissipative Structures*, eds. William C. Schieve and Peter M. Allen (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 347. See also Combs, *Radiance*, p. 251.

208. On meditative experience as a realization of interconnectedness, see D.P. Brown, "The Stages of Meditation in Cross-Cultural Perspective," in *Transformations of Consciousness*, pp. 256, 269.

209. The "openness" inherent in the Dzogchen approach is particularly emphasized in this passage by Dilgo Khentse: "When performing the meditation practice one should develop the feeling of opening oneself out completely to the whole universe with absolute simplicity and nakedness of mind, ridding oneself of all 'protecting' barriers" (Dilgo Khentse, p. 379).