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Buddhism and the Body

Edited by

Kenneth W. Holloway

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Buddhism and the Body

Studies in Somaesthetics

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Kenneth W. Holloway

This book will argue that the core teachings of Buddhism must be understood from the context of the lived experiences of its practitioners, which is represented by the broad category of "the body" in its title. The modifier of somaesthetics means that Buddhism will be analyzed for its ameliorative effect, which spans the understanding of how the mind integrates with the body, and its sensory organs. This exploration of positive effect spans from the abstraction of dreams to the concreteness of medicine. Beyond the historical side of these questions, a contemporary analysis includes its intersection with art, as well as philosophy, and ethnography. This introduction will outline the history of strategies for denying Buddhism's relationship with the body, which was done by criticizing it for being superstitious and idolatrous. These criticisms are predicated upon the premise that the religion is devoid of rational grounding, of which a connection to the body is of paramount importance. Exploring this critical perspective will underscore the value of bringing together the scholarly perspectives presented in this book.

The marginalization of Buddhism is evident in the history of an enduring way it has been criticized for a singular element of its aesthetics, the importance of statuary in its rituals. These inanimate yet beautiful statues came to be seen as unmistakable evidence that this religion lacked deep and meaningful connections to the lived human experience. The focus on idol worship is particularly surprising because there are no records of there being any statues of the Buddha in the first several centuries after he died; there seems to have been early opposition to the construction of images in his likeness, and this has obvious humanistic implications. Despite the first statues being created at a late date, praying before these images became a central feature of Buddhist worship. This feature then sparked attacks from followers of Abrahamic religions. According to Donald Lopez, the first time the word Buddhism is even used to describe this religion is 1844, prior to this it was consistently referred to as idolatry, with Sakyamuni being seen as a demonic figure who promoted this sinful practice.[1]

1 Much of Lopez's book is centered around the figure of Eugène Burnouf whose *Introduction to the History of Buddhism* was published in 1844, which Lopez sees as a watershed moment

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In the past century, the worship of statues reemerged as the focus of modernizers who argued that iconoclasm was the central feature of the most popular sect of Buddhism in East Asia, Zen/Chan/Son. Important leaders such as Hu Shih (胡適 1891–1962) in China and D.T. Suzuki (鈴木 大拙 貞太郎 1870–1966) in Japan both claimed that since the Tang Dynasty, the Chan/Zen sect eschewed idol worship. They saw the privilege surrounding statuary as anathema to this sect's egalitarian values. Despite the best efforts of reformers who sought to argue for the compatibility of Buddhism with a modern western protestant aesthetic, there were still movements in both China and Japan aimed at destroying the religion by targeting its statues and institutions.[2]

One surprising conclusion that can be drawn from the above tangle of aniconism, icons, and iconoclasm is that what would normally be mutually contradictory perspectives have coexisted comfortably within Buddhism. This contradiction is not a failure to construct a coherent system of beliefs. It is in fact, a signature feature of a religious system that does not understand the world as limited by the constrains of dualistic choices. The challenge is that nonduality is a term of art in Buddhism, and it refers to an embrace of conflict. One example is in the "Vimalakirti Nonduality Painting" (維摩不二圖) from the 12th century at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[3] In this painting, a monk is depicted as he is about to make a comment about the inferiority of women, whereupon he will be immediately given a lesson in gender equality. This nonduality that is being depicted is not separable from conflict, instead it is a direct reference to the engagement with social problems that pervades the sutra. Rather than seeking to avoid conflict, the Vimalakirti seeks to turn it into a teachable moment.

The importance of learning from conflict underpins the 2019 article by James Laidlaw and Jonathan Mair, which explores the importance of failure in the experience of short-term monastic retreats held by the Buddhist organization Foguang Shan. The article is part of a shift in anthropology that began in the 1990s toward engaging with ethics. They argue that ethics can be

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in the understanding of Buddhism. Burnouf had himself read and translated an immense amount of Buddhist writing so his introduction had a depth and nuance entirely absent from earlier writings. Donald S. Lopez, *From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha*, Buddhism and Modernity. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 34–45.

2 Robert H. Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," *History of Religions* 33, no. 1 (1993): 1–43; John R. McRae, "Religion as Revolution in Chinese Historiography: Hu Shih (1891–1962) on Shen-Hui (684–758)," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 12 (2001): 59–102.

3 James CY Watt, *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), 218–220; Wen Fong, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 8th-14th Century*, vol. 48 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 330–332.

learned through the challenges inherent in attempting to embody Buddhist ritual behavior.[4] This introduction to *Buddhism and the Body* builds upon their work by shifting the analytical lens from an anthropology of ethics to somaesthetics. Through this the practice of Buddhist ritual can be understood as a meditative experience. There is also a confluence of meditation, ritual, and the importance of challenges in Richard Shusterman analysis of his experience in a Japanese Zen monastery. One aspect of Zen that he highlights is the ritual aspect of eating. This is important for expanding meditation from being seen as a momentary experience of sitting into a way of living. It is through the challenges of following the ritualized formalities of Zen eating that he achieves a heightened aesthetic awareness. Expanding the scope of what can be meditative provides an important counterpoint to the perspective of early 20th century reformers who sought to modernize Buddhism by eliminating ritual, which they saw as outside the scope of meditation. I believe that an emic perspective on ritual performance will show that the meditative state of the practitioner is in fact central and the performing of prostrations is not an activity that inhibits self-awareness.

Initially, when starting to participate in a Buddhist service, it is common to be taken aside by someone who is an expert in the practice, often this is a nun, who is referred to as a venerable in Foguang Shan to avoid gender distinctions with male monastics. What is deemed aesthetically proper in bowing is to begin with feet shoulder width apart with hands pressed together and fingers joined in prayer at chest height. The hands stay there as the waist bows with the legs mostly straight, and when the torso approaches being perpendicular to the floor the right hand drops first to touch the cushion. This softens the impact of the knees lowering to a kneeling position. Then the head is lowered to the cushion; both hands are palm-down next to the head and when the forehead touches the cushion, the hands are reversed to have the palms facing upward. After a moment, the hands are flipped to be palm-down and then the body begins to rise with the right hand being the last to leave the cushion to maintain stability.

The intense detail of the bodily positioning, which is only given the briefest sketch above, initially produces a deep sense of anxiety. When attempting this the first few times, the countless bows that are performed in the course of the service require a great deal of focus to maintain any semblance of correctness.

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4 James Laidlaw and Jonathan Mair, "Imperfect Accomplishment: The Fo Guang Shan Short-Term Monastic Retreat and Ethical Pedagogy in Humanistic Buddhism," *Cultural Anthropology* 34, no. 3 (2019): 328–358; James Laidlaw, *The Subject of Virtue: An Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 10.

This is amplified by the fact that all of these bodily movements are being done during a service where group chanting is being performed. The chanting is done with a prayer book, usually in Chinese. This book is held in the left hand when bowing so that the right hand can facilitate the lowering to the knees and subsequent rising to stand. However, after each prostration, it is challenging to find the correct line in the book to continue chanting. Having spoken with numerous people about this when they first join a chanting service, anxiety is universal regardless of whether the person is a native speaker of Mandarin or someone who learned the language in college such as me. The process is challenging, it is difficult.

What is important to understand is that a transition occurs after the bodily actions become familiar, and it mirrors the process Laidlaw, Mair, and Shusterman described. This process involves an increased ability to enter a mindful or meditative state due to the complexities of chanting and bowing. Because of the challenges involved in the process, if the mind wanders to think about mundane daily tasks, such as remembering to fill the car with gasoline, finding the right line in the prayer book after bowing becomes more difficult. Slowly, these outside distractions become less frequent and the first ideas that begin to replace them are often associated with physical discomfort. There is an arising awareness of areas of the body that may have been strained recently such as the lower back or the neck, and they will begin feel uncomfortable. The reason is that as the meditative state begins, there is an increased sensory awareness of the body, which in Shusterman's analysis is essential to somaesthetics. This awareness is also the reason that people who begin seated meditation may stop practicing; there is a misunderstanding that the meditating is causing the pain instead of enabling an awareness of a preexisting condition. What follows this heightened sensory awareness is a gradual ability to start relaxing those areas of the body that are uncomfortable. This undoing of tight muscles is very satisfying when it happens, and relaxation slowly becomes an increasingly reliable and dominant experience during the service.

The feeling of deep relaxation is aided by the dharma instruments of bell, drum, wooden fish, and gong. Their sounds become more beautiful as they begin to connect to bodily movements of bowing, kneeling, and standing. Slowly, the musicality of the ritual and the body's movements become one. Early China is the origin of the theory that these two concepts, music and ritual, are profoundly interrelated. One source where these two terms are interrelated is the recently excavated Guodian (郭店) manuscripts, where it can be difficult to distinguish the meaning of the character for music (樂 *yue*) and which can also be read as joy (樂 *le*). One example is, "Laughter is the surface

of ritual; music/joy is the depth of ritual." 笑禮之淺澤也. 樂, 禮之深澤也.[5] This describes music, and its partner concept ritual, as uplifting bodily practices, but the practice also entails following a set of rules. The musician must learn the rigors of how to stand and move before the exhilaration of embodied performance can be experienced. In the writings of Xunzi, the shaping of the body and its sensory organs by religious ritual and music transforms people into socialized creatures and distinguishes them from animals.[6] Participating in a Buddhist ritual is a similar experience. As a group of people learn to chant together, rules are needed so that the self and the other merge to perform a musical ritual.

As a person participates in more dharma services, they will often be offered the opportunity to take refuge in the Buddha or even take the Five Vows. In the first case, taking refuge means that they can now wear a black robe (海青 *haiqing*) during the service and after the Five Vows a brown shawl (縵衣 *manyi*) is added on top of it. The aesthetics of these long draped garments means that the process of bowing and standing, or even walking up or down a staircase becomes much more complicated. In the case of the brown shawl, it is common to use a black paperclip to help prevent it from slipping off the left arm, but in recognition of its value for mindfulness I instead have valued the challenge it presents so I do not use one. This challenge creates a return to the early stage of chanting where anxiety resurfaces as the dominant experience. As an example, if the front of the foot accidentally steps upon the front edge of the long garment, it will tighten and prevent the body from standing upright. Slowly, as was the case in the initial encounter with chanting, the added challenge gives way to increased mindfulness. Greater mindfulness then produces joy as a response to the increasing relaxation and aesthetic appreciation of the chanting service. Similar cycles of tension, anxiety, and joy occur at various times in the practice. The first time participating in day-long dharma services such as the Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance Dharma Assembly ceremony (慈悲三昧水懺 Cibei sanmei shui chan) can elicit this. Subsequent multi-day ceremonies can continue the process of challenging one's ability to remain mindful and then rewarding it with feelings of equanimity. These are services such as the Emperor Liang Repentance Ceremony

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5 Kenneth W. Holloway, *The Quest for Ecstatic Morality in Early China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 55–58.

6 Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi Ji Jie, Kao Zheng: Ji Jie Er Shi Juan Kao Zheng Er Juan* 荀子集解, 考證 : 集解二十卷考証二卷 (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 1995), 禮論篇 "Li lun pian" "Discourse on Ritual".

(梁皇寶懺 Lianghangbao chan), which can be done in as little as three days and the Liberation Rite of Water and Land (法界聖凡水陸普度大齋勝會 Fajie Sheng Fan Shuilu Pudu Dazhai Sheng Hui) of seven days. More recently, the move to online services during the pandemic has once again presented new challenges and then rewards as the process of chanting and bowing is done at home via weblink. In short, the challenges presented by participating in a ritual, can offer limitless opportunities for developing greater sensory awareness. While the above discussion of meditative awareness in Buddhist ritual has been presented from an emic perspective, it should not be seen as normative. Each participant's body and mind are unique, and this offers unlimited variations to how ritual is experienced.

There is an important connection between refining one's sensory awareness in the above discussion and the first chapter of this book, which explores some of the oldest textual sources of Buddhism. Edward Drott analyzes the mastery of the sensory organs as one specific avenue for achieving enlightenment within the physical body. This mastery involves two clear but distinct metaphors that are described in early Pali texts. First, in Drott's category of "boundaries and centers," the mind is able to avoid becoming dissipated by the senses through a power that is described as occupying a central position. This is illustrated by the idea of a city with gates, with each gate representing a different sensory organ. A lord, which is the mind, seeks to govern the city gates properly to prevent the center from being overrun and dissipated. The second approach of verticality is importantly different. Here, the senses are deemed lower such as water in a river. Rising above them involves ascending the bank on the other side, which prevents the person from being dragged down. The final trend he observes is ocularism, which is less explicit than the two other metaphors. There is a tendency to privilege vision and the power to see, which means that the eye is consistently highlighted in episodes where a person achieves mastery of the senses as a whole.

The ability of human sensory organs to serve as the foundation for the process of enlightenment involves a bridging between lower order perception and cognition, which is higher order. This bridge is further explored in Steven Heine's chapter, which analyzes the question of the primacy of the mind versus the body in Buddhism. There are passages in the writing of Dogen (道元禅師 1200–1253) that can be read as emphasizing the importance of the body in that they contain instructions focused exclusively on how the body should be situated when in seated meditation, as well as in a host of other activities such as when standing, sitting, bathing, and other physical activities. In contrast, there are passages where mental states are discussed to the exclusion of the body and still others where the state of the mind dictates the correctness of the

body. Heine takes the position that when Dogen emphasizes either mental or bodily aspects as central to self-cultivation, these two aspects should be seen as mutually exclusive. When weighing these two elements, he argues that the mental aspect is given greater importance in Dogen's writing. The reason for the need to weigh these two elements and select one is that Heine sees the body of Dogen's work as lacking philosophical coherence. This lack of coherence is the result of a significant percentage of his writing being based upon or virtually copied from continental sources.

Many of the other authors in the volume rely on close readings of sources that are either limited in scope to a core a text or cover a collection of sources that speak to a specific issue of bodily practice to overcome this problem of coherence. In the next three chapters of this book, an interesting theme develops where expanding avenues for Buddhist practice are explored. Kenneth Holloway's chapter on Vimalakirti explores the role of what he terms supernatural phenomenon, which he defines as things that are beyond comprehension.[7] Examples of what lies beyond comprehension in the text include sudden change in a person's body so that it appears as another gender or becomes significantly larger, and the magical transportation of objects and people. Expanding practice involves an exploration of the importance of negative experiences for Buddhist cultivation, as is captured in the image of a lotus growing in mud from Chapter 8 of the sutra. This view that negative experiences can be nourishing is reflected in the numerous instances in the sutra where monks and bodhisattvas are embarrassed by their encounters with the eponymous layperson Vimalakirti. These negative encounters are events that enable large numbers of people to become enlightened or embark upon its pursuit. One such example is at the end of Chapter 4 which is filled with Bodhisattvas recounting their previous embarrassing encounters. At the end of the chapter, the result is that 200 Brahmans and all the lowliest beggars in the city decided to pursue enlightenment.

Exploring what is beyond comprehension is also relevant to Christopher Jensen's chapter which focuses on the importance of dream states for Buddhist practice. Waking states are privileged in modern scholarly assessments of Buddhism in that when asleep it is believed that the ability to comprehend the world is either sharply diminished or entirely absent. However, in Tang sources, dreams serve as both a source of Buddhist knowledge and as a verification of the attainment of enlightenment. One aspect of the dreams that shows their authenticity are the appearance of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The appearance

7 This is of course an alternative title for the sutra: "The dharma gate of incomprehensible liberation" (不可思議解脫法門).

of these deities in dreams is understood as a sign of their being authentic experiences of the dharma. There are also instances of people dreaming of being healed while asleep, only to awaken and discover that their maladies have been resolved. Through this tangible bodily evidence, the dream state is again presented as an authentic source of Buddhist cultivation.

Healing the body as part of Buddhist practice is explored in depth by Stephen Torowicz, whose chapter analyzes the 12–13th Century Japanese monk Myōan Eisai (明菴栄西). The chapter focuses on his book on tea drinking as a source for nourishing life, *Kissa Yōjōki* (喫茶養生記). This book is shown to have important connections to Traditional Chinese Medicine, Buddhist cultivation, and the Daoist *nourishing life* tradition. Eisai believed that the integration of nourishing life practices with Buddhism, which he encountered in Hangzhou China, was important for helping to propagate the dharma in Japan. The common belief in Japan was that Buddhist practice was particularly difficult because the world had already entered into the final period of the dharma (Ch. *mofa* J. *mappō* 末法) and illness amplified this difficulty. These bodily ailments were not readily treatable in Japan, so Eisai presented Buddhism as a practical solution to what he saw as a pressing problem of his era.

The final three chapters of the book deal with Buddhism in the contemporary world, and they continue the theme from Torowicz's chapter of exploring how Buddhism is engaged with contemporary social problems. Sarah Mattice combines the methodologies of anthropology and philosophy in her analysis of interviews she conducts with Buddhist women. The analysis covers the relationship between gender and practicing Buddhism, which includes a frank discussion of health issues. There is also an important section that covers the problem of gender discrimination. This chapter builds upon a large body of scholarship that has demonstrated the importance of Buddhism as a resource in the fight for gender equality. It also connects to the chapter by Holloway that discusses the opposition to gender discrimination in the Vimalakirti sutra.

A different form of discrimination is explored in Anne-Marie Ninacs' chapter which covers the difficulties involved in exploring the Buddhist elements of modern art. The chapter contextualizes this within the recent intense opposition to religious involvement of any sort in Quebec Canada and extends this to discuss parallel trends in France. Next, the chapter focuses in on the particular difficulties that Buddhism faces within this environment. This includes the challenges involved in organizing exhibits that explore Buddhist themes as well as teaching art students about Buddhism. In contrast to these structural impediments, Ninacs uses somaesthetics to explore the bodily and experiential Buddhist dimensions of modern art making. There is a compelling case

for the deep connections between modern art and Buddhist religious practice, but it is something that heretofore has been almost entirely ignored in the francophone academic world. As such it provides a case study of the enduring bias that Buddhist practitioners encounters in the face of modernity. There is an interesting connection here to Drott's chapter on the process of refining sensory awareness as part of how enlightenment can be achieved within the human body. Ninacs discusses a diverse group of painters, choreographers, and performance artists who integrate Buddhism into their art making process, which represents an interesting continuity from early Pali practices.

The conclusion of the book by James Garrison provides a comprehensive overview of philosophical issues raised in the earlier chapters. This centers around the question of if purity can be conceptualized as a self or place bound concept, or if it is something that necessarily exists as part of a world filled with dualities. One resource that the chapter relies upon is *Vimalakirti* which frames Buddhism as something that cannot develop in a person who is disconnected from the impurity of the world. Through this a commitment to issues of social justice becomes a driving force beyond the individual's body. In this way, the chapter speaks to the issues of illness and health raised in the chapters of Jensen and Torowicz. Most importantly, the chapter addresses the question of how the Buddhist focus of the book integrates into East Asian Philosophy. The primary avenue for this integration is the concept of ritual (*li* 禮) which importantly transcends Confucianism and Buddhism. Through this, modern Chinese and Japanese philosophical frameworks of Li Zehou (李泽厚 1930–2021) and Nishida Kitarō (西田 幾多郎 1870–1945) are explored at length. Ritual is an implicit concept in much of what is discussed in this volume, particularly the chapter on meditation by Heine. Meditation is often characterized as a practice juxtaposed against ritual, but such a reading is not possible in light of Garrison's analysis.

The importance of the how Buddhism is explored in the chapters outlined above is that it provides insight into the religion's pervasive bodily elements, which is a corrective to what the much older scholarship of Suzuki saw as only evident in meditation. Suzuki saw a fundamental failure in how Buddhsim was practiced in China, since he saw the performance of rituals there as being outside the scope of what could be considered meditative. The practice of meditation is something he saw as a seated practice, which was at the core of what defined Buddhism. What was being practiced in China was seen as in sharp contrast to Japan, which he saw as the only place in the world where the true teachings of the Buddha were being fully maintained. In his trip to China in 1934, he describes meditation as being nonexistent, having been replaced by

superstitious chanting services.[8] This dualistic perspective reflected a fundamental misunderstanding of what meditation entails.

Scholarship has worked to overturn the misrepresentations presented by Suzuki and others that transformed seated meditation into the central feature of Buddhism in modern Japan. However, the dichotomy between meditation and chanting has unfortunately remained.[9] This is where somaesthetics can provide an important contribution due to its philosophical roots that see eastern religions in a positive light. Somaesthetics is a philosophical system based in western pragmatism that shares important structural similarities with Buddhism in that they both are focused on a deeper understanding of the human body, with the goal of mitigating its physical and psychological challenges. There is a historical connection between Buddhism and western philosophy that has been traced back to the American transcendentalists Emerson and Thoreau. It is through the interest of these transcendentalists that William James becomes familiar with eastern religions, and this becomes incorporated into his treatise the *Varieties of Religious Experience*. The importance of James in popularizing pragmatism and his interest in eastern religions is how the history of somaesthetic philosophy is connected to Buddhism.[10]

The importance of somaesthetics to the analysis of Buddhism is significant. It provides a lens through which the centrality of bodily practices in the

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8 Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki, *Selected Works of D.T. Suzuki, Volume IV: Buddhist Studies*, Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021), 168–169. For an early and opposing view of this see Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900–1950*, vol. 26 (Harvard University Press, 1967), "The Meditation Hall."

9 Robert Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42, no. 3 (January 1, 1995): 228–83; Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism"; Victor Sōgen Hori, "D. T. Suzuki and the Invention of Tradition," *The Eastern Buddhist* 47, no. 2 (2016): 41–81.

10 Hans Lenk and Gregor Paul, eds., *Epistemological Issues in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture (Albany: State University of New York, 1993); Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetic Awakening and the Art of Living," in *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 288–314; Steven Stanley, "Intimate Distances: William James' Introspection, Buddhist Mindfulness, and Experiential Inquiry," *New Ideas in Psychology* 30, no. 2 (August 1, 2012): 201–211; Jim Garrison, "Nichiren Buddhism and Deweyan Pragmatism: An Eastern-Western Integration of Thought," *Educational Studies* 55, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 12–27; David Scott, "William James and Buddhism: American Pragmatism and the Orient," *Religion* 30, no. 4 (October 1, 2000): 333–352. For a contrasting view on James, Slater states that "one of the most frequently encountered criticisms of his account of religion, that it has a pronounced Protestant bias… his thinking about religion was shaped in important ways by the predominantly Protestant culture and society of his time." Michael R. Slater, *Pragmatism and the Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 9–10.

religion can be analyzed more clearly. This clarity then provides coherence to the studies on Buddhism and the body in this book which cover vast spans of time and space. Somaesthetics emphasizes the importance of sensory perception for bodily awareness, and this results in deeper aesthetic understanding, which is intended to improve the human condition. The first step toward this improvement is an awareness of the problem, which comes from analyzing diverse sources of bodily consciousness.

The standard direction that amelioration can follow in somaesthetics is to analyze systems and practices which can better the lived experience of people in a general way. There are elements of this volume that proceed in this direction. However, there is a second direction in which the analysis can be fruitful. This is where the field of somaesthetics can help identify and then ameliorate an important lacuna in the field of Buddhist research. There has been an emphasis on institutional histories that trace the structure and ideology of Chan/Zen Buddhism with insufficient attention being given to how it affects the bodies and thus the lives of practitioners. It is in this modality that somaesthetics can enhance Buddhology. One reason for this dearth of scholarship on the bodily side of Buddhism is the intense and sustained attacks that the religion has endured over the past two centuries.

Starting in the mid-19th century, Buddhism was the subject of repeated persecutions in Asia. At the start of the Meiji period in Japan, nativist policies resulted in the destruction of tens of thousands of temples while thousands of priests were forced to return to lay life. The start of this process began with the arrival of Commodore Mathew Perry. Upon his arrival, an order was issued to Buddhist temples for the confiscation of their bells, which were to be melted down to manufacture cannon.[11] China began persecuting Buddhism in 1898 as part of the Wuxu Reforms (戊戌變法) in which Liang Qichao (梁啓超 1873–1929) played a pivotal role. Since these reforms were short lived, they had limited impact, but the seizure of Buddhist temples continued to be revisited in subsequent reform movements.[12] What catalyzed these attacks in China and Japan was complex and there were unique circumstances in each country and era. However, there were also contributing factors that were common. As Western

11 James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji, Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); Patricia J. Graham, "Buddhist Institutions after an Era of Persecution, 1868–1945," in *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art, 1600–2005* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 177–198; Fabio Rambelli and Mark Teeuwen, eds., *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku As a Combinatory Paradigm* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002).

12 Vincent Goossaert, "1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 2 (2006): 307–335.

powers sought to open Japan and colonize China, traditional Asian bodily practices were seen as a source of the region's weakness.

China was singled out as a country whose weakness could be understood in bodily terms in the 19th century. One example of this is the racist trope "The sick man of Asia" (東亞病夫). At one level, this sickness was framed as a metaphor for the political and economic declines in the Qing administration. However, at the heart of the trope was a xenophobic conviction that the bodies of Chinese, including those living in diaspora communities, were inherently weak and even a source of plague. This belief resulted in the burning of portions of Chinatown in Honolulu in 1899 in a misguided attempt to eradicate disease. While the bodies of Chinese people were seen as vectors for disease, there was also a level at which this racist view extended into an existential condemnation of everything Chinese. Traditional Chinese culture in general and its religious beliefs in particular, were seen as degenerate. One example of a rumor that was circulated was that because people believed disease was spread by angry ancestors, it inhibited their acceptance of modern medical treatments.[13]

Returning to the Wuxu Reforms, one of its key members was Liang Qichao whose writing provides important insight into how negative ideas about Chinese people came to be catalyzed into policies that sought to marginalize the religions of China. During the same year that Chinatown in Honolulu was burned, Liang visited Hawaii. This visit would have given him firsthand knowledge of the racist view that Chinese people are vectors for disease. Four years later in 1903 Liang traveled to New York and recorded his experiences in a widely read memoir. What is interesting is that it is clear in his writings on New York that he has developed a disdain for the Chinese diaspora community. This disdain extends to other socioeconomically marginalized groups of the time such as Italian, Irish, and Jewish immigrants.

Contrasting his negative view of these diaspora communities, Liang has high praise for people of Anglo-Saxon heritage. One scholar has even described Liang's writings as harkening back to the Know-Nothing nativists who had held sway in the United States fifty years earlier.[14] A full analysis of how his negative views of marginalized groups informed Liang's thinking is beyond the

13 Christos Lynteris, "Yellow Peril Epidemics: The Political Ontology of Degeneration and Emergence," in *Yellow Perils*, ed. Franck Billé and Sören Urbansky, China Narratives in the Contemporary World (University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 35–59.

14 K. Scott Wong, "Liang Qichao and the Chinese of America: A Re-Evaluation of His 'Selected Memoir of Travels in the New World,'" *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11, no. 4 (1992): 3–24.

scope of this chapter. However, his support for social Darwinism produced a valuing of strength in his writings from 1902 where he draws parallels between kings and lions. His point is that their inherently violent characteristics are natural and not a sign of being bad in any way. Those in power naturally dominate marginalized groups, and this extends to how strong nations exploit weak ones.[15] There are important parallels between his belief that the strong should dominate and a disdain for the week, even when this includes members of the Chinese community.

> Thus, the Roman Law's view of slaves as equivalent to animals was, according to logical theory, truly appropriate. (If we used a logical syllogism to make the reasoning explicit, it would look like this: [1] those without rights are animals; [2] slaves have no rights; [3] thus, slaves are animals.) Therefore, while in a physical suicide, only one person is killed, in the case of a metaphysical suicide, a whole society is turned into animals. Furthermore, the descendants of animals will continue on endlessly. This is why I say that not fulfilling one's responsibility to oneself is to directly harm the group. Alas! I do not know how many times my fellow Chinese have willingly killed themselves!?[16]

Liang saw the situation as desperate because the early 20th century was a time when animosity toward traditional Chinese culture extended to the country's struggle to maintain its sovereignty. A belief had become pervasive that its traditions were entirely bankrupt, and this was seen as a major cause of its increasingly tenuous status in the international community. This view of the tradition as bankrupt inspired the short lived Wuxu Reforms, where temple properties were seized so that they could be used for purposes deemed more productive. The goal of these reforms was to change the behavior of Chinees people. One frequently cited remark by another Wuxu Reformer Kang Youwei (康有爲 1858–1927) states: visitors come to China from overseas, they enter temples, take pictures of the statues, watch people pray to them, and then they laugh.[17]

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15 Stephen C. Angle, *Human Rights and Chinese Thought: A Cross-Cultural Inquiry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 147–151.

16 Liang Qichao, "On Rights Consciousness," *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 31, no. 1 (October 1, 1999): 15.

17 David A. Palmer and Vincent Goossaert, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 46; Paul R. Katz and Meir Shahar, *Religion in China and Its Modern Fate* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 24; Vincent Goossaert, "Republican Church Engineering. The National Religious Associations in 1912 China" in Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, ed., *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State*

Ritual was the enemy: The bodies of believers prostrating and making offerings in front of statues was deemed central to China's problems.

There emerged a new category for describing the gamut of bodily activities entailed in traditional religious ritual practices, and this was "superstitious." Nedostup has shown that the Nationalist government of the late 1920s sought to popularize anti-superstition campaigns by presenting it in the context of disease. First, there was a castigation of people who sought aid for physical problems by praying to statues. The Nationalists said that these statues could not even take care of themselves, so how could they help others. Secondarily, this extended to a banning of fortunetellers, many of whom were blind. The logic was that if a person is unable to maintain their own body, they similarly would be unable to help another who is facing illness.[18] These two approaches to bodily cultivation were given the same negative aesthetic characterizations, they were diseases in need of a cure. The aesthetic connection is also built upon the concern by Kang that traditional activities would be photographed and elicit mockery.[19]

This negative aesthetic had direct policy implications as well. There were attempts to control Traditional Chinese Medicine and ban religious specialists from being involved in healing. This extended to prohibitions on the offering of prayers to those who were sick, which often entailed a monetary exchange. There was a concern that people who were seeking to care for their bodies would be cheated out of their money by religious specialists.[20] As such, the Nationalist government was attempting to govern to the best of its abilities, but the framework it approached the country's problems from was flawed.

Somaesthetics has its roots in pragmatism, so this provides a unique way of challenging the philosophical framework that fueled opposition to Buddhism. The starting point is to understand that somaesthetics is not dualistic, valuing Asian religious traditions does not entail a devaluing of Western ones. It is only when the world is seen dualistically that the aesthetic demands of modernizers resulted in the smashing of statues since these bodily images were seen as

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Formation, Global, Area, and International Archive (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 214.

18 Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 322. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), "Embodying Superstition" 191–226.

19 Some research has shown that part of this Western tradition Kang was encountering held visual sources of information far above those of the other senses. Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, A Centennial Book (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1993).

20 Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, "Embodying Superstition" 191–226.

inhibiting the full realization of selves in a modern western modality. Liang saw the world in dualistic terms between East and West which led to his describing Chinese people becoming like animals through their failure to exercise their individualism.

At the heart of the view that China's traditions were bankrupt was the belief that it inhibited positive social engagement. Western culture, inclusive of its religion and philosophy, was seen as the only means by which a society could flourish. The strategy for countering this Eurocentric view involved demonstrating ways that traditional Chinese religious beliefs could make concrete contributions to society. One way to concretize this was to emphasize the positive impact of traditional Chinese techniques of bodily cultivation. This can be seen in the example of Chen Yingning 陳攖寧 (1880–1969), who promoted healthy living through Daoism with the goal of saving his religion from extinction.

Daoist practices that related to eating a healthy diet were seen as helping develop strong bodies. Breathing exercises that were part of traditional Daoist practice were also depicted as powerful tools for achieving health. Chen, who was based in Shanghai, sought to position Daoism as compatible with nationalist ideals since the religion could make Chinese society stronger, one body at a time. Interestingly, Chen was critical of Buddhism, which he saw in modern times as failing to maintain its own traditional bodily practices that promoted health.[21] Another person who focused on demonstrating the positive impact of Daoist practices on the human body was Li Yujie 李玉階 (1901–1994). Li used his own recovery from illness through meditation as evidence that traditional Chinese religious practices could be used to heal the body.[22]

Buddhism was also shown to be making positive social contributions by promoting health. In the case of Master Hong Yi (弘一 1880–1942), early in his life he suffered from a disorder that caused him physical and mental fatigue, which was known as neurasthenia or the "American disease." This fatigue was seen as an affliction of overly active people, many of whom were quite successful. As a famous actor, Master Hong Yi worked to modernize the arts by promoting Western traditions, including establishing a drawing studio to feature nude models. This marked him as a successful hard-working modernizer. There is

21 Xun Liu, *Daoist Modern Innovation, Lay Practice, and the Community of Inner Alchemy in Republican Shanghai*, Harvard East Asian Monographs; 313 (Cambridge, Mass: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2009), 78–113, 148–151.

22 David A. Palmer, "Dao and Nation: Li Yujie—May Fourth Activist, Daoist Cultivator, and Redemptive Society Patriarch in Mainland China and Taiwan" in David A. Palmer and Xun Liu, eds., *Daoism in the Twentieth Century: Between Eternity and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 181–182.

an interesting parallel here with the American pragmatist William James, who in his younger years had also hoped to become an artist. Unfortunately, James came down with neurasthenia as well, which forced him into the study of science and medicine. In the case of James, this led him to an interest in Eastern ideas as part of his pursuit of a cure. This interest in the East is significant because many of the cures that were touted for neurasthenia involved steeping the individual in American traditions, such as living for a time on a ranch and eating roasted meats. It was believed that the cultural changes of modernization contributed to the fatigue so a brief return to a traditional lifestyle would be healing. In that James is a foundational source for the development of somaesthetics, his experience with illness explains why this philosophical system emphasizes practical ameliorative approaches to bodily understanding.[23]

Returning to Hong Yi, earlier in his life he had been attracted to Daoism, but when faced with his debilitating condition of neurasthenia, he saw Buddhist practice as his preferred solution. This involved fasting and living in a Buddhist temple in Hangzhou, which today is just over a two hours' drive from Shanghai. Buddhist practice proved to have such a positive effect on his life that he decided to become a monk. It is interesting that he writes about his experience of recovering from his illness through Buddhism a mere five years before he dies. Not coincidentally, this moment was during the height of the anti-superstitious campaigns of the Nationalist Government. At the time, Master Hong Yi was once again recovering from a serious illness that nearly cost him his life. He dictated the story of how he became a monk to his disciple so that others could appreciate the bodily benefits of Buddhist practice.[24]

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24 Raoul Birnbaum "Master Hongyi Looks Back: A Modern Man Becomes a Monk in Twentieth-Century China" in Steven Heine and Charles S. Prebish, eds., *Buddhism in the Modern World: Adaptations of an Ancient Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

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CHAPTER 2

Sensation, Salvation, and Simile

A Study of the Saḷāyatana-vagga

Edward R. Drott

1 Introduction[1]

As the various essays in this volume make clear, Buddhism has provided multiple frameworks for reflecting on and understanding the human body, both the bodies of others as well as one's own. This chapter will focus primarily on the latter—how Buddhists sought to describe and manage one aspect of our embodied experience: our engagement with our senses and sensory phenomena.

In the Buddhist teaching of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination)—to be discussed in more detail below—the human sensory apparatus accounts for four of the twelve links in the causal chain giving rise to ignorance and suffering. The rectification of the senses was, thus, a key element in many descriptions of Buddhist salvation. Indeed, certain early scriptures posited that a skillful response to sensory stimuli was a sufficient criterion for liberation. In these dialogues the Buddha is described instructing an interlocutor in how to manage their sensory apparatus, followed by a note indicating that, having put this teaching into practice, the individual became an arhat, directly knowing that: "destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being."[2]

Given the central role of the senses in Buddhist soteriology, it comes as no surprise that we find an abundance of discussion devoted to their nature and function in a wide range of early Buddhist texts—from *Jātaka* tales, to biographies of the Buddha, to various discourses, to the *Vinaya*, and, of course, the

1 I would like to thank Reiko Ohnuma and Kiyokazu Okita for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2 See, for example, the case of the Venerable Migajāla: "He directly knew: "Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being." And the Venerable Migajāla became one of the arahants." Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya.* VOLUME II. Sommerville: Wisdom Publications, 2000, pp. 1151–1152.

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Abhidhamma.[3] Some of the most fascinating treatments of the senses, however, are given in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*, which will be the particular focus of this paper.[4]

The *Saḷāyatana-vagga* is the thirty-fifth chapter of the of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* ("Connected" or "Grouped" *Suttas*), which collected shorter discourses of the Buddha connected by various themes.[5] Although I will primarily treat its Pāli recension here, discourses from the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* were also collected—albeit in a different order and often with slight variations in their content—in the *Saṃyukta Āgama*, which survives in complete and partial Chinese translations.[6] These translations made the discourses of the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* avail-

3 The twelve *āyatana* (internal and external sense bases) and the eighteen *dhātus* are dealt with systematically in the second chapter of the second book of the Theravada Abhidhamma Piṭaka, the Vibhaṅga. See Bhikkhu Nyanatikloka. *Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka: A Synopsis of the Philosophical Collection of the Theravāda Buddhist Canon*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2008 (1938): 38–41. This chapter corresponds to the eighteenth chapter of the Dharmaskandha, the second book of the Sarvāstivāda Adhidharma. See Nyanatikloka 2008, 1–2.

4 *Saṃyutta Nikāya, Part IV Saḷāyatana-vagga*. Ed. By M. Leon Feer. The Pāli Text Society, London. Distributed by Routledge & Kegan Paul, LTD, London and Boston: 1973 [1894]. Translations include: F. L. Woodward (trans.) *The Book of Kindred Sayings* (vols. 3–5). London: The Pāli Text Society (1917–1930); and Bodhi 2000, vol. II.

5 Most scholars place the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, along with three other early *Nikāya* and the *Vinaya*, within the earliest stratum of Buddhist writings, composed between 500 and 300 BCE. See Uma Chakravarti. *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987: 3–4. Schopen, however, calls for greater skepticism, noting, for instance, that the earliest known redaction of the Pāli canon dates back only to the last quarter of the of the first century BCE. Gregory Schopen. *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997: 23–29.

Bronkhurst sees a connection between the arrangement of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*/*Saṃyukta Āgama* by theme and the emergence of the Abdhidhamma, a similar project of organizing the teachings: "An original connexion between the *Saṃyukātagama*/*Samyutta Nikaya* and early Abhidharma is supported by the information we possess on the arrangement of the early *Saṃyukātagama* [....] We can easily recognize the connexion of the elements common to these [...] enumerations with the subject-matter of Abhidharma works [....]" Johannes Bronkhorst, "Dharma and Abhidharma," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (1985), pp. 305–320: 316–7.

6 The "complete" *Saṃyukta Āgama* (雜阿含經 Taishō 2.99) preserves the *Saṃyukta Āgama* of the Sarvāstivāda school; the "short" or "partial" *Saṃyukta Āgama* (別譯雜阿含經 Taishō 100), that of the Kāśyapīya school. See Etienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka era*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste, 1988: 154.

For discussion of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* and its relation to the *Saṃyukta Āgama*, see Lamotte 1988, pp. 153–156.

able to East Asian Buddhists, though their degree of influence is a matter of ongoing research and beyond the scope of the present study.

What is most striking about discussions of the sensory faculties in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* are the wide variety of elaborate metaphors and allegories deployed to help followers of the Buddhist path reflect on their sensory experience and the kinds of reactions they elicit. The variety and richness of these metaphors might be explained by the fact that although sensation is a dimension of human experience to which we seem to have an intimate and immediate access, the mechanics of sensation remain inaccessible to direct examination. As Dan Lusthaus observes, the human sense faculties are "transcendental" meaning they do not present themselves to us for immediate analysis. The term "transcendental" can be traced back to Kant, but was most fully developed and utilized by the school of phenomenology following Husserl. Lusthaus defines the "transcendental" as that which "constitutes experience without giving itself as an object of that experience. For instance, the eye is transcendental to seeing, since though one sees through the eye, the eye does not see itself when looking at things."[7] Given that our sense faculties cannot be directly perceived, we require some other means of conceptualizing them if we wish to render them objects of reflection or discussion. That is where metaphors come in—to provide tools with which to reflect on and manage that which eludes our immediate comprehension.

The extensive use of metaphor in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* lends itself to a style of analysis pioneered by cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, specifically their theory of "conceptual metaphors."[8] Lakoff and Johnson argue that the concepts that shape our perception of the world invariably follow the structure of metaphors. This is especially clear when we examine the language used to discuss abstract concepts. Lakoff and Johnson show that

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7 Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih lun*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002, p. 11. Although likely referring to the fact that the senses lack self-nature, the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* seems to raise a similar point: if "a wise, competent, intelligent person examines [his or her sense faculties] by way of the eye, they appear to be void, hollow, empty. If he examines them by way of the ear … by way of the mind, they appear to be void, hollow, empty." Bodhi 2002, p. 1238.

8 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

David McMahan applies Lakoff and Johnson's framework in his fascinating study of ocular metaphors in Mahāyāna Buddhism: *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhism*. (Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism). London: Routledge, 2014.

For a study of the use of metaphor in early Buddhist texts, see: Joseph Marino, *Metaphor and Pedagogy in Early Buddhist Literature: An Edition and Study of Two Sūtras from the Senior Collection of Gāndhārī Manuscripts*. (Diss.) University of Washington, 2017.

abstract cognitive domains tend to be described using language borrowed from more concrete cognitive domains. In other words, phenomena with which we have no direct, somatic experience will often be mapped, through conceptual metaphors, onto phenomena with which we *do* have direct, somatic experience. The statement "inflation is rising," for instance, maps a relatively abstract concept—inflation, or the changes in the average price of goods over time—onto a somatically accessible realm of experience: that of physical objects moving through space in a direction (up or down) relative to the location of the observer's body. However, the unconscious mapping of one cognitive domain onto another means that our understandings of a given abstract concept are also colored by what Lakoff and Johnson refer to as "entailments." In other words, when two cognitive domains come to be related through a conceptual metaphor, meanings associated with the first (possibly more concrete) cognitive domain will bleed into and influence our understanding of the second cognitive domain.

Lakoff and Johnson's work calls attention to the subtle, unconscious ways in which metaphors shape thought and experience—even when we are using language that we do not recognize as explicitly metaphorical. Although the metaphors under examination here were produced intentionally and presented as such, an analysis following Lakoff and Johnson can still reveal some of the implications of these images that might have otherwise gone overlooked.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the Pāli terms used to describe the senses and the structure of the human sensory faculties in the early Buddhist corpus. It then examines some of the metaphors most commonly employed in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*. It closes with an analysis of a few of the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*'s most striking metaphorical entailments.

2 The Structure of the Sensory Faculties in Early Buddhist Texts: Sense and Soteriology

Buddhist writings on the senses can be disorienting for those steeped in western cultural or philosophical traditions, which assume a clear distinction between an external world of objects, a sensory medium through which data about these objects travel, and finally an internal world of sense impressions. While never denying the existence of external factors that gave rise to sense impressions, early Buddhist theorists were primarily interested in ways in which sense data were processed once they had become available to a perceiving subject. Also of less interest were two questions that animated western philosophical investigation of the senses: (1) the precise relationship between

the nature of the objects presumed to exist independent of the perceiving subject and the sensory stimuli they produced—in other words, between the nature of the "thing in itself" and the way that thing appears or is represented in the mind, and (2) the mechanisms by which data from these objects were able to enter the mind and form impressions there.[9]

The two most common terms utilized in the Pāli and Sanskrit corpus to refer to the sensory faculties were *indriyāṇi* (P. and Sk.) and *āyatana* (P. and Sk.). *Indriyāṇi* seems to be related etymologically to the name of the god Indra "the powerful one," and refers quite directly to the sense organs.[10] The "power" implied by the term refers to their function as "spiritual faculties." In other words, the *indriyāṇi* are not, strictly speaking, the physical sense organ but rather the "subtle matter located within the organs of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body that enables the functioning of the senses."[11]

Āyatana could be translated as "sense fields," "sensory domains," "bases of cognition," or "sense bases."[12] The term *āyatana* generally refers to both the six sense faculties (*indriyāṇi*) and the six types of sense objects (*ārammaṇa*). Taken on its own, the term *āyatana* carries some intriguing connotations. Possible translations include: "resting-place, support, seat, place, home, house, abode."[13] These spatial metaphors imply that the senses serve as a foundation, a spot on which something else will be built. Thus, the term *āyatana* has been translated into English as "senses base."[14] This conveys their function not only

9 Discussed in David Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992, p. 32.

Dan Lusthaus's gloss on the Buddhist understanding of the four elements is also informative in this regard: "Even the earliest Buddhist texts explain that the four primary material elements (*mahābhūta*) are the sensory qualities solidity, fluidity, temperature, and mobility; their characterization as earth, water, fire, and air, respectively, is declared an abstraction. Instead of concentrating on the fact of material existence, one observes how a physical thing is sensed, felt, perceived. Yogācāra never denies that there are sense-objects (*viṣaya*, *artha*, *ālambana*, etc.), but it denies that it makes any sense to speak of cognitive objects occurring outside an act of cognition. Imagining such an occurrence is itself a cognitive act. Yogācāra is interested in why we feel compelled to so imagine." (http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/articles/intro.html)

10 "*Indriya*" in Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press. 1899.

11 "*Indriya*" in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.

12 "*Āyatana*" in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. See also Lusthaus, 2002, p. 55.

13 "*Āyatana*" in Muller et al. eds. *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*.

14 See, for instance, Bodhi, 2000, vol. II.

as a resting space, but as a support or foundation. As we shall see, the twelve *āyatana* were understood as bases supporting six types of consciousness.[15]

As opposed to the standard five senses of western tradition, the early Buddhist corpus points to six *indriyāṇi* and *āyatana*: (1) the eye, (2) the ear, (3) the nose, (4) the tongue, (5) the tactile areas of the body, and (6) the mind (*manas*). In its narrowest sense, *āyatana* refers to these six "sensory fields"—the subjective or "internal" realm in which qualia or irreducible sense data are experienced, sometimes referred to in English as "internal sense bases." Each of these internal *āyatana* corresponds to a particular mode of sensory data: visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, and mental objects. These objects of perception are collectively known as *ārammaṇa* (Sk. *ālambana*), rendered as "external sense bases." Although these sense data are presumed to relate, in some way, to aspects of the world external to the perceiving subject, they do not do so in a direct, or unmediated way. As David Kalupahana notes, "the sense object itself has to attune to the sense organ, for an object that is not compatible with the sense cannot be perceived."[16]

When an internal sense base encounters an external sense base—in other words, when one of our sense faculties is presented with an appropriate stimulus—one of six types of sense consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arise: visual-consciousness, auditory-consciousness, olfactory-consciousness, gustatory-consciousness, tactile-consciousness, and mind-consciousness. Technically, "mind-consciousness" refers only to that part of our awareness attentive to mental objects such as discursive thoughts or memories. This would seem to distinguish "mind consciousness" from some kind of central, mental faculty that shifts between different modes of perception.[17]

The conjunction of (1) a particular internal sense base with (2) its appropriate external base and (3) the emergence of sense consciousness is referred to as "contact" (P. *phassa*; Sk. *sparśa*).[18] Contact, in turn, gives rise to "feelings"

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15 Lusthaus, 2002, p. 55. The term also has connotations of "origin or source." Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1122.

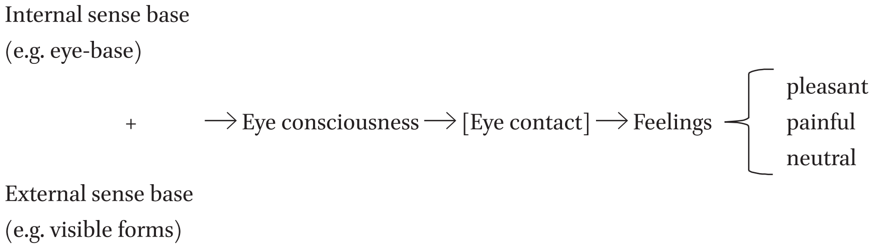
16 Although the suttas tend to discuss the internal sense bases prior to the external sense bases, the two are considered of equal importance and as simultaneous "moments" of experience. Kalupahana, 1992, p. 32.

17 Lusthaus qualifies that however, noting that it "to some extent appropriates and interprets the other five." See Lusthaus, 2002, p. 55, note 13.

18 Discussed in Kalupahana, 1992, pp. 33–34. The inclusion of this term suggests that it is possible to have both a functioning internal sense base presented with an appropriate stimulus and still not be aware of it, presumably, if attention is directed elsewhere As N. Ross Reat observes, "*phassa* does not automatically result from the mere physical juxtaposition of organ and object ... [the] object must be present to consciousness." Reat.

(P. *vedanā*), which can be pleasant, painful, or neutral (neither pleasant nor painful).

We can diagram this process as follows:



The twelve *āyatana* taken together with the six consciousnesses are known as the eighteen *dhātus*. These comprise the totality of human experience—the human sensorium—and, as we will discuss below, are seen to delimit the totality of phenomenal reality, or "the all" (*sabba*).[19] Bhikkhu Bodhi thus observes that the Buddhist teachings on the senses present an "alternative to the five aggregates as a scheme of phenomenological classification."[20]

Three basic salvific strategies are presented in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* relative to the senses. The first of these begins by calling attention to the fact that all three aspects of sensation: the sense faculties (internal sense-bases), sense objects (external sense-bases), and sense perception (sense-consciousness), as well as the feelings and concepts to which they give rise, are caused, conditioned and impermanent. Each element is therefore subject to the deconstructive analysis typical of early Buddhist writings, in which they are found to bear the "three marks" of existence: they are characterized by their impermanence (*anitya*), by being a source of suffering (*dukkha*), and by an absence of essence or self (*anatman*).[21] Having established this, the suttas argue that nothing that presents itself to our senses, that is to say, no aspect of the phenomenal world, is worthy of attachment or clinging.

A second strategy involves focusing on what generally follows the stage of "contact." This is when sensations are said to trigger memories and associations thus giving rise to feelings (*vedanā*), which are then deemed either pleasurable, painful or neutral. With the emergence of these feelings there again arises the danger of attachment and clinging. We are motivated to seek

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Buddhism: A History. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1994, p. 308. See also Lusthaus, 2002, p. 59.

19 Lusthaus, 2002, p. 56.

20 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1122.

21 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1146.

out and chase stimuli that give rise to pleasurable feelings, fear and seek to avoid stimuli that give rise to painful feelings. As for feelings that are neither pleasant nor painful, according to the suttas, we tend to approach these neutral feelings with ignorance, failing to comprehend their impermanence. Such reactions can never lead to satisfaction, invariably result in suffering, and thus lead us into decline, away from wholesome states conducive to awakening and liberation. An arhat, however, is able to experiences feelings without becoming attached and thereby attains liberation.

This particular soteriological strategy is echoed in various iterations of the doctrine of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination). According to this family of teachings, *samsaric* existence (conceived either in terms of cycles of rebirth, or in terms of the arising—in this life—of ignorant mental states that give rise to suffering), comes about through a chain of twelve causally-linked conditions.[22] Although there are variations in the list, generally the third through seventh terms are given as (3) *Viññāṇa* (six types of sensory consciousness), (4) *Nāmarūpa* (name and form, associated with the objects of perception), (5) *Saḷāyatana* (the six-fold internal sense bases or *āyatana*), (6) *Phassa* (contact), (7) *Vedanā* (feeling), and (8) *Taṇhā* (craving). It is the eighth stage in this causal chain, craving, that is associated with mental defilement and suffering. In various suttas, the Buddha indicates that it is the interstice between the seventh and eighth of the twelve causes or *nidanas*, between feeling and craving, that constitutes a "weak link," which can be severed in order to attain liberation. Those who react to pleasurable stimuli with attachment, who react to unpleasant stimuli with revulsion, or who react to stimuli that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant without examining carefully the conditions of their arising and passing away are subject to the three poisons of greed, hatred, and ignorance respectively. Those, however, who are able to experience contact and one of the three modes of feeling without reacting in greed, hatred or ignorance are able to break the cycle of suffering.

A third strategy for liberation through the successful management of one's senses focusses on the relationship between sensation and conceptualization (*saṇkhā*). Although attractive or repulsive stimuli can clearly give rise to the kinds of reactions deemed unwholesome, their hold over us would presumably be released once the perceptual object recedes from awareness. In such cases, however, Buddhists noted the way stimuli leave behind traces in the form of

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22 For Buddhaghosa, the first two links in the chain represented ignorance and action from previous lives; links three through ten described the arising of ignorance in the present life, and the final two links described the effects of one's karmic action in the present life on one's rebirth.

concepts that could in turn become the objects of obsession.[23] As Kalupahana puts it: "once an obsession is generated, its influence is felt in relation not so much to the perception (*sañña*) itself as to the conception (*saṇkhā*) of that perceived object."[24] The practitioner is thus encouraged to train themselves in restraint, which, in the words of Bhikkhu Bodhi, "involves stopping at the bare sensum, without plastering it over with layers of meaning whose origins are purely subjective."[25] Or, as we read in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* (SN 35: 248): "In conceiving, one is bound by Māra [the demonic personification of ignorance and desire]; by not conceiving, one is freed from the Evil One."[26]

To summarize, early Buddhist texts, including the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*, indicate that there are various junctures in our processing of sensory stimuli at which we are confronted simultaneously with potential pitfalls and opportunities for liberation.[27] In other words, neither the sense organs themselves, nor the objects of perception are seen as inherently problematic. Rather it is the ways in which the perceiving subject relates to their own sense faculties and to sensory stimuli that can be potentially unfavorable or, conversely, liberative. This point is illustrated, for instance, in the *Koṭṭhika Sutta* (SN 35: 232) and *Kāmabhū Sutta* (SN 35: 233), which describe the relationship between the eye,

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23 The "five cords of sensual pleasure" are described in the discourse "Going to the End of the World" (SN 35: 116): "not yet fully enlightened, the thought occurred to me: 'My mind may often stray towards those five cords of sensual pleasure that have already left their impression on the heart but which have passed, ceased, and changed, or towards those that are present, or slightly towards those in the future.' Then it occurred to me: 'Being set on my own welfare I should practice diligence, mindfulness, and guarding of the mind in regard to those five cords of sensual pleasure that have already left their impression on the heart, which have passed, ceased, and changed.'" Bodhi, 2000, vol. II, p. 1191.

24 Kalupahana, 1992, p. 34. See also Bodhi, 2000, vol. II, p. 1144.

25 "There is also a cognitive side to the teaching on sense restraint. Craving and other defilements arise and flourish because the mind seizes upon the "signs" (*nimitta*) and "features" (*anubyañjana*) of sensory objects and uses them as raw material for creating imaginative constructs, to which it clings as a basis for security. This process, called mental proliferation (*papañca*), is effectively synonymous with conceiving (*maññanā*). These constructs, created under the influence of the defilements, serve in turn as springboards for still stronger and more tenacious defilements, thus sustaining a vicious cycle. To break this cycle, what is needed as a preliminary step is to restrain the senses, which involves stopping at the bare sensum, without plastering it over with layers of meaning whose origins are purely subjective. Hence the Buddha's instructions to the bhikkhu Māluṇkyaputta, "In the seen there will be merely the seen," and the beautiful poem the bhikkhu composes to convey his understanding of this maxim (35:95; see too 35:94)." Bodhi, 2000, vol. II, p. 1127.

26 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1258.

27 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1156.

its object, and ignorance in terms of the relationship between a white ox, black ox and a yoke that connects them. The yoke, which here stands for the "fetters" that bind us to *samsaric* existence, is dependent on both oxen. But just as the yoke is not part of either ox, the fetters are not part of the eye, nor are they part of the object of vision.[28] Importantly, however, Buddhist scriptures at times seem to waver on this point. As we shall see, although our downfall is not supposed to be thought of as the fault of something inherently offensive or attractive in certain objects of perception, nor that of some inherent flaw in our sense organs, there are passages that seem to contradict this stance.

3 The Buddhist Lifeworld

Along with the *khandhas* (Sk. Skandas) and *dhātus*, the *āyatana* form one of the three major taxonomies of the factors of existence found in the suttas.[29] As we have seen, a coherent account of Buddhist soteriology can be constructed centering solely on the senses. In fact, there are many passages in the early Buddhist corpus that urge practitioners to recognize that our senses define the limits of our world. This is evident, for instance, in the *Sabba Sutta* (SN 35: 23), where the Buddha declares that he will teach his followers "the all." "And what, bhikkhus, is the all? The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odours, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects, the mind and mental phenomena. This is called the all."[30]

Similarly, in the *Loka Sutta* ("The World" SN 12: 44), the Buddha promises to discuss the "origin and the passing away of the world."[31] Though one might

28 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1230.

29 Miyaji Kakue notes that, although it seems natural to assume that a Buddhist anthropology based on the concept of the five skandhas has primacy over that of the six *āyatana*, or to treat discussion of the sense bases as a "footnote to" or "elaboration on" the skandhas, in fact, theories related to the scheme of the six *āyatana* garnered more attention than the five skandhas in the earliest textual layers of the Buddhist corpus. 「五蘊と六處」印度學佛教學研究 10(1), 24–28, 1962. See pages 26b–27a.

Bhikkhu Bodhi also notes that "the Theravada exegetical tradition, beginning already from the Abhidhamma period, understands the six pairs of bases as a complete scheme of classification capable of accommodating all the factors of existence mentioned in the Nikāyas. This conception of the six bases probably originated from the Sabba Sutta (35: 23), in which the Buddha says that the six pairs of bases are "the all" [*sabba*] apart from which nothing at all exists." Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1122.

30 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1140.

31 See *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (12: 44). Bodhi 2000, vol. I, pp. 581–582.

expect from this some form of creation myth, the sutta takes a different turn. The Buddha begins by reciting a version of the twelve *nidanas*: "In dependence on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling comes to be; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair come to be. This, bhikkhus, is the origin of the world." In other words, "the world" arises in conjunction with the coming into being of a perceiving subject. With the cessation of craving and clinging, however, there follows "cessation of birth, aging-and-death, [consequently] sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease." This, we are told "is the passing away of the world."[32]

The Buddha is depicted playing with the double meaning of the term "world" in another *sutta*, "Going to the End of the World" (SN 35: 116), in which he informs his disciples that "the end of the world cannot be known, seen, or reached by travelling. Yet, bhikkhus, I also say that without reaching the end of the world there is no making an end to suffering."[33]

In this case, it falls to Ananda to provide an explanation: "the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world—this is called the world in the Noble One's Discipline. And what, friends, is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world? The eye is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world. The ear ... The nose ... The tongue ... The body ... The mind is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world. That is the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world—this is called the world in the Noble One's Discipline."[34] In other words, the world that one must reach the end of is not some geographic region, but the phenomenal world of sensory experience.

This passage provides an obvious opening for a nihilistic interpretation. If the "end of the world" requires there be no perceiver or conceiver of the world, then non-existence would seem to be the solution to riddle posed by the Buddha. But the suttas record numerous instances in which the Buddha rejected such interpretations. The fact that the Buddhist tradition posits the possibility of a "lived" Nibbana—an end to suffering and ignorance that can be attained within this life, in contrast to *parinibbāna* (Sk: *parinirvāṇa*) that is attained upon death—suggests that the "end of the world" proposed in this

32 Bodhi 2000, vol. I, p. 582.
33 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1188.
34 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1190.

passage is not meant to be taken as a complete extinction of consciousness.[35] Rather, it suggests that through a skillful approach to sense data one can examine them with absolute thoroughness, to their "limits," thus gaining a perfect and complete understanding of and, one presumes, an proper engagement with one's sensorium.[36]

Writings in this vein call attention to the degree to which, as Dan Lusthaus observes, Buddhism is "phenomenological" in its outlook. In contrast to philosophical traditions that give priority to a mind-independent substrate out of which conscious minds emerge, in suttas such as the *Sabba Sutta* or the *Loka Sutta*, the Buddha is presented directing attention to what might be termed a Buddhist "lifeworld."[37] That is to say, the thrust of these texts is always primarily toward understanding of the world not as it exists independently of the mind, but how it appears to and is experienced by sentient beings. This tendency has been referred to as Buddhist "idealism," a philosophical outlook most often associated with the later Yogācāra school. But, as Lusthaus has shown, Yogācāra was less of a departure from classical Buddhist philosophizing than is usually assumed. As he puts it "Buddhism was phenomenological from the outset."[38]

4 Conceptual Metaphors in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*

Equipped now with a better understanding of the centrality of the senses to Buddhist soteriology and the inherent difficulty in conceiving this ever-present yet elusive aspect of our subjectivity, let us now turn to some of the

35 For a discussion of nirvana and parinirvana, see Paul Williams, with Anthony Tribe and Alexander Wynne. *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (Second Edition). London: Routledge, 2012, p. 36. Related to this are Buddhist objections to annhiliationism (*ucchedavāda*), see Williams 2012. pp. 45–46 and 51–52.

36 This notion that one might be able to, by properly attending to sense data, somehow "reach their end," calls to mind another passage from the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*, in which adherents are encouraged to explore or examine the sense faculties, stimuli, consciousness, and feelings to their "utmost extent," to see if they can locate anything resembling a self: "So too, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu investigates form to the extent that there is a range for form, he investigates feeling to the extent that there is a range for feeling, he investigates perception to the extent that there is a range for perception, he investigates volitional formations to the extent that there is a range for volitional formations, he investigates consciousness to the extent that there is a range for consciousness. As he investigates form to the extent that there is a range for form… consciousness to the extent that there is a range for consciousness, whatever notions of 'I' or 'mine' or 'I am' had occurred to him before no longer occur to him." Bodhi, 2000, vol. II, pp. 1254–1255.

37 The concept of "lifeworld" is outlined in the writings of western phenomenologists, most notably, Merleau-Ponty.

38 Lusthaus, 2002, p. ix.

metaphorical tools employed in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* in its attempt to provide Buddhists with a means of discussing and mastering them.

4.1 *Sensation as Fuel for Fire*

Perhaps the best-known metaphor employed in the early Buddhist corpus to elucidate the nature of the senses is found in the so-called "Fire Sermon" (SN 35: 28).[39] Supposedly the third discourse preached by the Buddha in the months following his enlightenment, in it, he informs his disciples and an audience of soon-to-be converts that "all is burning." "And what, bhikkhus, is the all that is burning? The eye is burning, forms are burning, eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant—that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion; burning with birth, aging, and death; with sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair, I say."[40] The formula then continues, describing each of the six internal and external sense bases, their associated consciousness, contact, and the feelings that arise in response to them as "aflame" with lust, hatred and ignorance, and thus suffering.

Note that this discourse is careful to point out that every link of the chain of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) connected to sensation is aflame, not singling out the sense organ or the object of sensation for particular blame. Another sutta from the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*, however, which also plays on the theme of burning (SN 35: 235), tells us that it would be better "for the eye faculty to be lacerated by a red-hot iron pin burning, blazing, and glowing, than for one to grasp the sign through the features in a form cognizable by the eye."[41] Although singling out the internal sense bases for mortification, the sutta goes on to clarify that it would be far better to simply use one's sense faculties properly, without attachment. Then there would be no need for such extreme measures.

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39 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, 1143. Bhikkhu Anālayo gives a thorough accounting of its parallels: "Parallels: SN 35.28 at SN IV 19,22 (= Vin I 34,14), EĀ 24.5 at T II 622b8, the Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra, Waldschmidt 1962: 316,6 (§26.2), the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, T 1428 at T XXII 797a11, the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya, T 1421 at XXII 109b25, the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Gnoli 1977: 230,10, with its Chinese and Tibetan counterparts in T 1450 at T XXIV 134b4 and Waldschmidt 1962: 317,7 (§26.2), as well as several biographies of the Buddha preserved in Chinese, such as, e.g., T 185 at T III 483a9 (which just mentions the three miracles), T 189 at T III 650a22, T 191 at T III 962a11, and T 196 at T IV 151c29; cf. also Waldschmidt 1951/1967: 193." See Bhikkhu Anālayo. "On the Six Sense-spheres (1)—A Translation of *Saṃyukta-āgama* Discourses 188 to 229 (Fascicle 8)," *Dharma Drum Journal of Buddhist Studies, New Taipei City: Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts*, No. 18, pp. 1–61 (2016), p. 13, note 22.

40 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1143.

41 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1233.

Fire imagery is also found in "The Exposition on the Corrupted" (SN 35: 243), but here, it is the external sense bases that are the source of danger. In this sutta, the individual is analogized to a hut made of flammable, dry grass: "If a man approaches it from the east with a blazing grass torch, or from the west, from the north, from the south, from below, or from above, whichever way he approaches it the fire gains access to it, the fire gets a hold on it. So too, friends, when a bhikkhu dwells thus, if Māra approaches him through the eye ... through the mind, Māra gains access to him, Māra gets a hold on him."[42]

4.2 *External Sense Bases* (*Sense Stimuli*) *as Attackers or Snares*

Many of the metaphors in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* single out the external sense bases as a source of danger. This is the case, for instance, in the "Simile of the Vipers" (SN 35: 238). In this extended parable, stuffed to overflowing with mixed metaphors, we are told of a person who is pursued by four vipers, five enemies, and a sixth murderer with a sword. Our protagonist flees and ends up in an empty village that comes under attack by armed robbers (dacoits). Fleeing the village, the individual seeks a means to cross an expanse of water to escape, eventually fashioning a raft and reaching the safety of the other side.[43] Although each of the elements of the parable have their corresponding referent in Buddhist doctrine, for our purposes, it will suffice to note that the empty village is intended to represent the six internal sense bases, for, as noted above, when examined absent of sense data, they "appear to be void, hollow."[44] The dacoits, unsurprisingly, represent the six external sense bases. "The eye, bhikkhus, is attacked by agreeable and disagreeable forms."[45] The near shore, replete with dangers, is associated with "identity," the raft is the Buddhist teachings in the form of the Noble Eightfold Path, and the far shore is, naturally, Nibbana. "'Crossed over, gone beyond, the brahmin [master] stands on high ground': this is a designation for the arahant."[46]

Another common trope in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* presents sense data (external sense bases) as traps or snares. In "The Fisherman Simile" (SN 35: 230), sensory stimuli are compared to fish hooks used by Māra to capture us. "So too, bhikkhus, there are these six hooks in the world for the calamity of beings, for the slaughter of living beings. There are, bhikkhus, forms cognizable by the eye that are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, tantalizing. If a bhikkhu seeks delight in them, welcomes them, and remains holding to

42 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1246.
43 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, pp. 1237–1238.
44 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1238.
45 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1238.
46 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1239.

them, he is called a bhikkhu who has swallowed Māra's hook. He has met with calamity and disaster, and the Evil One can do with him as he wishes."[47]

This is reminiscent of a passage from the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* ("Discourse on the Noble Quest"). In this sutta, the Buddha recounts a version of his biography in which, as his first sermon, he instructs his original cohort of disciples in the nature of the senses.[48] He begins by describing the five "strands of sense pleasures" or *kāma-guṇa*.[49] He then introduces an analogy of a deer living in a forest. If the deer should come across a "heap of snares" and lie down on it: "this may be said of it: 'It has come to calamity, it has come to misfortune, it is one to be done to by the trapper as he wills, for when the trapper comes it will not be able to go away as it wishes [....]'"[50] The Buddha continues, however, by indicating that those who are able to master their senses are like a deer who is able to "lie down on a heap of snares but is not caught [....]"[51]

In contrast to the other two similes, here we are reminded that sense data are not evil in and of themselves; it is through our mis-relation to them that suffering arises. In contrast to the image of a snare, we are presented with the freedom of the skillful practitioner who is able to approach and experience sensation without becoming entrapped by it.

4.3 *Internal Sense Bases as Portals to be Guarded*

The metaphor of the snare implies that the sensing subject is being tempted by and possibly entrapped by external agents. A variation on this metaphor envisions the body as a dwelling place with the six senses (internal sense bases) compared to doors that must be guarded. But rather than devoting much attention to the nature of the external threat, the subject is entreated to keep themselves contained and guard against extending themselves toward the objects of sensation. Only by venturing toward a door, it is implied, can one be

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47 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1228.

48 羅摩経 T no. 26.775c07–0778c09. Sutra 204 from the *Chū Agonkyō*.

49 Described in the Kāmaguṇa Sutta (SN 35: 117), these are "cords" imagined to connect one to pleasant stimuli one has experienced in the past.

50 I. B. Horner, trans. *The Collection of the The Middle Length Sayings* (*Majjhima-Nikāya*) *Vol. I The First Fifty Discourses*. Lancaster: The Pāli Text Society, 2007, p. 217. Bareau, 1963, p. 193 provides a translation from T. 26 p. 778a, 1.11–p. 778c, 1.6.

51 Horner 2007, p. 218. The material here seems to be derived from the Jātaka tale of Śiriprabha, the king of deer, in which the bodhisattva is ensnared but released. The tale appears in the biography of the Buddha given in the Sanskrit text *Mahāvastu* (J. J. Jones, trans. *The Mahāvastu Volume II. Sacred Books of the Buddhists. Vol. 2* London: Luzak and Company, 1952, pp. 222–224). After relating the tale, the narrator states that Buddha provided exegesis on it "with reference to the skandhas, the dhātus, the āyatanas and the atman" (Jones, 1952, p. 224). See also Jātaka No. 359 (Fausboll).

in danger of capture. One version of this conceptual model asks us to imagine ourselves as a tortoise, who, when approached by a Jackal (Māra), retracts its head and limbs and "guards" them within its shell (SN 35: 240).[52] So long as the tortoise can practice restraint and keep itself confined, the Jackal cannot get a grip on it.

A similarly structured metaphor (35: 245) involves conceiving of oneself as a city with six gates corresponding to the six internal sense bases: "Suppose, bhikkhu, a king had a frontier city with strong ramparts, walls, and arches, and with six gates. The gatekeeper posted there would be wise, competent, and intelligent; one who keeps out strangers and admits acquaintances. A swift pair of messengers would come from the east and ask the gatekeeper: 'Where, good man, is the lord of this city?' He would reply: 'He is sitting in the central square.' Then the swift pair of messengers would deliver a message of reality to the lord of the city and leave by the route by which they had arrived."[53] The Buddha unpacks this metaphor, explaining that the gates of the city represent the six internal sense bases. The "gatekeeper" is meant to represent "mindfulness," an attentive and discerning attitude toward sense data. The swift messengers, we are told are meant to represent meditative "serenity [*samatha*] and insight [*vipassana*]," the "message of reality" is a designation for Nibbana, and the "lord of the city" is a designation for "consciousness [*viññāṇa*]."[54]

4.4 *Internal Sense Bases as Animals Drawn to their Habitats*

One of the most vivid metaphors in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* is "The Simile of the Six Animals" (SN 35: 247). The six internal sense bases are compared to a snake, a crocodile, a giant bird, a dog, a jackal and a monkey, all tied together by ropes connected at the center by a single knot. Each animal has its own preferred habitat, and will struggle to reach that particular domain.[55] After a while, the animals become exhausted and will be pulled along the strongest

52 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1241.

53 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1252. For the use of the metaphor of the walled city in Pāli, Chinese and Gāndhārī texts, see: Joseph Marino, "Cats with Flaming Tails: The Simile of the Fortified City in Pāli and Gāndhārī Sūtra Literature." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*. Vol. 38 (2015): 73–105.

For a study of the use of metaphor in early Buddhist texts, see Marino 2017.

54 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, pp. 1252–1253. Here, rather than alerting us to the dangers inherent in sensory stimuli, the implication is that, once one has established a proper, mindful attitude toward sensation, the stimuli that enter the mind can correspond to the true, nibbānic nature of reality and are conducive to insight.

55 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, pp. 1255–1257. For its parallel in the *Agonkyō*, see T no. 99.02.0313a14.

one. "So too with the bhikkhu who has not developed mindfulness of body [*kāyagatā-sati*]. The eye will pull him in the direction of agreeable forms and is repelled by repulsive forms, etc."[56] If the practitioner, however, is able to secure the animals to a strong post or pillar, they will all become exhausted and "lie down to rest by the [central] post or pillar [....] [T]hus when the bhikkhu has developed mindfulness directed at the body, the various senses do not pull toward or away from their objects. [...] 'A strong post or pillar': this, bhikkhus, is a designation for mindfulness directed to the body."[57]

4.5 *Sense Bases as Bodies of Water*

One intriguing set of images compares the senses to bodies of water. In the sutta titled "The Ocean" (SN 35: 228), we are told that each of the six sense bases are an ocean. The forms and phenomena that appear there (external sense bases) are to be understood as dangers associated with the sea: high waves, whirlpools, sharks and demons. The one who can prevail (*sahati*) against these dangers may traverse the ocean, arrive at the other side and find themselves on high ground. Such a person, we are told, is worthy of being called a brahmin—a master.[58]

Another sutta, "The Great Log" (SN 35: 241), provides a metaphor in which practitioners are asked to imagine themselves floating down a river like a log, carried along (*vuyhamānaṃ*) by a current. The bank on the near side of the river is associated with the internal sense bases, the bank on the far side of the river is associated with the external sense bases. If one can navigate a course right down the middle and keep from running aground on either side, we are told, one will be carried along, eventually reaching "the ocean of Nibbana."[59]

These two contrasting uses of water symbolism are interesting, in part, for their incoherence. Whereas the movement of the water depicted in "The Ocean"—waves and whirlpools—are violent forces that need to be resisted and transcended, in "The Great Log," the current is what propels one, almost effortlessly, to salvation. In "The Ocean" we need to transcend the body of water representing the phenomenal world to reach the proverbial "other side." In "The Great Log," however, the ocean is our soteriological goal of Nibbana.

56 The notion that the strongest animal will pull the rest in the direction of its own domain seems to reflect the way in which our attention tends to be tuned to a single stream of sense data at any given time.

57 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, pp. 1255–1257.

58 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, pp. 1226–1227.

59 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1242.

Also of interest are the differences in the treatment of the internal and external sense bases in these suttas. In the sutta of "The Log," the two sides of the river—representing the inner and outer sense bases—are equally implicated. One must avoid attachment to either side, the one associated with self and the "inner" world, or the one associated with other and the "outer" world, in order to arrive at salvation. In "The Ocean," however, the body of water representing the internal sense bases is itself presented as relatively neutral. It is the external sense bases (the objects of sensation) that disrupt the waters, causing strong currents and appearing as various other dangers that need to be avoided. This is reminiscent of later Buddhist writings, most prominently in the Yogācāra tradition, that compare the mind in its natural resting state to a body of still water. When this still water is agitated it forms the ripples and waves that produce the appearance of discrete objects, and the appearance of discrete selves and others. In such writings, the mind itself is given a neutral valence as a locus in which delusion arises, but not in itself the cause of delusion.

5 Concluding Observations

When we take a broad overview of the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*, we can discern three recurring root metaphors underlying many of the similes the text employs. Two of these root metaphors involve what Lakoff and Johnson refer to as spatialization. The first spatializing root metaphor maps the body and mind onto a horizontal plane comprising boundaries arranged around a central point. The second ask us to imagine a vertical dimension on which aspects of mind can be arranged hierarchically. A third root metaphor relies on "ocularism" or the privileging of vision over the other senses as a means of conveying information about the nature of salvation.

5.1 *Boundaries and Centers*

Many of the similes presented in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* are undergirded by an image of the body as a bounded space like a city or a house, within which there exists some kind of central figure that is instrumental in the proper regulation of the senses. Be it a tortoise in its shell, a person seeking shelter in a hut, or a lord occupying the central square of a walled frontier city, in each case the body is conceived as a bounded area with openings through which sense data might arrive.

The image of the body as a zone under attack from the outside runs counter to the doctrinal expositions described above, which allocates equal

measures of concern to each aspect of our perceptual faculties. When the body is imagined as something to be guarded, defended, and withdrawn into, it is only natural to assume that the external sense bases are the sole source of peril.

The conception of the body as a bounded area with openings through which sense data might arrive is also, of course, similar in many ways to metaphorical schemes that have dominated western philosophical reflection on the senses. Most famously, John Locke proposed that we imagine the senses functioning the way a window does in a house—as something permeable, through which information from the outside world could flow in to be evaluated by a homuncular self, ensconced in its interior.[60]

Where these metaphors differ from their western counterparts, however, is in their intent. In each of the metaphors in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*, the purpose is to alert the listener to the dangers posed by these portals. In most cases, Buddhists are encouraged to "guard" or recoil from these openings, the way the tortoise retreats into its shell when attacked by a predator.

Interestingly, however, like the image of the "Cartesian Theater," which Daniel Dennet has argued is the misleading metaphor at the heart of much reflection on the nature of consciousness, these Buddhist metaphors seem to posit the existence of some aspect of mind occupying a "center," from which it may govern that individual's reaction to sensation.[61] Based on the ways in which these metaphors are structured, this aspect of mind seems to be distinguishable from the six sense consciousnesses, including the sixth consciousness that attends to mental objects.

The metaphors of the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* also imply a power hierarchy between the central and peripheral aspects of mind and body. In the simile of the city gates, for instance, we are told that it is a lord who occupies the central square. In the simile of the six animals, it is by securing the animals' leashes to a firm central stake, identified as "mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatā-sati*)," that the senses come to be pacified. In another simile, the one who has achieved mastery of their sense faculties is compared to a chariot driver guiding the tamed horses of the senses. "So too, a bhikkhu trains in protecting these

60 Discussed in S. H. Clark, ""The Whole Internal World His Own": Locke and Metaphor Reconsidered." *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Vol. 59, No. 2 (Apr., 1998), pp. 241–265; see especially p. 246–247.

61 On the "Cartesian Theater," see Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1991.

six sense faculties, trains in controlling them, trains in taming them, trains in pacifying them."[62]

The emphasis in these metaphors on an imagined center resonates, as well, with instances in which suttas call for practitioners to achieve "concentration" (*samādhi*) or "one-pointedness." Samādhi of course refers generally to mental or meditative concentration, but its etymology points to the act of placing items next to each other.[63] The English word "concentration" carries similar connotations of gathering up something that could be scattered or dissipated, bringing it together and presumably removing, discarding, and excluding that which does not belong. When the mind becomes concentrated in meditation, we are told, perception grows more accurate. "When a bhikkhu is concentrated, things become manifest to him as they really are."[64] Elsewhere in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* we find descriptions of mindfulness that resonate with these centripetal images. In the discourse presented at Devadaha (SN 35: 134), the Buddha states that "When the mind is not obsessed, tireless energy is aroused, unmuddled mindfulness [*upaṭṭhitā sati*] is set up, the body becomes tranquil and untroubled, the mind becomes concentrated and one pointed [*samāhitaŋ cittaŋ*]."[65]

The term used to refer to the mind when it is gathered into a central point, *citta*, is not one that corresponds in any systematic way to any of the mental or cognitive functions outlined above.[66] But, from the use of the term in other parts of the early Buddhist corpus we gather that, although it carries a number

62 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, pp. 1239–1240.

63 In Buddhagosa's *Visuddhimagga* he posits that the term samādhi derives from samādhāna, meaning "putting together," or "fixing." See "Samādhāna" in Rhys Davids and William Stede, eds. *Pāli Text Society Pāli-English Dictionary*, London: Pāli Text Society, 1921–1925, p. 758.

64 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1218. See also: Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1180: "When the mind is concentrated, phenomena become manifest. Because phenomena become manifest, one is reckoned as 'one who dwells diligently."

Bodhi notes that there is some disagreement about precisely *what* becomes manifest: "[Sāratthappakāsinī, Saṃyutta Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā (Burmese-script ed.)] takes this to mean that the states of serenity and insight (*samatha-vipassanā dhammā*) do not become manifest, but I think the point is that the internal and external sense bases (the *dhammā*) do not appear as impermanent, suffering, and nonself…" Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1411, n. 83.

65 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1207. To modern readers, these images of concentrating or centering the mind call to mind another metaphorical scheme: that of an optical instrument that can be focused. A focal point is the point at which the image being processed reaches maximum clarity and precision.

66 *Citta*, *manas*, and *vijnana* are discussed in Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya. VOLUME I*. Sommerville: Wisdom Publications, 2000, pp. 769–70, n. 154.

of uses and association, most critically this is the mind of meditative calm and insight. Its implicit association with a purported center was clearly apparent to later translators, who chose to render it with the Sinitic ideogram 心 (Ch. *xīn*) meaning "heart" or "core."[67] As the mind cultivatable through meditation, *citta* is reminiscent of the "lord" in the simile of the city gates: the aspect of mind that receives the "message of reality," and is thus capable of salvation. In the simile of the six animals, the stake that centers and tames the senses is identified as "mindfulness of the body" (*kāyagatā-sati*). This mental state is elaborated on in the *Kāyagatā-sati Sutta* (MN 119), where once again we read that once a practitioner is able to "gather" the mind "inwardly," it "grows unified and centered" (*Tesaṃ pahānā ajjhattameva cittaṃ santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodi hoti samādhiyati*).

These representations of the person are striking for the ways in which they edge dangerously close to positing the existence of an "inner self" with the role of "ruling" or "controlling" other aspects of mental function. This would, of course, contradict a foundational tenet of Buddhist philosophy, the doctrine of no-self. The discourses avoid this by never seeking to reify this implied central consciousness or *citta*. These entailments remain more or less implicit in the metaphorical schemes, which attempt to draw our attention to other elements—usually the six *āyatana* or the dangers lurking "outside" the tortoise shell, hut or city gates.

5.2 Vertical Hierarchies

A second root metaphor organizes aspects of mind along a vertical hierarchy. We can see this form of spatialization at work, for instance, in the examples from the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* in which the individual is depicted traversing a body of water in order to reach the other side. This is, of course, a common trope representing the attainment of Nibbana. But interestingly, these similes also indicate that the one who reaches the far shore is to be deemed a "master" (brahmin) who stands on "high ground." Here, as Lakoff and Johnson suggest, the physical structure of the world and our embodied experience of it cannot but be reflected in the way this metaphor structures our understanding of that which it seeks to illuminate. For dry land to exist near a body of water, it must have some degree of elevation. The *Saḷāyatana-vagga* exploits this fact, emphasizing the superior position of those who have mastered their senses.

67 See Digital Dictionary of Buddhism: http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E5%BF%83.

Although high ground might bring with it a number of associations—including moral, psychological, or social superiority—in the context of discussions of the senses, it is clearly meant to contrast with the bodies of water that represent our sense faculties. High ground thus affords one not only safety, but *perspective*. One who fails to reach liberation is "submerged" in the ocean of sensation. Unlike the one who is immersed in sensual experience, the master is able to look down on and appraise sensory experience in its totality. This corresponds, as well, to other passages from the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* in which mastery of one's senses is described as being the ability to "overwhelm" sense data, as opposed to being overwhelmed by them. "When a bhikkhu dwells [unskillfully], forms overwhelm him; he does not overwhelm forms [*bhikkhu rūpe adhibhosi, na rūpā bhikkhuṃ adhibhaṃsu*]."[68] The Pāli root *abhi*, from the terms *adhibhosi* and *adhibhaṃsu*, which Bhikkhu Bodhi renders "overwhelm," carries connotations of conquering, but also spatial connotations of "being above."[69] In other words, the image of the brahmin as the one who attains high ground connotes two types of superiority. They are superior to those who still live in ignorance, immersed in the ocean of sensation. But they are also superior in the sense that they are able to stand "above" their own sense faculties and the stimuli they encompass.

This brings us back to the discussion of the "limits" of our world that we encountered in the *Loka Sutta*, in which the Buddha admonished his disciples to discover for themselves the boundaries of their horizon of experience. Although one can discern boundaries while remaining within a circumscribed space, presumably, by bumping up against them, other passages seem to indicate that one can only grasp the truth of phenomenal reality by finding its end, and somehow moving "beyond" its boundaries. Several suttas in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga* state that one only achieves a full understanding of sensory reality by "abandoning" it. A passage from *Pahanaya Sutta* (SN 35: 24), for instance, indicates that abandoning the senses and sense stimuli—in other words, relating to sensation without attachment—results in "direct knowledge and full understanding."[70] In a similar vein, the *Lohicca Sutta* (SN 35: 132) and the *Exposition on the Corrupted* (SN 35: 243) contrast the one with a "limited mind" to the one who has established "mindfulness of the body," discussed above. Mindfulness of the body is associated with a "measureless" unbounded

68 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1246.

69 "The primary meaning of *abhi* is that of taking possession and mastering, […] coming by and over-coming, thus literally having the function of facing and aggressing […] mastering […] over, along over, out over, on top of […]." PTS Pāli English Dictionary, p. 71.

70 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1140.

mind.[71] These metaphorical schemes relate back again to embodied experience: one who is in the midst of something is unable to discern its limits. The one "submerged" in something, to return to the water analogies, is quite literally bounded, restricted, surrounded, trapped.

Only from the "outside" or "above" can we take in the full picture. Whereas those of us who are still lost in samsaric existence, remain, in a way, submerged in our senses and cannot discern the limits of phenomenal experience, those who have extricated themselves from their sensations have the clearest view of them. But this root metaphor, thus, brings with it some unsettling entailments. The one able to transcend and gaze down on the ocean of sensation and see its limits could presumably "see" what lies beyond—a world outside of our senses. Indeed, how could one know one has reached the limit or end of something until one has a view that encompasses what lies on the other side? Other similes, such as that of the Great Log, or the Vipers also suggest that one could leave both one's external and internal sense bases behind and sail out into some larger reality.

The notion that salvation involves somehow getting outside, beyond, or above our sensorium is never directly articulated in the *Saḷāyatana-vagga*. It is, however, consistent with certain aspects of Buddhist cosmology, which envision the universe divided into the worlds of desire (*kāmadhātu*), form (*rūpadhātu*), and formlessness (*arūpadhātu*), at times depicted, once again, as arrayed along a vertical hierarchy. These realms are inhabited by ever more rarefied types of beings. The beings who dwell in the realm of desire, including the gods, are equipped with the same six senses we are familiar with as humans. The gods of the more "elevated" realm of form experience levels of consciousness that correspond to the four stages of meditative concentration (*jhānas*), which the Buddha is said to have first ascended through on the occasion of his awakening. Interestingly, the highest god of the realm of form has only two senses: sight and hearing. Gods within the formless realm have no senses, only consciousness.[72] The implication here is not that the gods of the higher planes gradually lose their perceptive capabilities. Quite the opposite. Similarly, Nibbana, often depicted as "outside" these realms altogether, would

71 "He dwells having set up mindfulness of the body, with a measureless mind, and he understands as it really is that liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder." Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1204. "He dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body, with a limited mind, and he does not understand as it really is that liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder. Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1245.

72 Williams 2012, pp. 55–56.

also be beyond sense and sensation altogether, but presumably in a way that encompasses rather than negates them.

5.3 Ocularism

The image of gaining the high ground and taking in the ocean of phenomenal reality in its totality carries with it a final set of entailments, relying on what has been called "ocularism"—a tendency to describe sensation or other mental processes solely in terms of the workings of vision.[73] Ocular metaphors prioritize vision over the other senses, and operate on the assumption that it gives one special, unmediated access to an object of perception.

It is somewhat ironic that a text dedicated to explaining the senses in terms of other kinds of things should fall back on the function of the eye as a means of describing the workings of the other sense faculties. It is equally ironic that the trope of vision is employed to describe the awakened mind that is supposedly able to discern (or even transcend?) the limits of all of the sense faculties, including sight. For the most part, ocular metaphors are implicit and do not rise above the level of entailments. The similes of the ocean and the river, for instance, do not explicitly name vision or perspective as the prize we gain when we reach the high ground. But at other points, vision is identified as the goal of our practice. For instances, in a discourse on Abandoning Ignorance (SN 35: 79) we read of the arhat: "when a bhikkhu knows and *sees the eye* [emphasis mine] as impermanent, ignorance is abandoned by him and true knowledge arises."[74]

"Seeing" one's own eye is, of course, the physically impossible act that occasions the need for metaphors in the first place. We should not be surprised, however, that the suttas must at times fall back on sensory metaphors to describe the senses. Lakoff and Johnson observe that our conceptual metaphors are always mediated by the body. The body is the ultimate source of metaphor, since it is the aspect of the world with which we are most intimately familiar. We have no way to think or conceive beyond our embodied experience. Using sensation as a metaphor to describe sensation is perhaps inevitable since sensation is a powerfully salient aspect of our embodied experience. To revert once again to a spatial metaphor, when the practitioner reaches the "end of the world," of the sense, what language can be employed to describe that hazy

73 On the prominence of ocular metaphors in western philosophy, see Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.

74 Bodhi 2000, vol. II, p. 1160. Although the verb translated here as "sees" (*passati*) could also be rendered "recognizes," "realizes," or "knows," its primary definition is "to see" (Rhys Davids and Stede, eds., 1921–1925, p. 497). The term employed in the parallel passage from the *Saṃyukta Āgama*, namely 觀察 (Ch. *guancha*; Jp. *kansatsu*) also carries strong ocular connotations.

horizon, let alone what lies beyond? That experiential territory, should it exist, can only be described and conceived using metaphors from within the world of phenomena. If there is a world "beyond" images, sound, smells, etc. what could be said of it? Even when we concede that "whereof we cannot speak, we must pass over in silence," we have again fallen into metaphor's trap. Silence, after all, is only meaningful to those who have ears to hear.

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CHAPTER 3

Zen Body, Zen Mind

Dōgen's Approach to Meditation and Monastic Training

Steven Heine

1 The Question of Body vis-à-vis Mind[1]

According to the Edo period Sōtō Zen (曹洞禪) scholar-monk Katsudō Honkō's (瞎道本光) capping-phrase remarks on the "Principles of Zazen" (Zazengi 坐禪儀), a fascicle of the *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (*Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏), the saying "Sitting still with clean feet" 洗足巳坐 characterizes the significance of seated meditation (*zazen*) in the thought of Dōgen (道元, 1200–1253).[2] This phrase, which could loosely be rendered, "sitting in meditation begins by cleaning one's feet," shows how Dōgen's approach to Sōtō Zen practice combines lofty discussions of the role of nonthinking (*hishiryō* 非思量) as key to contemplative awareness that lies beyond conventional language or rational thinking (*shiryō*) and its antithesis, the irrational (*fushiryō*), with specific instructions for washing the body and related seemingly mundane physical functions. These exercises are not considered merely preparatory but are crucial for continually conducting and renewing the deceptively simple act of sitting unperturbed in zazen (坐禪) meditation.

Honkō's phrase reinforces the interpretation of zazen expressed in Giun's (義雲) fourteenth-century verse comment on the same fascicle, which opens with reduplicative wording in the opening line that includes the pictographic character for "being upright" (兀): "Cattails sitting tall are silently swaying, / Dragons hum as clouds float in the vast darkness. / No longer counting the number of breaths, / Three thousand realms are collected in the sacred sea" (兀兀寥寥倚蒲團 / 龍吟雲起黒漫漫 / 箇中消息絶思議 / 刹海三千祇一般).[3] Giun adds his own capping phrase, "Flowers blooming on a withered

1 Note main reference: *Dōgen's Complete Works* (*Dōgen Zenji zenshū* 道元禪師全集). 7 vols., ed. Kawamura Kōdō, et al. (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1988–1993); abbreviated as *Dōgen*.

2 See Steven Heine, *Flowers Blooming on a Withered Tree: Giun's Verse Comments on Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 101. For an in-depth discussion of the fascicle see Steven Heine, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

3 See Heine, *Flowers Blooming on a Withered Tree*, 100.

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tree" (枯木花開), which can be read as affirming the capacity of the defiled corpse to be rehabilitated and rejuvenated through ongoing spiritual training or, more positively, as emphasizing that the tree representing the human body serves as the necessary vessel for religious realization.

The capping phrase by Honkō has also been interpreted to indicate, "Washing your feet is a form of meditation," thereby suggesting that corporeal cleanliness, which links the act of bodily cleaning to mystical cleansing, is conducive and essential to the attainment of an authentic state of realization without obstruction or diversion. In that vein, the analysis of Buddhist monasticism in *A Pure Mind in a Clean Body* by Ann Heirman and Mattieu Torck argues that Dōgen's masterwork, the *Treasury*, should be seen in light of the idea that he "belongs to a generation of monks who were very keen to preserve the Chan tradition as outlined in the 'rules for purity' [from the classic 1103 text by Zongze (宗賾), *Pure Rules for the Zen Monastery* (*Chanyuan qinggui*, Jp. *Zen'en shingi* 禪苑清規)."[4] The authors point out that in several *Treasury* fascicles, particularly "Washing the Face" (Senmen 洗面) and "Cleaning" (Senjō 洗淨), which both offer finely detailed instructions in addition to provocative philosophical injunctions regarding hygiene, "achieving purity—of both body and mind—is the principal motivation for any washing activity. So, it is unsurprising that [Dōgen] also insists a monk's feet should be spotless when he meditates."[5]

From this standpoint, Dōgen's focus on the underlying unities of body-mind (*shinjin ichinyo* 身心一如) and practice-realization (*shushō ittō* 修証一等), or of exercises and explanations encompassing a broad diversity of training techniques in addition to theoretical perspectives, is reflected in all occasions of a practitioner's activities, however seemingly commonplace or trivial.[6] In the

4 Ann Heirman and Mattieu Torck, *A Pure Mind in a Clean Body: Bodily Care in the Buddhist Monasteries of Ancient India and China* (Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press, 2002), 44; the authors point out that Dōgen's primary concern is with cleanliness of the mouth. Much of the *Pure Rules* text is translated by Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China: An Annotated Translation and Study of the Chanyuan Qinggui* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002). See also Kenshu Sugawara, Akihiko Masuda and Kayla Sargent, "Zen and Body," in *Handbook of Zen, Mindfulness and Behavioral Health*, eds. Ahihiko Masuda and William T. O'Donohue (Carn, SW: Springer, 2017), 77–84.

5 A recent bestselling book by Kaoru Nonomura on spending a year of practice at Dōgen's temple, Eiheiji, *East Sleep Sit* (see note 15) could be renamed "Eat Sleep S**t Sit" in reflecting the master's uncompromising focus on all bodily functions.

6 In contrast, Eisai (栄西) in *A Treatise on Letting Zen Flourish to Protect the State* (*Kozen gokokuron* 興禅護国論, *Taishō* 80.2543) frequently mentions the oneness of body and mind, but he does not put a particular emphasis on the body as a gateway to realization that may have priority over the mind.

fascicle on “Realization Here and Now” (Genjokōan 現成公案) Dōgen speaks of “the original person” (*honbun nin* 本分人), an expression used in Zen literature for one who has actualized in everyday existence his or her true nature or fundamental lot in life. Here he indicates that the transmission of Dharma is fully embodied through such an authentic person. Furthermore, in “The Lancet of Zazen” (Zazenshin 坐禪箴) he writes of the embodiment of Buddha (*shinbutsu* 身佛) by practicing (*gyōbutsu* 行佛) or sitting (*zabutsu* 坐佛), as contrasted with an idle attempt to “make a Buddha” (*sabutsu* 作佛), as if the state of Buddha were something different than the bodily form we already are:

> We should realize that in the usual means of investigation to learn the way, one pursues the path of seated meditation. The essential point that marks this process is that there is a practice of enacting Buddha that does not seek to make a Buddha. Because the practicing Buddha is not done to make a Buddha, it is realization here-and-now. The embodied Buddha does not further make a Buddha; but once the nets and cages [of delusion] are broken through, a seated Buddha does not interfere with making a Buddha. At just such a time…whether stepping forward or stepping backward, any ditches and gullies are clearly filled.
>
> しるべし，學道のさだまれる參究には，坐禪辨道するなり．その榜様の宗旨は，作佛をもとめざる行佛あり．行佛さらに作佛にあらざるがゆゑに，公案見成なり．身佛さらに作佛にあらず，籮籠打破すれば，坐佛さらに作佛をさへず．正當恁麼のとき…進歩退歩，したしく溝にみち，壑にみつ量あるなり.[7]

Moreover, in the fascicle on “Learning the Way Through Body-Mind” (Shinjingakudō 身心学道), in addition to commenting on his own enlightenment experience of “casting off body-mind (*shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落), which is referred to dozens of times in his writings, Dōgen stresses the inseparability of both physical and mental realms functioning as gateways to Zen realization through the ongoing practice of just sitting (*shikan taza* 只管打坐). This standpoint is symbolized by the Tang dynasty Chan stories showing that, after years of futile efforts, master Lingyun (靈雲) attained realization when seeing peach blossoms blooming and master Xiangyan (香嚴) gained satori upon hearing a pebble strike a bamboo tree. Those anecdotes, cited frequently by Dōgen, seem to suggest that, if a choice among the equals of body and mind were to

7 Dōgen 1.105.

be made, the bodily or perceptual-based aspect of human existence is valued more highly than the conceptual or cogitative-based aspect.

It is the case that an emphasis on gaining enlightenment by perceiving "colors and sounds" was maintained throughout Dōgen's career, yet he often argues that this type of sensation is not a matter of affirming physicality over intellect or highlighting the body more than the mind. That view is also expressed in an ironic remark by Edo monk-scholar Banjin Dōtan (萬仭道坦), "What about all the times when flowers are seen, or bamboo is heard, and still there is no realization?" Therefore, great awakening (*daigo* 大悟) is characterized by the unity of enlightenment and delusion, as well as the beginning and end of phenomenal experiences without necessarily prioritizing either the physical or conceptual.

Such an outlook is reflected in the contents of the *Treasury*, which features several fascicles that include in their title the term for mind, such as "This Mind Itself is Buddha" (Sokushin zebutsu 即心是佛), "The Ungraspable Mind"(Shinfukatoku 心不可得), "The Old Buddha Mind" (Kobusshin 古佛心), "Triple World is Mind Only" (Sangai yuishin 三界唯心), "Disclosing Mind, Disclosing Nature" (Sesshin sesshō 説心説性), "Arousing the Bodhi-Mind" (Hotsu bodaishin 發菩提心), "Arousing the Supreme Mind" (Hotsu mujōshin 發無上心), and "Penetration of Other Minds" (Tajinzū 佗心通). According to the philosophical analysis by Akiyama Hanji in *A Study of Dōgen*, the main notion is that of mind examined in terms of the categories of ontology (*sonzairon* 存在論) and praxeology (*jissenron* 実践論), which covers the ramifications for understanding the modern themes of religion, education, and economics.[8]

Dōgen's use of the term mind has four implications according to Akiyama's examination. The first meaning concurs with the conventional view of the interior world of cognizance set in contrast to the exterior world of objects. The second sense is that of noesis, or the act of perceiving that gives rise to consciousness, and the third level equates mind with the entire noetic-noematic experience in that, "It is the mind itself, while watching the mountain, river and the whole world only as mountain, river and the whole world, that indicates 'mountain, river and the whole world are themselves the mind.'" The fourth and most fundamental meaning, greatly influenced by the Huayan (Jp. Kegon) school, takes mind as the ground that enables and brings into existence every single particular being. Yet Dōgen seeks to overcome any idealist implication

8 Akiyama Hanji, *A Study of Dōgen* (*Dōgen no kenkyū* 道元の研究) (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1935), 101–104; see also Ralf Müller, "The Philosophical Reception of Japanese Buddhism After 1868," in Gereon Kopf, ed., *The Dao Companion to Japanese Buddhist Philosophy* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2019), 155–203.

of the unidirectional causation of being when he equates mind to the concrete reality of "fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles" (牆壁瓦礫) by evoking traditional Zen catchphrases.

The *Treasury* also contains a group of fascicles emphasizing that the cultivation of the purity of the body necessarily contributes to reaching an aloof standpoint. These include "Principles of Zazen" (Zazengi 坐禪儀), "Lancet of Zazen" 坐禪箴 (Zazenshin), "Washing the Face" (Senmen 洗面), "Cleaning" (Senjō 洗淨) "Transmission of the Robe" (Den'e 傳衣), "Merits of the Robe" (Kesa Kudoku 袈裟功徳), "Sustained Practice" (Gyōji 行持), "Summer Retreat" (Ango 安居), and "Dignified Demeanor of Practicing Buddhas" (Gyōbutsu iigi 行佛威儀). All the fascicles provide guidelines or historical explanations regarding Zen ancestors concerning how bodily behavior and demeanor make possible the actualization of enlightenment.

The unity of body-mind is also expressed in many Dharma Hall sermons (*jōdō* 上堂) contained in the first seven volumes of Dōgen's *Extensive Record* (*Eihei kōroku* 永平廣錄). In sermon 3.294, for example, the Buddha is manifest in "every speck of dust" (塵塵), but this term can also indicate "every possible sensation" that is generated by the interaction of sense organ and object:

> Casting off body-mind does not prevent us from recognizing the original source of the Dharma is not apart from arising and extinction, yet we still mistakenly have discussions of illusion and reality. Therefore, it is said that seeing Buddha in every speck of dust does not denigrate Buddha, and hearing sūtras in all sounds does not separate us from the sūtras. Do you want to attain first-hand the prediction of enlightenment made on Vulture Peak? Large and small stones nod their heads knowingly. After a pause Dōgen said, "After thirty years [of practice], you will no longer succumb to mistaken ideas."
>
> 身心脱落也，不妨人認為本源．法離断常也，猶有自錯説虚実．所以道，塵塵見仏不謗仏，刹刹聞経不離経．要得霊山親授記．石頭大小点頭来．良久云、三十年後不得錯挙.[9]

Furthermore, according to sermon 4.325, a preaching for the First Day of the Fifth Month, the casting off of body-mind occurs within, rather than separately from, karmic causality. This passage begins by alluding to a couple of well-known Zen dialogues:

9 Dōgen 3.192–194.

> When ox-hide covers temple pillars, the temple pillars wail. Someone crosses over a bridge: the bridge flows, but the water does not. Although ancient worthies spoke this way, do people today understand? Patch-robed ones cast off body-mind within the realm of ignorant karmic consciousness. At this mountain retreat, the fifth month rains are falling, but soon enough will be the time for autumn harvest.
>
> 五月初一上堂. 牛皮覆露柱, 露柱叫啾啾. 人従橋上過, 橋流水不流. 古徳雖恁麼道, 今人還会麼. 衲子身心脱落, 無明業識拳頭. 山家五月降梅雨, 天下如今新麦秋.[10]

In addition, a Chinese poem in the *Extensive Record* makes several interesting points about the importance of the body and physical sensations for understanding the unity of true reality: "Encountering anything meeting the eye in full intimacy. / While moving, sitting, or reclining, the body is completely real. / When someone asks about the meaning of this: / A speck of dust appearing within the treasury of the Dharma eye (触目遇縁尽是親, 経行坐臥体全真, 有人若問箇中意, 法眼蔵中一点塵).[11]

My goal in this paper is to explore whether, after a close reading of his works including the philosophical essays of the *Treasury* and related passages, there is any slight discrepancy in Dōgen's thought between the physical and mental, and if so, which side is more prevalent. This investigation is carried out in light of recent research trends in the field of Buddhist studies that tend to highlight the examination of "on-the-ground" somatic, material, ritual, and visual levels of experience after decades of scholarship that was dominated by text-historical or philological studies. In particular, I focus on the practice of zazen and other forms of monastic discipline in pursuit of the purification of body-mind as articulated in terms of corporeal or conceptual components. I also take into account the standpoint of Critical Buddhism (Hihan Bukkyō 批判仏教), an intellectual movement that insists Dōgen and other Buddhist thinkers must be evaluated in terms of their ability to create a compelling view of ethics in relation to modern societal issues, such as discrimination against women and outcasts or tacit support for prewar imperialism and authoritarian outlooks.

Dōgen says of the conundrum of prioritizing body vis-à-vis mind in a sermon included in the *Treasury of Miscellaneous Talks* (*Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* 正法眼蔵随聞記), as recorded by Ejō in the mid-1230s: "Is the Way attained through mind or body? In the pre-Zen doctrinal schools, it is said that since body and mind are not separate, the Way is attained through the body. Yet,

10 Dōgen 3.212.
11 Dōgen 4.276.

because of the identity of body-mind, it is not altogether clear that we attain the Way primarily through the body. In the Zen lineage, the Way is attained through both the body [by sitting in concentration] and the mind [by exercising contemplation]."[12]

2 Zazen Postures

Dōgen's view of the body and mind in relation to the practice of just sitting is shaped by a confluence of factors, including the Indian Buddhist view that the physique is an empty, ephemeral, phantom-like entity that delays the attainment of true nirvana until after death, and the Chinese religious standpoint that puts an emphasis on gaining realization in this immediate existence. His standpoint is also greatly impacted by the Japanese Buddhist approach stressed in the formation of various new sects at the dawn of the Kamakura era, including Zen, to "realize Buddha in this very body" (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成佛), in addition to Chinese Chan meditation manuals imported to Japan by Eisai and Dōgen that delineate rules for silent sitting.

Both the physical and mental realms are seen as double-edged swords in that they can lead to ignorance and suffering yet serve as vehicles for resolving the problem of that "one great matter" (*ittaiji* 一大事) through zazen and other activities that are seen by Dōgen as altogether dynamic rather than passive. A relevant way to consider the question of the primacy of body or mind is to link this issue to the oneness of theory and practice. In support of the priority of practice, which would more or less correspond to an emphasis on body, it seems that Dōgen's general attitude toward Zen training recalls that of Pope Francis, who teaches that human actualities invariably supersede intellectual abstractions because, "Reality is more important than ideas (*La realidad es superior a la idea*)." This is the pontiff's signature phrase highlighting the function of genuine pastors, who should act "like shepherds living with the smell of the sheep."[13] Francis consistently cautions against clerical leaders falling into the conceptual traps of "rigidity" and "empty rhetoric," or getting "stuck in pure speculation."

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12 Dōgen 7.103.

13 Mary Eberstadt, "The Prophetic Power of Humanae Vitae: Documenting the realities of the sexual revolution," *First Things* (April 1, 2018) n.p.; other affinities include the idea that time is as powerful as space, unity prevails over the conflict, and the whole is superior to the part.

Similarly, a prominent recent study contends that Dōgen "never was concerned with producing a new, dogmatically consistent philosophical doctrine along the lines of Western philosophical theories. Rather, his philosophy was always at the service of his main purpose: that of religious practitioner and spiritual guide."[14] This assessment is supported by a passage in "Discerning the Way" that maintains, "Religious teachings should be evaluated not in terms of the consistency of doctrinal formulations, but the authenticity of one's own practice."[15] According to a Chinese saying, "One who learns but does not practice has never really learned (*zhier buxing feizhiye* 知而不行非知也)." In a similar vein Gandhi once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

In various writings on the theme of just sitting, Dōgen borrows heavily from a short tract in the lengthy work on monastic regulations produced in 1103 by Zongze known as the *Principles of Seated Meditation* (Ch. *Zuochan yi*, Jp. *Zazengi* 坐禪儀), the same title as one of the *Treasury* fascicles in addition to other Chan/Zen writings. Over a third of Dōgen's *Universal Recommendation for Zazen Practice* (*Fukanzazengi* 普勸坐禪儀) and the aforementioned fascicle are based on, or are almost copied from, the continental predecessor's composition. These passages highlight instructions for how monks should wear their robe while entering the hall to make *gasshō* (合掌) bows of greeting before circumambulating the room, and then cross their legs and place their hands and palms properly to achieve a state of concentration by focusing the body-mind in an appropriate fashion. Also discussed is the way to rise from sitting as well as visit the washroom for cleaning and go to sleep at the end of the day, along with the functions of the abbot's chair and the meditation hall manager's actions that include burning incense and using the sounding board to call the assembly to order. An additional topic involves the directive that a practitioner should swing his body from side to side seven or eight times while gradually reducing the length of the arc, which is an opening exercise still widely followed in Sōtō sect meditative practice.

In various writings Dōgen refers extensively to the contemplative state of just sitting in both literal and figurative senses. The literal meaning refers to a practitioner being seated on a cushion with legs crossed in the lotus position and hands held in place, in addition to head and torso firmly aligned for sustained periods of time on a daily basis. This technique must be carried out according to carefully demarcated guidelines by priests in the Monk's Hall, the

14 Taigen Daniel Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, trans., *Dōgen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community: A Translation of Eihei Shingi* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 17.

15 Dōgen 2.467.

primary place for meditation on the temple grounds, or in a solitary hermitage or retreat in the forest. Dōgen sometimes speaks of the power of seated meditation to cure ailments, such as reversing the effects of hemorrhoids that may stem from excessive sitting, by enabling a practitioner to forget and thus overcome the psychic roots of illness. Since "sickness worsens depending upon one's frame of mind," Dōgen suggests that he conquered suffering from severe diarrhea through contemplation after he remained on board the ship for a few months when he first landed in China in 1223. "Considering this," he says, "I think if we devote ourselves to the practice of the way and disregard everything else, no illness will ever arise."[16] That capacity applies even to uninformed practitioners who meditate, so long as they sustain just sitting single-mindedly, without aim or purpose.

Zazen evoked in the figurative sense of gaining intuitive insight into the true nature of reality at any time and place, regardless of whichever actual posture is undertaken, is suggested by Dōgen's use of two key terms that appear in several fascicles, especially "The Lancet of Zazen" and "King of All Samādhis" (Zanmai ō zanmai 海印三昧). The first term refers to the act of "sitting upright and steadfast," with the Chinese character 兀 (Ch. *wu*, Jp. *gotsu*) appearing at first glance to resemble an upside-down peak (山, Ch. *shan*, Jp. *san* or *yama*), so that one translator renders the process of unwavering concentration as "sitting upright and firm like a mountain."[17] The idiom 兀兀 (Ch. *wuwu*, Jp. *gotsugotsu*) indicates whatever is massive and immovable or indifferently towering above everything else in sight. This term is generally used in a twofold way implying either a positive state of concentrated awareness unimpeded by the outside world, which Dōgen emphasizes, or a negative condition of being unmindful or oblivious to external influences, as suggested by critics of unresponsive quietude.

The second term referring to the contemplative act in a figurative way is *kekkafuza* (半跏趺坐), a standard Buddhist phrase for the cross-legged meditation posture (Skr. *paryaṅka*) that is sometimes called the "lotus position" (Skr. *padmāsana*), which Dōgen indicates in "King of All Samādhis" can be understood for its symbolic rather than literal qualities:

16 Shohaku Okumura and Tom Wright, trans., *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki: Sayings of Eihei Dōgen Zenji Recorded by Koun Ejō* (Tokyo: Soto-shu Shumucho, rpt. 2004), section 187; Dōgen 7.144.

17 Gudō Wafu Nishijima and Chodo Cross, trans. *Master Dogen's Shōbōgenzō*. 4 vols. Woods Hole, MA: Windbell Publications, 1994–1999 *Shōbōgenzō* II:115.

> At the moment of sitting we should investigate whether this occurs while the universe is vertical or horizontal ... Does sitting overturn the whole world or move vigorously toward engaging with it? Is it a matter of thinking or not thinking? Is it transforming [into Buddha] or not transforming [into Buddha]? Is it sitting with body-mind or with having cast off body-mind? We must investigate this matter from thousands and tens of thousands of perspectives. We should maintain cross-legged sitting of the body, cross-legged sitting of the mind, and cross-legged sitting of casting off body-mind.[18]

All conceptual categories for describing meditation are thereby thrown aside, but it seems that the mental outlook is given priority. Moreover, in the fascicle on "Buddha-nature" (Busshō 佛性), Dōgen identifies zazen with the true nature of reality that encompasses yet lies beyond the realm of human behavior by suggesting, "'Skin, flesh, bones and marrow' and the 'treasury of the true Dharma-eye' are nothing other than sitting upright and steadfast, which conveys the face [of Mahākāśyapa] at the time of his breaking into a smile."[19]

According to Dōgen's non-literal understanding of the power of zazen, meditation encompassing every aspect of human behavior is not just a matter of solving kōan cases or sitting still without thoughts:

> Different kinds of concentration belong to the king of all samādhis. Sitting with legs crossed means keeping your body straight, keeping your mind straight, and keeping your body-mind straight. It is keeping the Buddhas and ancestors straight, keeping your practice and realization straight, keeping the crown of your head straight, and keeping the very pulse of your lifeblood straight.[20]

Therefore, meditation remains eminently engaged with all aspects of reality at every occasion based on enacting zazen in the broader sense of realizing nonthinking as the essence of past, present and future existence.

18 Dōgen 2.177.

19 Dōgen 1.31.

20 Dōgen 2.180.

3 The Value of Dignified Demeanor

In addition to promoting the primacy of zazen practice as a bodily exercise with crucial attitudinal implications, Dōgen's *Treasury* is known for its emphasis on many other kinds of religious training methods that have a physical component. These involve following strict disciplinary codes and adhering to traditional clerical precepts as well as enhancing attitudes of dedication and exertion in light of the significance of the basic Buddhist notions of karmic retribution and repentance for negotiating the effects of moral causality. Dōgen's detailed instructions for cloistered behavior are based on Chinese Mahāyāna writings plus the rites and ceremonies he personally observed and experienced during his four-year pilgrimage to the mainland at a time when Zen was first getting established in Japan and its monks needed to learn lessons from the source of the tradition. These guidelines deal with very specific matters of hygiene, such as washing, wiping, brushing, and trimming, supplemented by more general daily, seasonal, and annual ritual activities as well as lofty ethical injunctions designed to develop and cultivate a gracious, dignified manner carried out in all activities, whether secular or sacred, monumental or commonplace, by applying the truth of Dharma in relation to the effects of karma.

In speaking about regulating the Monks' hall (literally, Cloud hall (*undō* 雲堂), which refers to the transient circumstances of many novices), Dōgen preaches that there must be no attention given to gaining fame and fortune or contribution to transgressions committed by others. On a more practical level, there is to be no going out of the premises unless necessary, no reading of Zen books or letters from family, no quarreling or speaking loudly with other monks, no blowing one's nose noisily or laughing out loud, no circumambulation of the hall or reading of sūtras (except one time for the sake of donors), no wearing patterned garments, no entering the hall drunk, and especially, no dropping one's bowl (which leads to a fine) and no disregard for listening to the teachings (which leads to expulsion).[21]

Instead, all monks must seek to blend together harmoniously like milk and water and show an indebtedness to one another that is greater than to one's own father or mother by reporting all comings and goings or matters large and small to the hall chief while practicing zazen with unremitting diligence and

21 According to a scripture Dōgen cites, a monk should always have for personal use eighteen indispensable items, including a tooth-cleaning willow twig, soap, three monastic robes, a water jug, an alms bowl, a bowing mat, a mendicant's traveling staff, an incense burner, a clothes box, a water filter, a towel, a razor, something to light a fire with, tweezers, a hammock, a sūtra and a rules text, an image of Buddha, and an image of a bodhisattva.

remembering to attend morning and evening consultations with the abbot. Dōgen advocates an old Chinese proverb on paying attention to each and every detail, "A sage does not favor a one-foot tall jewel while neglecting any speck of time [literally, "an inch of shadow],"[22] although there are also several passages in the *Treasury* that criticize those whose attention only lasts for a moment. "Overall," he says, "the regulations of the Buddhas and ancestors must be strictly observed. We should carve the rules of the purity of the monastery on our bones and seal them in our minds. We must seek a life of peace and tranquility by pursuing the way effortlessly [that is, without forethought or preparation]."[23]

What, according to Dōgen's teaching, is the connection between the performance of zazen and following rules for behavior that show a trainee's expanding level of self-control but may appear to be secondary to the mental functions of sitting meditation? Is zazen the primary, if not necessarily exclusive, pathway for the realization of awakening? Do additional forms of practice have a status considered more or less equal to that of zazen, or should they be regarded as spiritual stepping-stones or examples of an outcome of meditation that are of lesser value because they are designed for neophytes, as suggested by many Sōtō sect commentators? Or, as some contemporary interpreters suggest, particularly those associated with Critical Buddhism, should zazen along with various other Zen practices be understood as religious exercises that are relative to Dōgen's primary focus on overarching ethical rather than strictly ritual concerns, a topic expressed at length in the writings included the 12-fascicle edition of the *Treasury* that was composed mainly near the end of Dōgen's life when he apparently put greater emphasis on the doctrine of karmic causality.

Extensive clerical activities endorsed and explained by Dōgen cover the daily customs of reciting chants, cooking meals, cleaning and washing, or enacting temple chores while utilizing implements such as bells, bowls, robes, and scrolls. These practices also include the yearly custom of holding an intensive summer retreat as well as intricate long-term procedures for selecting the most promising successors to receive the sect's transmission from the current abbot. Therefore, one scholar characterizes the *Treasury*'s approach as genuinely moralistic in that:

> It illustrates Dōgen's own belief in Buddhas and tathāgatas, in the power of merit transcending the relative and absolute worlds, as well as in the reality of karma of the past, present, and future, and its functioning

22 Dōgen 2.247.
23 Dōgen 2.486.

> within all of these worlds. Dōgen frequently writes about past Buddhas and ancestors, and the performance of repentance rituals in front of them, he makes numerous mentions of the importance of a sincere heart, a deep and honest devotion, as well as places emphasis on the enactment of rituals with one's sincere mind and body of faith. To Dōgen, there is no distinction between any of these practices, as they equally lead to Buddhahood."[24]

Based on a Sōtō axiom frequently cited by practitioners trying to steady their coordination of mental awareness and bodily comportment that probably was formulated in the medieval period as derived from ideas originally expressed in the *Treasury*, "dignified demeanor is the Buddha Dharma (*iigi soku buppō* 威儀即仏法) and ritual etiquette (literally, transacting the Dharma) is our sect's teaching (*sahō kore shūshi* 作法是宗旨)." The fascicle on "Washing" proclaims, for example, "Ritual etiquette (*sahō* 作法) is itself the sect's teaching (*shūshi* 宗旨), and attaining the way is itself ritual etiquette."[25]

A prime illustration of this principle, as shown in Figure 3.1, occurs regularly today at Eiheiji temple, where novice monks polish the floors of corridors by rushing ahead on their hands and knees while holding a cloth as an exercise that establishes external cleaning as a direct reflection of internal cleansing. The wood becomes so smooth that visitors walking along wearing socks are likely to slip and fall unless they are very careful. In that highly refined setting everyone involved, including the clerics and visitors, take part in an enriched and honorable setting. According to Kaoru Nonomura, who wrote a best-selling account, *Eat Sleep Sit*, about spending a year at age thirty fully immersed in Sōtō Zen practice as a respite from humdrum life in Tokyo, the interfusion of meditation and housekeeping is complete each and every day of the year. "At Eiheiji," he writes, "along with sitting, which is done morning and night, collective manual labor is done twice daily…[by] cleaning the Monks' hall, the washroom, the walking corridor, the common quarters, the work area, and its washroom and toilet." Furthermore, he reports, "it isn't done on special days or in special places, but takes place every single day, whether or not there is any dirt to speak of."[26]

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24 Zuzana Kubovčáková, "Believe It or Not: Dōgen on the Question of Faith," *Studia Orientalia Slovaca* 12/1 (2018): 193–215 (214–215).

25 Dōgen 2.81.

26 Kaoru Nonomura, *Eat Sleep Sit*, trans. Juliet Winters Carpenter (New York: Kodansha USA, 2015), based on an original 1996 publication.

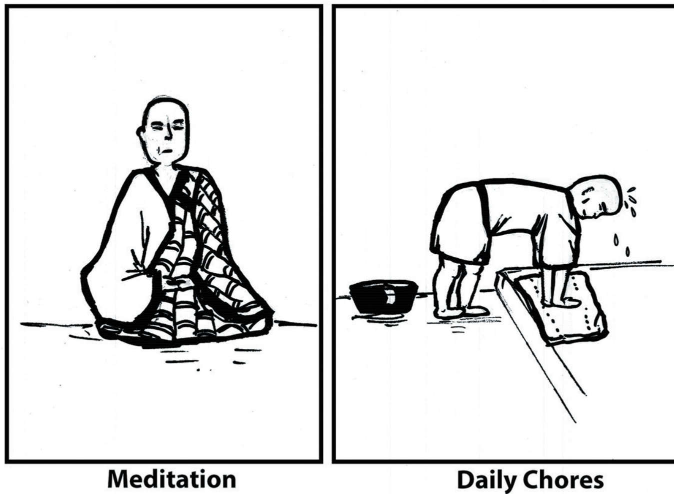

FIGURE 3.1 This illustrates the relation between zazen and *samu* (作務), or chores performed daily in the Zen temple
DRAWN BY MARIA SOL ECHARREN WITH STEVEN HEINE

4 Precepts and Purification

Although the above evidence seems to lean toward the priority of bodily practice, it is clear that Dōgen was significantly influenced by the nearly opposite notion that he learned in China about the so-called "formless precepts," which stresses the activities of monks not in terms of particular deeds (or misdeeds), although this is by no means excluded, but rather as extensions of Buddha-mind continually cultivated through seated meditation. In the opening passage of the fascicle on the "Way-Seeking Mind" (Dōshin 道心) Dōgen writes, "If you want to pursue the 'way of Buddhas' (*butsudō* 佛道), you must first of all develop the way-seeking mind (*dōshin* 作務)."[27] This passage shows that enlightenment is based on inner motivation supporting the authenticity of contemplative awareness and the integrity of unwavering impartiality gained by conducting zazen on a continuing basis.

The *Treasury* considers all activities that are part of collective life in the monastery, including cooking and cleaning or reading and praying, to be

27 Dōgen 2.530.

displays of interior refinement based on the power of just sitting. Even though many passages give an extraordinary level of attention to the finest details of various priestly rituals, Dōgen's vision of practice encompasses the inseparability of individual and communal actions by virtue of subjectivity that is linked to external circumstances. He frequently uses the term *ehō shōhō* (依報正報), which refers to the connection underlying primary causes and secondary conditions or the unity of self and world.[28]

In this vein Dōgen shifts the monastic focus from the traditional East Asian Buddhist question of the number of precepts to be followed based on Vinaya and Mahāyāna codes of conduct, an emphasis that was advocated by Eisai, to purifying the mind as the basis for all modes of behavior. Various passages of the *Treasury* concerning discipline are based on how intentionality, rather than external rules, guides the enactment of deeds. The fascicle on "Thirty-seven Methods of Training to Realize Enlightenment" cites a saying attributed in the *Heap of Jewels Sūtra* (Ch. *Baoji jing*, Jp *Hōsekikyō* 寶積經) to Śākyamuni, who tells his disciple Upāli known for strict adherence to the precepts according to the vehicle of the *śrāvaka*, which refers to a less advanced practitioner who is required to follow strict regulations, "The *śrāvaka* keeps the precepts, but the bodhisattva [a fully accomplished Buddha] breaks the precepts."[29] Also, based on a passage from the *Rules for Purity*, the fascicle on "Washing the Face" maintains that the central point of the precepts is "knowing what it is to uphold or to break them by understanding what is permitted and what is forbidden. Rely only on the holy words of Buddha and do not heed the words of ordinary people."[30] The level of insight that is able to bend or break the rules as deemed appropriate, Dōgen suggests, reflects the essence of Dharma that has been transmitted by all Buddhas and ancestors.

Therefore, the *Treasury* bypasses almost entirely the debate about monks receiving 48 Mahāyāna vis-à-vis 250 Hīnayāna precepts by showing that a more limited set is sufficient if conducted with wholehearted concentration. The fascicle on "Receiving the Precepts" provides instructions, still followed during

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28 Dōgen provides an innovative interpretation of *ehō shōb*ō (依報正; literally, dependent effects and primary effects), as a traditional Buddhist term for the results of past karma reflected in the interiority or character of the individual (*shōb*ō) in terms of how he or she is born into particular external circumstances (*ehō*); see Ōtani Tetsuō, *Dictionary of Key Terms in the Treasury of the True Dharma-Eye and Dōgen's Extensive Record* [*Shōbōgenzō-Eihei Kōroku yōgo jiten* (正法眼蔵—永平広録用語辞典) (Tokyo: Daihōrinkan, 2012), 38.

29 Dōgen 2.149; Dōgen also says, "There is certainly a difference between them that surpasses the separation of the heavens and the earth."

30 Dōgen 2.48.

ordination ceremonies that are held as a crucial part of Sōtō ritual life today, for administering three refuges, three pure precepts, and ten grave precepts.[31] Modern scholars sometimes refer to Dōgen's standpoint as the "precepts of One Mind (*isshin* 一心)," in that there are no meaningful regulations aside from the self-awakening and self-realization of authenticated Buddha-nature permeating all sentient and insentient beings. An implication of the radical reduction in the number of rules is that Dōgen probably assumed most practitioners of his era had already memorized and probably mastered longer lists that helped them understand and appropriate the essential ingredients captured in the sixteen precepts.

In other fascicles Dōgen discusses the role of various ceremonial activities not specified in the precepts that are required of enlightened monks as part of the reclusive regimen. This includes a list provided in the "Thirty-seven Methods of Training to Realize Enlightenment" (*Sanjūshichihon bodaibunpō* 三十七品菩提分法) which covers four types of mindfulness, four kinds of correct efforts, four modes of supra-normal powers, five faculties, five powers, and seven branches of awakening, in addition to the traditional Buddhist eight-fold path. To ensure that followers do not take the quantitative aspect of practice too seriously, Dōgen points out that these methods are the same as, "Riding an ox backwards right into the Buddha hall, then doing one lap around the hall, two laps, three, four or five laps, so that nine times nine equals eighty-two,"[32] thus deliberately defying common sense. He concludes the fascicle by referring to the realization (*genjō* 現成) of a grand total of 1,369 kōans in order to show that ritual practice is no different from the contemplation of case narratives. Also, this seemingly arbitrary amount represents an accurate squaring of the original number of thirty-seven based on the view that each item contains all the others.

This is also the case in the *Treasury*'s discussion of the Mahāyāna practice of the six "perfections" (Skr. *pāramitā*, Jp. *haramitsu* 波羅蜜), or the moral deeds of an awakened person including charity, caring, patience, commitment, contemplation, and wisdom, Dōgen explains that all these modes of behavior are of identical value in that each reflects the continuing process of self-realization. Therefore, the six perfections do not represent a prelude to enlightenment in a

31 The 16 precepts advocated by Dōgen include: taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Samgha; ceasing from evil, doing only what is good, and doing good for the sake of all beings; not killing, not stealing, not lying, not coveting, not deluding, not betraying, not having pride, not possessing objects, not showing anger, and not defaming the three jewels.

32 Dōgen 2.149.

way that is usually symbolized by the image of crossing a river on a raft in order to arrive at the "other-shore" (*higan* 彼岸) representing the goal of nirvāṇa, at which point the vehicle can be tossed aside. By incorporating the philosophy of being-time into his analysis of Zen practice, Dōgen significantly recasts the analogy of the discarded raft:

> Arriving at the other-shore is realization occurring right here-and-now (*genjōkōan*). Do not think that practice (*shugyō* 修行) will lead you to reach the other-shore because the other-shore is realized whenever genuine training takes place. As soon as we begin to practice, that is already an arrival at the other shore, since cultivation is unmistakably bestowed with the capacity to manifest in all realms of the universe.[33]

Dōgen also disparages those who conceive of the exercise of the six perfections in sequential fashion. He argues that any of the stages could come first, middle or last, depending on the level of development of a particular practitioner.[34] He thus maintains, "There are really thirty-six perfections in that every single one contains all of the others."[35] As a typical instance of Zen irony, Dōgen then says that realizing one perfection "is getting hold of snares (literally, 'nets and cages') by using those very snares."[36] In other words, the process of advancing from perfection to perfection without interference or delay is expressed by an image that typically implies a decline from proficiency to deficiency. This is comparable to an emphasis in the *Treasury* on the struggle to disentangle tangled vines by virtue of entanglements.

Another fascicle featuring a list of moral activities is "The Four Exemplary Acts of a Bodhisattva" (Bodaisatta shishōbō 菩提薩埵四摂法) delineating essential items of practice including: (1) giving to others through material offerings to relieve ordinary stress, and Dharma offerings to engage spiritual awareness; (2) providing kind or loving words used to arouse a trainee's mind to seek and accept the way of Buddha; (3) making beneficial actions that create a sense of love and trust between master and disciples in a communal context; and (4) exercising empathy based on the teacher's profound insight that sees clearly the true nature of each being on its own terms in order to act

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33 Dōgen 1.387.

34 The six *pāramitās* in Sanskrit are: *dāna-pāramitā*, śīla-pāramitā, *kṣānti-pāramitā*, *vīrya-pāramitā*, *dhyāna-pāramitā* and *prajñā-pāramitā*; but *dāna* is not necessarily the first nor is *prajñā* the last and also *kṣānti* or *dhyāna*, for example, could come at the beginning.

35 Dōgen 1.386.

36 Dōgen 1.386.

accordingly to facilitate their path to enlightenment. Using the same principle of squaring as in previous passages, Dōgen says that in the final analysis there are really sixteen bodhisattva practices. Additional lists of enlightened accomplishments are provided in two fascicles contained in the 12-fascicle edition that were written in the final stage of Dōgen's life when he knew his end was near. These include "One Hundred and Eight Gates to Awakening" (Ippyaku hachihōmyōon 一百八法明門) and "Eight Realizations of a Great Person" (Hachi dainingaku 八大人覺), both of which borrow heavily from standard Indian Buddhist texts about how an adept faces imminent death.

Dōgen's primary aim in all of these discussions is to move away from the paradigm of keeping track of a scorecard of guidelines involving moral rectitude in order to show that the practice of just sitting, whether or not actually cross-legged, experiences reality unfettered and without ulterior purpose and thereby actualizes awakening at each moment and in every action. This holds true whether the deed is sublime, such as viewing autumn foliage on a distant mountain peak and following the vows of compassion, or mundane, like enacting menial daily tasks such as sweeping a dusty floor or repairing a torn garment. In the fascicle on "Dharma-nature" (*Hōsshō* 法性), a title that can also be read to mean "The Nature of Things" since the term dharma (*hō*) can indicate either Buddhist truth or particular phenomena, Dōgen suggests that everyday activity is just as much the fulfillment of awakened experience as any lofty occurrence. "This very experience here-and-now is none other than Dharma-nature and Dharma-nature is none other than experience here-and-now," he writes in alluding to a passage by master Mazu (馬祖). Therefore, "Wearing clothes or eating meals is the fulfilled concentration of Dharma-nature that wears clothes or eats meals. Realization is Dharma-nature as clothes, it is Dharma-nature as meals, it is Dharma-nature as the act of eating, and it is Dharma-nature as the act of wearing."[37]

5 Thinking, Not Thinking, and Nonthinking

In "The Lancet of Zazen," the main *Treasury* fascicle that articulates a theoretical framework in support of the inner dynamics of meditative practice, various topics concerning the method of just sitting are seen in relation to achieving and maintaining the fundamental condition of nonthinking. This state transcends the ordinary dichotomy of rationality and irrationality through

37 Dōgen 2.28.

continual practice that is applied to each aspect of everyday life. As Dōgen explains, nonthinking does not indicate a deficiency of thought but is a matter of keeping free from the coveting and grasping that tends to accompany ordinary cogitation, while staying fully involved in creative modes of deliberation and discourse.

According to the "King of All Samādhis," Dōgen delineates six aspects from among "the hundreds of thousands of kinds of intellectual activity"[38] that are encompassed by nonthinking:

> There is just sitting of the mind, which is not the same as just sitting of the body. There is just sitting of the body, which is not the same as just sitting of the mind. There is just sitting of casting off body-mind, which is not the same as just sitting 'in order to' cast off body-mind … We should uphold (1) thoughts (*nen*), (2) ideas (*sō*) and (3) perceptions (*kan*), and investigate (4) mind (*shin*), (5) intention (*i*), and (6) consciousness (*shiki*).[39]

Sometimes referred to as an ability to carefully discern distinctions while recognizing the basic unity underlying all apparent differences or a paradoxical non-discriminative discrimination, the state of nonthinking, or thinking-as-not-thinking, reflects the continuing circulation of constructive reflections. This is achieved without lapsing into an attachment to any particular standpoint since all ideas are innately relative and constantly shifting.

One way of clarifying Dōgen's view of the significance of nonthinking for understanding seated meditation involves considering the notion of reflexivity, which refers to the way the human intellect seeks to polish and perfect itself through constantly turning back to try to correct and uplift, and ultimately liberate, its own activity. This represents the effort to illumine self-awareness by means of the self that ordinarily exists in a darkened or disguised state, but nevertheless harbors the ability to transform that condition. The function of reflexive thought reveals either productive or counterproductive features, depending on whether and to what extent the mind is cultivated by developing sustained self-control and self-discipline.

The crucial conundrum that is continually faced by human thinking is summed up by a couple of traditional Buddhist sayings that sometimes appear on plaques at Japanese temples. The first expression suggests, "A troubled self can only be remedied by means of reliance on the self." The attitude of self-reliance taken by itself is not necessarily decisive, however, as it needs

38 Dōgen 2.177.
39 Dōgen 2.179 (numbers added).

to be coordinated with another dictum, "Resolution is not found in terms of self alone, but only through engaging with all phenomena." Therefore, self-reflection implies self-regulation by recognizing that, as part of the interconnected universe, human thoughts and activities are linked to all other beings, whether living or non-living and natural or supernatural (including ghosts, spirits, ethereal Buddhas and mythical bodhisattvas). Dōgen captures with chiasmic wording the crux of the dilemma of perfecting reflexivity in "Realization Here and Now": "Bringing the self forward to practice and confirm multifarious things represents delusion but allowing multifarious things to practice and confirm the self represents awakening (*satori* 悟り)."[40] In other words, the self must overcome the self in terms of itself, but this cannot be accomplished without the self at some point negating itself so as to surpass ordinary awareness through adjusting to all phenomena.

To give a humorous contemporary example of how this situation can affect ordinary human behavior, in *I Love You, Alice B. Toklas*, a romantic comedy from 1968 starring the great comedian Peter Sellers, the actor's awkward lead character is so troubled by some recent events that his easygoing girlfriend grows impatient. She advises him to stop worrying and relax by disregarding or forgetting about the problems with which he is obsessed. "Alright," he responds dutifully, "I will try to remember to forget." The implication is that reflexivity involves either a vicious circle of self-deception, resulting in endless frustration and hopeless futility, or a productive cycle leading out of despair and duplicity toward gaining realization through exercising restraint.

In highlighting the counterproductive side of reflexivity, Dōgen gives an analysis of ignorance in the fascicle on "Dignified Demeanor of Practicing Buddha" by saying, "It is just like losing one's head by accepting its image [in a mirror] as real,"[41] that is, mistaking an appearance or likeness for true existence. This is comparable to "forgetting to make your next move (literally, "concealing one's body but showing your horns")."[42] which refers to inattentiveness while playing a game of chess leading to unforced errors that hand the advantage over to the opponent. The reverse notion of productive reflexivity, Dōgen points out, requires "concealing your body while letting the horns show," which means that by using fewer words, a greater and more strategic meaning is expressed and thereby the upper hand of an exchange gets recovered.

One of many intriguing examples demonstrating Dōgen's discursive prowess in highlighting productive reflexivity involves his unique interpretation in "The

40 Dōgen 1.3.
41 Dōgen 1.67.
42 Dōgen 1.68.

Lancet of Zazen" of a brief yet highly suggestive encounter dialogue involving master Yaoshan (藥山) and an anonymous monk in regard to the value of contemplation.[43] According to the case that is also mentioned in a couple of other writings but without analysis, a novice asks Yaoshan who is deep in meditation, "What do you think about while sitting upright and steadfast (*gotsugotsuchi* 兀兀地)?" The master replies, "I think about not thinking." When the monk probes further, "How do you think about not thinking?" Yaoshan answers enigmatically, "By nonthinking," which can also be rendered as "without or beyond or transcends thinking."[44] The kōan suggests that the state of nonthinking (*hishiryō* 非思量) must be understood in relation to thinking (*shiryō* 思量) and not thinking (*fushiryō* 不思量). But how do these connections play out? Or, as Edo-period commentator Katsudō Honkō put it, how do we understand the state of thinking-nonthinking (*shiryō-hishiryō* 思量非思量), whereby there is no need to deliberate on the meaning of deliberation in that the vicious cycle of ordinary cogitation is cut off or cast away?

Most commentators highlight a progression of stages, from (a) thought as thesis to (b) its antithesis as no thought and, finally, to (c) the culminative synthesis that is beyond thought.[45] Therefore, the typical explanation of the Yaoshan dialogue emphasizes that the master has cleverly outsmarted the inquirer by leading him on a progression from ordinary thinking (*shiryō*) to the stoppage of conceptualization (*fushiryō*) and, finally, to a transcendent state involving absolute negation (*hishiryō*) that lies outside the conventional boundaries of thought and thoughtlessness. At that point the monk is struck speechless, much like the episode in which the supposedly great sūtra commentator Deshan (德山) is rendered mute in his conversation with an old lady selling refreshments by the side of the road.

Dōgen points out that the Yaoshan exchange demarcates a subtle but crucial distinction between two terms indicating negation, "not" (*fu* 不) and "non" (*hi* 非), which are used as modifiers for the noun "thinking." Since these prefixes can appear in other contexts to be almost interchangeable in meaning in a way that is different than the function of this dialogue, it is important to clarify Dōgen's view by keeping in mind his complex discussions in "Buddha-nature" and other fascicles of the significance of nullification involving several kōans that evoke another word for negation, "no" (*mu* 無). This term indicates various aspects of "nothingness" or non-substantiality that surpass the ordinary sense

43 This case is cited but without any explanation or commentary in both *Universal Recommendation* and "Principles of Zazen."

44 Dōgen 1.103.

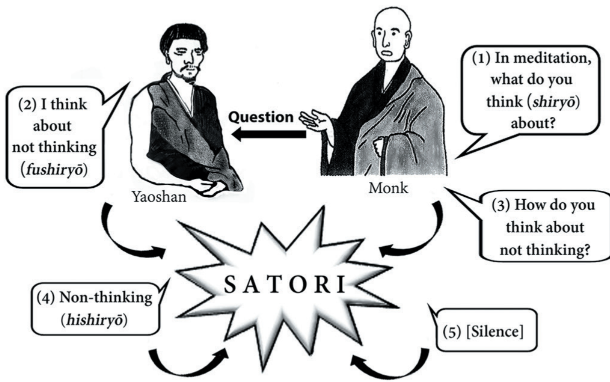
45 See Thomas P. Kasulis, *Zen Action, Zen Person* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981).

of absence, loss, lack or vacuity, which can also apply to the meaning of *fu* and *hi*, especially when the word "what" is understood as quiddity or what-ness rather than indicating a simple query.

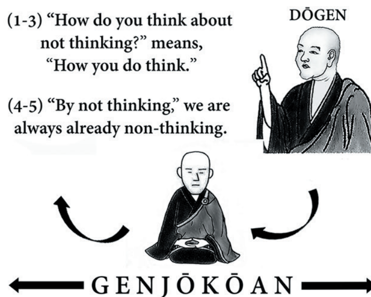
As illustrated in Figure 3.2, Dōgen's extended commentary disputes the conventional interpretative position in several ways typical of the hermeneutics of intrusion. According to Dōgen's view, the monk's query about not thinking does not suggest a naïve sense of doubt but constitutes a remark that contributes to the master's ability to utter a more constructive expression of the meaning of reflexivity than he ordinarily musters. Dōgen asserts that both parties in the

DŌGEN'S VIEW OF KŌANS IN RELATION TO SATORI

Conventional Method Based on Two Kinds of Negation



Dōgen's Interpretative Method Based on Mutually Reciprocal Awakening



According to Dōgen, rather than an unenlightened monk asking an enlightened teacher a question and getting baffled by the answer, both parties are always 'already' enlightened and, therefore, leading each other to an expression of ongoing realization (*genjōkōan*), encompassing but not limited to instantaneous illuminations.

FIGURE 3.2 Contrasting Dōgen's view of the Yaoshan kōan case with conventional approaches
DRAWN BY MARIA SOL ECHARREN WITH STEVEN HEINE

exchange, the superior master and the uninformed monk, are actually speaking from the standpoint of enlightenment and are working together to bring each other to an enhanced understanding without the usual sense of competition involving winner and loser.

This standpoint contradicts interpretations indicating the one-sided defeat of a benighted disciple by an enlightened master. The monk's final silence suggests understanding rather than a state of being dumbstruck. For Dōgen, the goal is not necessarily to reach satori as a one-time breakthrough experience, but to realize the ongoing process of self-reflection and self-reliance based on the power of nonthinking. Dōgen's reversal of the typical view of the exchange as a three-stage progression is based on his creative (mis)reading of the interrogatory sentences to represent declarative statements. He thereby argues that not thinking is actually a form of thinking that incorporates nonthinking:

> The monk asks, "How do you think about not thinking?" Although not thinking [in the sense of an absence] may represent a long-held view, in probing this sentence further the phrasing suggests, "Not thinking is how you do think." It is not the case that there is no thinking whatsoever while sitting upright and steadfast, or that thinking somehow lies outside the activity of sitting upright and steadfast.[46]

By extending the implications of the founder's approach, various leaders of the Sōtō sect's extensive Edo-era tradition of commentaries on the *Treasury* have shown that the whole case can be read not as a set of questions and answers, but as a series of statements with each remark in the dialogue conveying, instead of concealing, some aspect of the overall profundity of the notion that just sitting equals nonthinking. This interpretation understands the dialogue to mean:

1. Monk: "Thinking while sitting upright and steadfast is 'what.'" (兀兀地思量什麼).
2. Yaoshan: "[Such] thinking is not (*fu*) thinking." (思量箇不思量底).
3. Monk: "Not thinking is how you do think." (不思量底如何思量).
4. Yaoshan: "It is thinking of no-particular-thing (*hi*)." (非思量).
5. Silence: [Indicates nothing more needs to be said, rather than a failure to speak].

A key aspect of the *Treasury*'s hermeneutics is to suggest that there is no advancement of consciousness toward a culminative state of transcendence

46 Dōgen 1.103–104.

because three different standpoints referred to in the dialogue—thinking, not thinking, and nonthinking—actually represent a single mode of awareness, that is, several possible ways of considering its differentiable but underlying unified significance. Therefore, for Dōgen, nonthinking is not separable from the realm of thought, but is fully embedded within it while enabling the interactions of thinking and not thinking:

> Regarding Yaoshan's answer, "Nonthinking," although this term may seem crystal clear, when we are thinking of not thinking we are always already in the process of nonthinking … Although sitting upright and steadfast functions as sitting upright and steadfast, how could sitting upright and steadfast not be engaged in thinking about sitting upright and steadfast?[47]

For Dōgen, whether referred to as thinking, not thinking, or nonthinking, once the underlying meaning of self-reflection and self-reliance is fully realized, the state is understood as remaining free from grasping and cannot be categorized as conscious or unconscious. Nonthinking represents the dynamic condition of absolute liberation based on perpetually casting off any subtle clinging to a distinction between thinking and not thinking, while remaining unconfined by either side or their apparent contradiction. According to the remarks of eighteenth-century commentator Menzan Zuihō (面山瑞方), "When we actually sit on a cushion in *hishiryō* (nonthinking), the root of the discriminating mind is cut off, intellectual understanding is exhausted, body-mind are dropped off, and delusion and enlightenment are thrown away. You will know it naturally if you are the person sitting."[48]

Another traditional commentary on the *Treasury* suggests, "The moment of zazen is thinking-not-thinking," and also points out that, "Zazen is total sitting, for which there is no measure."[49] Dōgen further suggests in "The Lancet of Zazen," "Sitting upright and steadfast does not delimit [literally, "measure"] the significance of Buddha, delimit the Dharma, delimit awakening or delimit understanding."[50] Furthermore, "In the realization that was correctly transmitted [from Śākyamuni Buddha all the way down to Yaoshan thirty-six generations later], there was always already thinking about not thinking."[51] In each

47 Dōgen 1.104.
48 Shohaku Okumura, trans., *The Heart of Zen: Practice without Gaining-mind* (Tokyo: Soto-shu Shumucho, 1988), 33.
49 Eitan Bolokan, "Dimensions of Nonduality in Dōgen's Zen," PhD diss. Tel Aviv University (2016). 170.
50 Dōgen 1.104.
51 Dōgen 1.104.

and every generation, Dōgen argues, the true meaning of Zen transmission is put forth in a distinctive way according to the standpoint of nonduality embracing multiplicity and particularity. This level of insight is fundamentally the same as every other way of appropriating Buddhist Dharma.

6 Conclusion

This study of the topic of Zen body, Zen mind in Dōgen's distinctive approach to rules for meditation and monastic training as seen in connection to his analysis of nonthinking suggests several main points. First, even though there is ample evidence of Dōgen's focus on somatic experience, overall, he remains committed to an emphasis on mental capacity or the state-of-mind of the Zen practitioner. For example, in his finely detailed instructions for washing the face, wiping the body, cleaning the feet, or sweeping the floors as chores that are required for the daily deportment of monks in addition to sitting meditation and other monastic rituals, according to the *Treasury*, in the end Dōgen stresses that the question of the proper performance of these activities is based on one's inner attitude, or on subjective awareness rather than tangible results. Dōgen's view thus recalls a saying attributed to the poet Wang Wei (王維), "In landscape paintings, the idea [or intention] precedes the brushstroke" (*fan hua shanshui, yi zai bi xian* 凡畫山水, 意在筆先).

I further maintain, however, that the creative tension between physical and mental realms is not fully resolved in Dōgen's thought, and that this ambivalence leads to shortcomings in his attempt to develop an ethics that effectively applies clerical disciplinary ideals to social circumstances and conflicts. When trying to form the ethical component of his philosophy, Dōgen seems to rely too heavily on a traditional view of karmic causality that operates in mechanical fashion without clarifying the role of interiority or intentionality as key to determining the moral implications of deeds and their ramifications for reacting to retribution by undertaking repentance and reform.

It is important to note that ethical controversies based on interpreting different versions of the *Treasury* have triggered wide-ranging ideological debates that are by no means confined to basic disagreements between traditional or orthodox monks and the irreverent methods of Critical Buddhist commentators, since many other interpretative standpoints are continually being put forth. An interesting compromise approach is found in a book by Nakano Tōzen (中野東禅), a prominent Sōtō priest who was part of the a task force convened in the 1980s to discuss matters of Zen involvement in social discrimination (*sabetsu mondai* 差別問題) that spawned the analysis of the 12-fascicle edition

of the *Treasury* by Critical Buddhism in reaction to a then-urgent social crisis about discrimination. The title of Nakano's more recent work, which literally means *Sunday Treasury* (*Nichiyōbi no Shōbōgenzō* 日曜日の正法眼蔵), suggests that Dōgen's teachings are applicable to the everyday lives of non-clerical followers.[52] Nakano seeks to balance fairness and equitability toward others as key to the process of self-realization by understanding that the relativity and interdependence of all dichotomies, including good and evil, is not simply reducible to a view that opposites reflect "two sides of the same coin," to cite a typical Zen saying.

Moreover, Nakano links an engagement with social affairs to a deep sense of appreciating the consequences of one's action or inaction. His standpoint is encapsulated in a string of chapters that start with the fundamental query, "Who am I?," and cover such timely topics as, "Living on the borderline of having a defiled mind while seeking the realm of purity," "Surpassing conventional selfhood by encountering nonthinking," and "Discovering ways of communing with nature" by probing "What would it mean to live in hell?" Nakano's approach to developing self-discipline as a key to moral decision-making can be summed up by a cryptic saying extracted from the fascicle on "Empty Space" (Kokū 虚空) that highlights evenhandedness and proportionality, "Whether you are being controlled by the twenty-four hours of a day or are in control of the twenty-four hours of a day, you should know that when a stone is large it is large just as it is and when a stone is small it is small just as it is."[53] In this way, Dōgen highlights that mentality prevails yet it remains unclear to what extent this is applicable to an ethical commitment ensuring that intentionality is fully compatible with the results of bodily deeds.

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52 Nakano Tōzen, *Sunday Treasury* (*Nichiyōbi Shōbōgenzō* 日曜日《正法眼藏》) (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō shuppan, 2012).

53 Dōgen 2.212. A different way of applying Dōgen's medieval Buddhist thought to the current environmental crisis following the 2011 Fukushima Triple Disaster is found in Masato Ishida, "Nondualism after Fukushima? Tracing Dōgen's Teaching vis-à-vis Nuclear Disaster," in *Japanese Environmental Philosophy*, eds. J. Baird Callicott and James McRae (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 243–270.

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CHAPTER 4

The Somaesthetics of Discord in the *Vimalakirti*

Kenneth W. Holloway

The Vimalakirti sutra argues against what it sees as an important misconception about Buddhist practice, which is an excessive emphasis on rigid distinctions. An example of this is in the first chapter of the text where the Buddha Sakyamuni challenges the distinction his disciple Shariputra makes between a pure heavenly realm and the ordinary saha world. In fact, these are one and the same. The sutra presents this emphasis on distinctions as a standard narrative for how the dharma is understood, which it then criticizes. This is the central theme of the sutra, which becomes obvious in chapters three and four of the Kumarajiva translation, where a long series of Theravada monks and Mahayana bodhisattvas have their understanding of how to practice the dharma corrected through discordant encounters with the iconoclastic merchant Vimalakirti.

The discord or conflict in these encounters is far more than an entertaining narrative device, it is central to how the dharma is correctly propagated. It is important to understand that this discord continues into later chapters of the text, including the way that nonduality is presented as experiential in Chapter 9. Vimalakirti's silence is an embodied response to being asked to describe nonduality. At its most basic, nonduality is beyond language. However, staying silent when asked a question also places Vimalakirti in a superior position and as such challenges the status of the questioner, Manjusri. This nonduality of silence is consistent with other examples of confrontation. There is an important trend in the sutra where discordant acts produce beneficial impacts. The numerous witnesses who see and hear the discordant encounters that pervade the sutra are suddenly able to achieve rapid progress toward enlightenment. These confrontational encounters are a pedagogical device that conveys the embodied experience necessary to feel the rupturing of rigid distinctions.

Discord is an underlying theme in Chapter 9, which is dedicated to a lengthy exploration of how to practice nonduality. The chapter consists of a series of bodhisattvas who attempt to describe how to enter the dharma gate of nonduality, but they ultimately all fall short of Vimalakirti's explanation through silence. One challenge inherent in describing nonduality is the problem that arises from how one would understand the difference between the perceiver and what is perceived in the world.

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> 妙意菩薩曰。眼色爲二。若知眼性於色不貪不恚不癡。是名寂滅。如是耳聲鼻香舌味身觸意法爲二。若知意性於法不貪不恚不癡。是名寂滅。安住其中。是爲入不二法門[1]
>
> The Bodhisattva Sumati[2] said, Eye and form are a duality. If you know that the nature of the eye is not greedy, angry, or ignorant in regard to form, then this is called nirvana. Like this, the ear and sound, nose and fragrance, tongue and taste, body and touch, mind and dharma are dualities. If you know the nature of the mind is not greedy, angry, or ignorant, then this is called nirvana. Living at peace in this state is entering the dharma gate of nonduality.

Sumati's description of a skillful use of sensory organs as central to nonduality reflects the analysis Edward Drott provides earlier in this volume. The āyatana or internal sense bases interact with ārammaṇa or external sense bases which are being misapprehended as being in a duality. Duality in this description is a state that is built upon the conflict experienced between sense bases. In Sumati's understanding, this state of discord is how a person can comprehend and thus enter the gate of nonduality. There is also important resonance between Sumati's description and several other examples of nonduality in Chapter 9 of the Vimalakirti that contain value-based dualisms. These serve as examples of the type of judgements made of phenomenon that sensory organs should avoid: Seeing things as polluted or pure (*gou jing* 垢淨), good or not good (*shan bushan* 善不善), and being contaminated or uncontaminated (*youlou wulou* 有漏無漏). The main problem with Sumati's response is imagining that nonduality would be a state free from discord.

Stepping back from the question of how to enter the dharma gate of nonduality, it is instructive to consider the manner in which it is described. In Chapter 9 thirty bodhisattvas provide descriptions of nonduality in a similar form as Sumati in that they focus on a particular element of the dharma that is in fact nondual. When the last one finishes, they turn to Manjusri, the wisest Bodhisattva and ask him to explain nonduality, which he does. Finally, Manjusri turns to Vimalakirti and asks him to explain nonduality, but he remains silent. Manjusri then declares that this is the true entrance into nonduality. The

1 Huang Baosheng 黃寶生, ed., *Fan Han Dui Kan Weimojie Suo Shuo Jing* 梵漢對勘維摩詰所說經, Di 1 ban, Fan Han Fo Jing Dui Kan Cong Shu (Beijing: Zhongguo she hui ke xue chu ban she, 2011), 263.

2 The translation of the Bodhisattva as Sumati is from Gómez and Harrison but the rest of this and other translations in this chapter are my own. Luis Gómez and Paul Harrison, trans., *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa The Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (Berkeley: Mangalam Press, 2022), 96.

conclusion of the chapter creates a hierarchy in which the thirty-one bodhisattvas, including Manjusri, all fail to fully express the way to enter into nonduality. As each Bodhisattva attempts and then fails this test of nonduality, a sense of conflict slowly builds. Each bodhisattva struggles to provide a better explanation than the last with the clear implication that the previous answer was not entirely correct. The apex of this increasing discord is Manjusri himself explaining how to enter the gateway of nonduality and then asking Vimalakirti to provide his own description. Vimalakirti's expression of nonduality is a bodily performance of silence, which in fact is a rebuke of Manjusri and all the other Bodhisattvas whose understanding of this dharma gate is imperfect. However, the wrongness of Manjusri and the other thirty bodhisattvas provides the fertile ground of discord through which others can understand nonduality. Chapter 9 concludes by stating that five thousand bodhisattvas were able to enter the dharma gate of nonduality.

Nonduality connects the mind, body, and religion in that the understanding of the dharma becomes materially manifest in a person's physical form. Inhabiting a human body is not represented as imposing limitations on the enlightened person, but instead it provides a platform for cultivation that can transform as needed. In the Vimalakirti, the bodily experience of perceiving the vast interconnections that exist amongst all things in the universe is how people feel and cognize nonduality. This is not an abstract notion; people must see/hear/touch/perceive the world in this way through their bodies. Linguistic exchanges can serve as keys to achieving this connectivity, but they cannot capture it in its entirety. These connections span through what is seen as well as what is felt. Through this understanding, boundaries are transcended in a tandem physical-intellectual experience. This nonduality is experienced through bodies that are not isolatable nor limited by physical boundaries. Every person, along with their constitutive parts, is interconnected to all the others. This entails what I will be terming supernatural displays, which are mechanisms in the sutra for expressing this reality, by showing physical limitations are illusory. This connected world is also inseparable from issues of social justice, particularly as they relate to gender discrimination. The following is a sampling of activities that I will refer to as supernatural: It can involve an individual having their gender changed, the movement of objects via some sort of teleportation, and carrying a large group of people in the palm of Vimalakirti's hand.[3] The lines customarily imposed by gender, geography, and scale are suddenly ruptured.

3 In the Kumarajiva edition, the lion thrones are teleported in Chapter 6, gender change of Shariputra is Chapter 7, and carrying the assembly is in Chapter 11. Huang, *Fan Han Dui Kan Weimojie Suo Shuo Jing*, 191–219, 168–190, 298–325.

Discord in Vimalakirti is simultaneously social and religious, it relates to interpersonal strife and is how the religious process of nonduality is taught. Interestingly, in Sumati's assessment, this nonduality is also clearly an aesthetic issue, it is related to how our senses perceive the world. This social/religious/aesthetic nexus has important parallels with Richard Shusterman's analysis of exceptional aesthetics achievements involving sudden breakthroughs, which can be understood as a connection to the divine. He sees an artist capturing the beauty of the moment as simultaneously having secular and religious meaning. The term he introduces to connect the religious with the social is atmosphere, which he intends as a bridge between these modalities. There is a challenge inherent in working with aspects of Buddhism that relate to its supernatural side. It is difficult to connect the supernatural transformations in the Vimalakirti to other parts of the text that relate to ordinary social practices of the religion in everyday situations. As such, there is a danger of treating the text as having two systems of self-cultivation which are not related to each other. Shusterman's bridging of the divide between art, religion, and aesthetics can provide a framework for understanding similar sensibilities in the Vimalakirti.[4]

1 Everyday Nonduality

As part of its larger project of challenging boundaries, the Vimalakirti shows sacred sources of power, including Manjusri, to be consistently flawed. There is a complex process in the sutra of opposing hierarchy as part of a multi-staged process. Monks, Bodhisattvas, and even the Buddha himself are challenged. This creates a wide-ranging opposition to bias including the basic activities of monastics, such as how they should approach begging for the food they eat,

4 Richard Shusterman, "Aesthetic Experience and the Powers of Possession," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 53, no. 4 (2019): 1–23; Richard Shusterman, "Art and Religion," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 42, no. 3 (2008): 1–18. There are Buddhist miracle tales that are connected to everyday situations. Examples can be found in Campany and Verellen who discuss a genre of Buddhist miracle tales wherein familiar people are saved from calamities by Bodhisattvas. This is quite different from *Vimalakirti* where these magical phenomena are primarily pedagogical tools for dharma propagation. In addition, the power to perform magical acts is not reserved for a few Bodhisattvas but is something that all people can do after reaching a certain level of self-cultivation. Robert Ford Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China*, Classics in East Asian Buddhism. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012); Franciscus Verellen, "'Evidential Miracles in Support of Taoism' the Inversion of a Buddhist Apologetic Tradition in Late Tang China," *T'oung Pao* 78, no. 4 (1992): 217–63.

as well as more advanced aspects such as what constitutes proper meditation. Both examples are found in Chapter 3 of the sutra. The background for this is established in Chapter 2, where it had been revealed that Vimalakirti is manifesting his body as sick so that he can teach people about impermanence. Sakyamuni Buddha wants to send someone to visit him, so he asks his ten most esteemed disciples, one at a time, to call on Vimalakirti. Each disciple rejects the Buddha's request by pointing out that they are unfit for the task. This creates a fascinating situation where not only is the Buddha shown to have failed to properly teach his disciples, but he is not even aware of this failure until it is revealed by Vimalakirti's illness.

Among the various areas where the training of these disciples is shown to be lacking, one interesting area relates to how they understand the basics of bodily practice. Two of the disciples of the Buddha learn about nondiscrimination from Vimalakirti as it relates to the activities of begging and eating. These are Mahakashyapa (Dajiaye 大迦葉) and Subhuti (Xuputi 須菩提). Both monks were in the process of begging for their food when they encountered Vimalakirti. In the case of Mahakashyapa he is begging in a poor village, and Vimalakirti tells him that he should not discriminate against the rich. They also have the need to enjoy the karmic benefit of having monastics coming to their door asking for food. Vimalakirti is described in Chapter 2 of the Sutra as being wealthy, but when Subhuti comes to his house to beg for food, he is also corrected. This means that the solution is not to simply beg in a wealthy area. Instead of focusing on wealth, Subhuti is told in the strongest terms that he must be free from discrimination of any sort prior to being worthy of begging for food. The list of what cannot be discriminated against includes a sampling of core heretical practices and beliefs deeply opposed by Buddhism. This category of wrong things must be understood as mere phantoms and meaningless words. Despite the initial difference in how Mahakashyapa and Subhuti are instructed, they are both told that viewing all food as essentially the same is fundamental to seeing all things as equal.

The specifics of how equality pertains to consuming food is an interesting aspect of how somaesthetics are fundamental to this section of the sutra. Mahakashyapa is told that when the aroma of food is smelled, it should be perceived as no different from regular air. "What is fragrant should be the same as the wind, what is tasted should not have discrimination." 所嗅香與風等。所食味不分別.[5] This process involves perceiving an attractive aesthetic category and its opposite as essentially the same. In the case of Subhuti, the connection

5 Kumarajiva, T14.0475, 0540a25.

between appreciating all food as equal is also said to be intimately related to the ability to perceive all things as equal. “If you can treat all food equally all matter can also be seen as equal. If all matter is treated equally, all food can also be seen as equal.” 若能於食等者諸法亦等. 諸法等者於食亦等.[6] Following this, both are told very similar messages about how to act once the world is seen as equality. This involves embracing what is bad as though it were good. Mahakashyapa is told the following.

> If you do not abandon the eight evils[7] you enter the eight enlightenments, through evil images you enter the upright dharma, with one meal feed all. Make offerings to the Buddhas and the multitude of sages. Then you can eat.
>
> 若能不捨八邪入八解脫。以邪相入正法。以一食施一切。供養諸佛及眾賢聖。然後可食.[8]

What the first sentence of the quote is arguing is that there should be no differentiation between actions that assist in the process of self-cultivation and those that would harm it. The specific activity that is connected to this is how a monastic goes about begging for food, a fundamental element of the Vinaya rules they have sworn to follow in Theravada Buddhism. Interestingly, Richard Mather argues that this Buddhist practice is abandoned by Mahayana Buddhists in India just over two thousand years ago. If he is correct, then the decline of rules concerning begging is only slightly older than the earliest documented edition of the *Vimalakirti*. What is certain is that when Buddhism entered China, the practice of begging was never adopted.[9] Tying the avoidance of the unpopular practice of begging for food with a heightened appreciation of equality shows the sutra contributing to or possibly responding to dominant views of Buddhism in this early period.

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6 Kumarajiva, T14.0475, 0540b18.

7 The translation of evil (*xie* 邪) is somewhat problematic. What I translate as Eight Evils is the opposite of the Eightfold Path: Right views, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, concentration. Evil here is dysfunctional behavior that moves a person further away from enlightenment. It has no real connection to evil in the western sense of something that battles the good.

8 Kumarajiva, T14.0475, 0540a25.

9 Richard B. Mather, “The Bonze’s Begging Bowl: Eating Practices in Buddhist Monasteries of Medieval India and China,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101, no. 4 (1981): 418; John Kieschnick, “Buddhist Vegetarianism in China,” in *Of Tripod and Palate Food, Politics and Religion in Traditional China*, ed. Roel Sterckx, Conference on Food and Religion in Traditional China (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

A more fundamental aspect of the above quotation is that Vimalakirti is providing a corrective to a student of the Buddha on a core tenet of his daily practice. As such this passage challenges the institutionally derived authority of the Buddha and his disciples, which makes it a significant example of iconoclasm in this sutra. The normal hierarchical structure of Buddhism is challenged on multiple levels simultaneously. There is a challenge to how Mahakashyapa should be acting as well as more broadly, how one should go about judging whether or not actions are orthodox. An ordinary way of ascribing orthodoxy would be if it were being done by a leading disciple and in keeping with the Buddha's teaching. Such an ordinary approach is opposed by the *Vimalakirti* sutra.

The advice given to Mahakashyapa is importantly similar to the next section where Vimalakirti gives advice to Subhuti.

> If Subhuti, you do not break from lewdness, anger, and stupidity but also do not entirely join with them. Do not treat the body as harmful and follow the unity of nature. Not extinguishing ignorance and love yet giving rise to enlightenment. Rely on the appearance of the Five Defilements to achieve enlightenment. Do not become enlightened do not stay bound. Do not see the Four Noble Truths and do not avoid seeing them. Do not obtain karmic results, do not avoid karmic results. Do not attain rebirth, do not depart from rebirth. Do not be a sage, do not avoid sage hood. Although you master the dharma, you stay away from the appearance of dharma. Now you can eat.
>
> 若須菩提。不斷婬怒癡亦不與俱。不壞於身而隨一相。不滅癡愛起於明脫。以五逆相而得解脫。亦不解不縛。不見四諦非不見諦。非得果非不得果。非凡夫非離凡夫法。非聖人非不聖人。雖成就一切法而離諸法相。乃可取食.[10]

This passage is filled with dualities, which resemble those that were mentioned at the start of this chapter: polluted or pure, good or not good, being contaminated or uncontaminated. As *Vimalakirti* Chapter 9 makes clear, the goal is to enter the dharma gate of nonduality. The text does not state explicitly what this entails, but the conclusion of the passage once again points to its performative side, "Now you can eat." Eating is part of the daily ritualized activity of a monastic that extends to something shared with lay society. Vimalakirti is the layperson here and his instructions on eating are intended for a monastic

10 Kumarajiva, T14.0475, 0540b18.

so this is an example of a connection between sacred and secular elements of society. Throughout the Vimalakirti sutra, the eponymous protagonist goes about the activities of his daily life, while correcting the monastics and bodhisattvas he encounters. As Vimalakirti embodies the highest understanding of nonduality in Chapter 9, how he acts elsewhere provides clues to how a life of nonduality is inseparable from conflict.

It is also possible to read the above quotation as following a progression from an initial stage where one simply remains attached to commonly encountered negative tendencies such as lewdness and anger. This leads to the next level of attainment, where performing the most heinous of evil deeds is the path to enlightenment. I see the apogee of this as committing the unforgivable sins translated here as the Five Defilements (*wuni* 五逆), which are killing one's father, mother, an Arhat, causing a Buddha to bleed, and causing disunity in the Sangha.[11] Performing any of these actions will normally result in a person being reborn in hell to suffer the worst imaginable punishments.

Later in Chapter 8 of the *Vimalakirti*, there is another passage that describes how it is acceptable for enlightened beings to commit heinous transgressions.

> At that time Manjusri asked Vimalakirti saying. "How do bodhisattvas enter into the Buddha's Way?" Vimalakirti said: "If bodhisattvas act contrary to the way, this is how they enter into the Buddha's Way." Manjusri asked again: "How do bodhisattvas act contrary to the Way?" Vimalakirti replied: "Bodhisattvas perform the five acts leading directly to hell but has no anger and hate. They arrive in hell without the various feelings of guilt and defilement. Being born as an animal, they are without ignorance, arrogance, and other excesses."
>
> 爾時文殊師利問維摩詰言。菩薩云何通達佛道。維摩詰言。若菩薩行於非道。是爲通達佛道。又問。云何菩薩行於非道。答曰。若菩薩行五無間而無惱恚。至于地獄無諸罪垢。至于畜生無有無明憍慢等過.[12]

It is important to remain cognizant of the context in which these evil deeds are committed, and that is within the larger project of providing benefit to others in society. The earliest example of this is in the first chapter of the sutra

11 For a general discussion of bodhisattvas committing sins to help others see Susanne Mrozik, "The Vital Points of the Bodhisattva Discipline," in *Virtuous Bodies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 27–29. A general discussion of the Five Defilements is in Jonathan A. Silk, "Good and Evil in Indian Buddhism: The Five Sins of Immediate Retribution," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 35, no. 3 (2007): 253–86.

12 Kumarajiva, T14.0475, 0548c29-0549a02.

where Bodhisattvas obtain their pure lands by helping all beings. This creates an equivalency between the individual and the pure land since one cannot be obtained without the other. However, this does not mean that good and evil actions are equated. Instead, evil deeds are at times a necessary part of what a bodhisattva must do in order to reach people who have been damned to hell. This distinction is important because in scholarship on Tiantai Buddhism, Brook Ziporyn has argued for an equivalency between good and evil. This passage of the Vimalakirti reflects what David Loy argued for in his critical review of Ziporyn's work where he shows that equating good and evil is incorrect.[13] In the Vimalakirti, there is a consistent commitment to helping all beings in a system framed by Mahayana religious values, and as such the Five Defilements are only acceptable if they are performed by a bodhisattva as part of saving others.

Helping others relates to the issue of social engagement, an important element of Chapter 3 of the Vimalakirti sutra. The previously discussed examples of Mahakashyapa and Subhuti are the third and fourth disciples discussed in the chapter. While it is not possible to survey all ten here, it is instructive to discuss the first one where Shariputra is admonished to remain engaged with society. In this encounter, Shariputra is sitting under a tree meditating when Vimalakirti happens upon him. The following is where Vimalakirti explains why it is wrong to meditate in this manner.

> 'Hey Shariputra, it is not necessary to sit when you meditate. Your meditation is not manifesting body or thoughts in this tripart world. The following is true meditation: Not arising from the cessation or concentration but your appearance has an exalted manner. This is true meditation: Not departing from the way and dharma but appearing in the affairs of a common person.'
>
> 唯舍利弗。不必是坐爲宴坐也。夫宴坐者。不於三界現身意。是爲宴坐。不起滅定而現諸威儀。是爲宴坐。不捨道法而現凡夫事.[14]

The description of meditation shares a common rhetorical device with the previously discussion of Mahakashyapa and Subhuti. A person should engage

13 David Loy, "Evil and/or/as the Good: Omnicentrism, Intersubjectivity, and Value Paradox in Tiantai Buddhist Thought," *Philosophy East and West* 54, no. 1 (2004): 99–103; Brook Ziporyn, "Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Tiantai Doctrine of Evil as the Good: A Response to David R. Loy," *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 2 (2005): 329–47; David R. Loy, "Evil as the Good? A Reply to Brook Ziporyn," *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 2 (2005): 348–52.

14 Kumarajiva, T14.0475, 0539c17.

with the world when eating and meditating. All three examples employ binary opposites as a device that include both normative Buddhist principles and their obverse. The mistake Shariputra is making is not merely sitting under a tree. Instead, the problem results from the implication that this is the exclusive way that meditation should be performed. In the example of Shariputra, Vimalakirti's corrective is startling, and this opens new avenues for him to understand this important Buddhist practice. The instances of eating are similar. They contain pairs of binary opposites that conclude with a directive from Vimalakirti that embracing these opposing states are a prerequisite for a person eating. This focus on the mundane act of eating is a reminder of the broad valuing of engagement in the sutra.

This quote where Vimalakirti corrects Shariputra on meditation is famous for being referenced in the Platform Sutra. "If sitting in meditation for a long time without moving is correct, then what of Shariputra's meditation in the forest being scolded by Vimalakirti." 若言常坐不動是，只如舍利弗宴坐林中，却被維摩詰訶.[15] According to Peter Gregory, the *Platform Sutra* quotes the *Vimalakirti* more frequently than any other sutra. This means that what initially appears as an iconoclastic corrective in the *Vimalakirti* eventually becomes a source of orthodoxy. As a side note, Gregory also sees the *Vimalakirti* sutra as a text which is primarily interested in criticizing Hinayana teachings.[16] The sutra does contain specific instances where it criticizes Hinayana teaching, and one example is in the third chapter of the sutra. However, it is also in this third chapter that the Buddha himself is subjected to the repeated humiliation of having requests he directs to his top ten disciples rejected. Each time he asks a disciple to visit Vimalakirti this request is summarily denied. Even the Buddha's own son Rahula refuses his request. In addition, the fourth chapter of the sutra criticizes Mahayana Bodhisattvas, including Maitreya who will be a Buddha in the future. Rather than seeing the text as narrowly focused on questions of institutional affiliation, there is far more evidence that the text was famous in China for its interest in social engagement.[17] Understanding how the text was read in this manner requires turning to its representation in art.

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15 Platform Sutra, T48.2008, 0352c25.

16 Peter N. Gregory, "The *Platform Sūtra* as the Sudden Teaching," in *Readings of the Platform Sūtra*, ed. Morten Schlütter and Stephen F. Teiser (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 79, 83–84.

17 One example of how social engagement becomes part of mainstream Buddhist ideology is in the Song Dynasty. Here, a major debate arose between the Caodong and Linji sects over which group was more engaged with social problems of the day. The two sects criticized each other as doing nothing but sitting in meditation and failing to be engaged with the world. Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and*

2 The Aesthetics of Discord

Early representations of the *Vimalakirti* are abundant, and they consistently depict acts that are supernatural.[18] The sutra was a popular subject of Buddhist art. It was carved on stele, featured on cave walls, and was the subject of formal paintings. Understanding that one particular scene from the sutra was consistently selected as the central feature of its representation allows a refocusing of the reading of the sutra upon this area celebrated in art. This helps ground the analysis by connecting its religious message with the text's aesthetic orientation.

Artistic representations of the sutra become quickly standardized in Sixth Century China. An early stele that was inscribed by the Xiongnu 匈奴 Helian Ziyue 赫連子悅 (ca. 501–573) contains elements that remain standard centuries later in the Dunhuang cave complex.[19] The consistency of this standardization has even caused a questioning of the vibrancy of later Buddhist art in China.

> Although the view that orthodox Buddhism and Buddhist art declined and became stagnant in China after the eighth century generally holds true, the Representation of Mt. Wutai will show that, on the contrary, development in Buddhist doctrine and creativity in expression may still be found in post-Tang (618–907) Buddhist art, but in a different guise.[20]

There was a tendency in the 1990s to overemphasize the weight of traditional standards as part of a negative judgement of Chinese aesthetics, even when demonstrating important exceptions to the rule, as is the case in Wong's article. This trend of seeing China as a time capsule is most famous in the field of

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the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 22 (Honolulu: Hawaii, Kuroda Institute, 2008).

18 Heyrman for example identifies 168 extant representations of Vimalakirti from the early fifth through late twelfth centuries including those in China and Japan. Laura Gardner Heyrman, *The Meeting of Vimalakirti and Manjusri: Chinese innovations in Buddhist iconography* (PhD diss. University of Minnesota, 1994), 62.

19 Bunker cites Pinyang Cave 3 at Longmen which she states was finished in 523 as her earliest example of a standardized representation. It features the goddess who instructs Shariputra on gender equality. See Hsu for a discussion of the Helian Ziyue stele, which she refers to using the name of Trübner, the western art collector who purchased it. Emma C. Bunker, "Early Chinese Representations of Vimalakīrti," *Artibus Asiae* 30, no. 1 (1968): 32; Eileen Hsiang-Ling Hsu, "The Trübner Stele Re-Examined: Epigraphic and Literary Evidence," *Artibus Asiae* 67, no. 2 (2007): 177–99.

20 Dorothy C. Wong, "A Reassessment of the Representation of Mt. Wutai from Dunhuang Cave 61," *Archives of Asian Art* 46 (1993): 27.

architectural history where prior to the work of Liang Sicheng it was believed that building styles had remained largely constant over the past millennium.[21] Today it is recognized that the Song praise of the Tang represented a process of selective editing and repurposing. This process of interacting with long standing traditions also produced innovations in art. Part of this understanding of the Chinese world as dynamic is described by Qiang Ning, who discusses a painting from 925 CE, on the north entrance wall of cave 220. Here an inscription states that Manjusri is now being depicted in a "new style" (*xinyang* 新樣).[22] This is part of the emergence of Manjusri as the focus of devotion, which is also important because of his central his role as a source of religious authority in the *Vimalakirti* sutra.

Depictions of the *Vimalakirti* are prominently featured in Dunhuang caves that are constructed by wealthy families for their own practice of Buddhism and are representations of their devotion to the religion. One example is the famous Zhai Family Cave, which is Dunhuang Cave 220. This cave has four walls, and one is dedicated to *Vimalakirti*. Entering the cave, you face the west wall, which has a niche containing a group of statues with Sakyamuni at the center. If you turn full circle to face the entrance passage, the east wall is dominated by a painting that comes to be known as the Nonduality Painting of the *Vimalakirti* sutra.[23] This painting spans the entrance passage to the cave, which the visitor would have just entered. One fascinating aspect of this is that by entering through the painting, the visitor is in fact literally entering a gateway surrounded by a depiction of nonduality. Near the center of the scene on either side of the doorway, are Shariputra and the Goddess, who are the main characters at this moment in the sutra.

Shariputra is easily identifiable by the presence of flowers on his robe even though much of his other features are obscured. Interestingly, he is the second figure on the left of the center of the painting, which is interrupted by the

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21 Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, "The Tang Architectural Icon and the Politics of Chinese Architectural History," *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 2 (2004): 229.

22 For the engagement between Buddhism and Song Politics, see Schlütter. Qiang Ning, *Art, Religion, and Politics in Medieval China: The Dunhuang Cave of the Zhai Family* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 77; Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*.

23 This standard representation of the Vimalakirti sutra comes to be known as the Nonduality Painting (*Bu er tu* 不二圖) as early as the 11th century. There is a reference in a poem by Li Mixun 李彌遜 (1082–1153) who saw a painting that he refers to as the Vimalakirti Manjusri Nonduality Painting (*Weimo Wenshu bu er tu* 維摩文殊不二圖). For a discussion see Chen Liu, "Flowers Bloom and Fall: Representation of 'The Vimalakirti Sutra' In Traditional Chinese Painting" (Ph.D., United States – Arizona, Arizona State University, 2011), 96. VR images of the cave can be found here "Digital Dunhuang - Mogao Grottoes Cave 220," accessed July 22, 2022, https://www.e-dunhuang.com/cave/10.0001/0001.0001.0220.

doorway. In a break with symmetry, the goddess is the first figure on the right of the doorway. She can be identified by her right hand which is upturned in the motion of casting a flower into the air. The painting overall has deteriorated considerably, and the first figure on the left of the doorway has almost entirely crumbled from the wall. This doorway accentuates an important organizational device used in the sutra and this is its discussion of duality and nonduality. At a basic level, there is a hierarchy where nonduality supersedes duality. It is a higher level, or a conceptual perspective, which is occupied by the lesson of gender equality being taught by the goddess on the right to Shariputra on the left. Her teaching bridges the doorway and the unified representation of nonduality is amplified.

However, there is also a level beyond what could be considered higher. This is the embodied practice of the *Vimalakirti*. It connects the sutra to social and political issues, which is represented by an emperor and his retinue who appear below the Bodhisattva of Wisdom Manjusri, also on the left side of the painting. On the right side of the painting, mirroring Manjusri, Vimalakirti is seated under a canopy. Below him is a group of foreign dignitaries who are the counterparts to the Chinese emperor. The painting is of a world that is divided, in this case left and right. Interestingly, the moment being captured is one where the right side represents those who are superior in their understanding of the dharma. This is part of a goal of challenging normative discourses that impede an appreciation of equality. The specific normative idea being challenged is the expectation that in a Buddhist painting, a Bodhisattva surrounded by monks should be the focus of veneration. It could also be expected that a layperson and a woman would be present in only a supporting role, perhaps seekers of the dharma or a decorative element respectively. This expectation of lower status is underscored and challenged by the foreign retinue on the right side of the painting.

This pairing of a foreign retinue with *Vimalakirti* is repeated nine times between the Tang and the Northern Song.[24] The first instance according to Heyrman is Dunhuang Cave 103, which interestingly also appears on the east wall bridging the entrance to the cave. The result of this pairing is that the Chinese Emperor consistently appears on the side of the painting that is occupied by people with a lower understanding of the dharma. Manjusri sits in a stately manner, but he is also there to learn, not to teach. It would not make sense for the patron of Cave 103 to intentionally marginalize the statutes of the

24 Heyrman, *The Meeting of Vimalakirti and Manjusri*, 245.

Chinese Emperor by placing him on the inferior side of the painting. Instead, there must be a different message being conveyed by the scene.

Despite the *Vimalakirti* sutra focusing on the brilliance of the eponymous layman, the text serves as a catalyst for the veneration of Manjusri. In contrast to other sutras where Manjusri is merely part of a group of Bodhisattvas, in the *Vimalakirti* sutra he is singled out for praise. The process of praising Manjusri takes on the fascinating form of simultaneously denigrating others who are compared negatively. There is a slow building of anticipation toward Manjusri's appearance in the sutra that spans its third and fourth chapters. These chapters contain recollections of encounters with the ten most esteemed disciples of the Buddha along with four Bodhisattvas. Sakyamuni Buddha asks these fourteen people to go visit the ailing Vimalakirti to ask about his health. The seemingly simple request is refused by each person. None are willing to re-encounter Vimalakirti because each had been humiliated on a previous meeting. Finally, the Buddha asks Manjusri. Despite some hesitation, he agrees to visit Vimalakirti. However, in the ninth chapter he is shown to know less than Vimalakirti. A series of thirty Bodhisattvas attempt to define nonduality and fail. After their failed attempts, Manjusri provides a definition of nondiscrimination and then turns to Vimalakirti to ask how he would define this concept. Vimalakirti remains silent which Manjusri interprets as the ultimate expression of nondiscrimination. It is beyond words. At this moment, Vimalakirti's superiority to Manjusri is undeniable.

Even though the sutra clearly shows that Manjusri's understanding is lower than Vimalakirti's, there is no cult of veneration that develops around this layperson. Instead, it is understood that Vimalakirti as a layperson is a universal model for devotion to Buddhism, and Manjusri becomes one foci of this pantheon that is selected for worship. The path to higher understanding of equality requires starting with the popular process of Bodhisattva veneration. Once this hierarchy of veneration is established, a process of iconoclasm creates an inversion wherein devotees come to realize that they are no different from the deities who are the objects of their devotion. One way to understand this iconoclasm is to consider Chapter 8 of the Sutra where it discusses the importance of the lotus flower. It states that lotuses do not grow in pristine environments, instead they are nourished by filth and mud. Conflict is a necessity for self-cultivation so having Manjusri as an object of veneration who can then be debased is an inseparable component of the process of achieving enlightenment. The sutra believes that this process can have a wide impact. The number of people who dedicate themselves to enlightenment at one moment reaches one hundred thousand at the end of Chapter 10, and Chapter 1 states that eighty-four thousand people achieve this.

3 Supernatural Conflict

Shariputra experiences interpersonal conflict with Vimalakirti more frequently and dramatically than any other figure in the sutra. This consistent trend of conflict is important for understanding the interactions that occur in Chapter 9 and how it connects with the rest of the sutra. Through exploring conflict in Vimalakirti, it is possible to reframe this seemingly negative experience as an enabling function for dharma propagation. One particularly challenging type of negative experience that is described in the sutra involves events that depart sharply from mundane human experience. There are several instances where the sutra features people with what in modern terms would be seen as miraculous powers: abilities that defy what could be characterized as the limits of comprehension. In fact, an alternative title for the sutra is *The Dharma Gate of Incomprehensible Liberation* (不可思議解脱法門 Bukesiyi jietuo famen). Pushing consciousness beyond what can be comprehended by logic and reason is part of the purpose of the sutra. This is accomplished through describing situations where the normal physical limitations of the body suddenly do not apply; they are breakthrough moments.

Arriving at this connected state requires confrontation, which a reader of the *Vimalakirti* sutra experiences second-hand through the retelling of numerous interpersonal clashes in the text. This confrontation must be understood as more than a psychological experience, it is also a religious breakthrough. These religious breakthroughs are where people in the sutra are described as either achieving enlightenment or deciding to dedicate their lives unswervingly to its pursuit. There is an important corollary to this in Richard Shusterman's analysis of the process of creating artwork. He described the muse as an actual spirit that possesses the artist's body to enable a person to achieve creative breakthroughs. Aesthetic experience in this mode has religious meaning and is not purely rational, which has caused critics such as Pierre Bourdieu to deny its value for the study of art. As a strategy for affirming the value of this aspect of artistic creativity, Shusterman describes and then analyzes the frenzy involved in entering such an artistic state. In this, the bodily dimension provides a solid platform for Shusterman's analysis of atmosphere, which bridges the social and the religious. This is in stark contrast to others he discusses who see bodily experience as nothing but a source of hopeless subjectivity.[25]

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25 Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 75; Shusterman, "Aesthetic Experience and the Powers of Possession."

In the *Vimalakirti*, breakthrough religious moments consistently involve tumultuous social experiences that arise from interpersonal confrontation and its partner, negative affect. This social confrontation, far from being negative in any simplistic way, is repeatedly associated with an individual's progress toward religious enlightenment. One instance of confrontation in Chapter 7 involves a type of spirit possession, where a goddess takes control of Shariputra's consciousness and moves it into her own female body. Simultaneously, she takes her own consciousness and transfers it into Shariputra's male body. It is important to clarify that this term "consciousness" is not a translation of a Chinese word from the text. It is a modern term I am using to describe the scene of the goddess and Shariputra switching bodies. This thing that is switched is what would today be termed their consciousness. This suddenly new bodily experience, akin to the above frenzied state of an artist, forces Shariputra to confront and then abandon his gender bias. Attaining this breakthrough, wherein the mental and physical are recognized as interconnected is shown to be dependent upon the altered state he experiences, including his confusion and consternation. As a result of this negative experience, Shariputra learns that gender is not binary: The dharma transcends dualistic gender distinctions.

This situation of a person's consciousness or mental state being moved to another body, is part of a group of unusual pedagogical devices the text uses that involve what I categorize as supernatural techniques. These techniques are tools that enable individuals to expand their own consciousness. Shariputra's learning about gender equality through his own experience of transformation reflects a view that bodily changes are intertwined with expansions in understanding. Conversely, an expanded understanding of the dharma can also be expressed through bodily changes. One example of this is in Chapter 6 of the sutra where the corporal bodies of enlightened individuals grow to become gigantic in size. The reason for this transformation is that upon Vimalakirti's request, a series of thrones have been supernaturally transported into his room for those in attendance to sit upon. These thrones are from a world which is inhabited by beings who are giants, and the thrones are thus gigantic in size. This represents an obstacle that is overcome on two levels. First, the thrones fit into his room without it becoming cramped. Secondly, for those who are already enlightened, they simply grow their bodies so they can sit down comfortably. Shariputra and others who have yet to achieve enlightenment remain frustrated until they are told that by performing prostrations, core elements of Buddhist ritual, their bodies will gain the ability to grow to the size necessary to sit upon the thrones.

This transformation of human bodies is in fact central to the propagation of the dharma in Chapter 7, Regarding Beings 觀眾生品 Guan zhongsheng pin,

which can be seen as the climax of the text. In this chapter, a being simply referred to as the goddess causes herself to appear in the room quite suddenly. She informs those who were assembled there that she had been there listening all along but had chosen to remain invisible through the use of her supernatural powers. Listening to the dialogue between Manjusri and Vimalakirti became increasingly enjoyable. Because of this she decided that she wanted to make an appearance so as to share her enjoyment of the debate with everyone present. The medium she selects for conveying this enjoyment is flower petals. She scatters them about the room, which is remembered in the colloquialism 天女散花 *tiannu sanhua* "The Goddess Scatters Flowers." Amongst the fully enlightened people in the room, these flowers simply fall to the floor. Unfortunately for Shariputra, he is but a monk. The flowers adhere to his body, which causes him deep consternation when he is unable to remove them.

The goddess initiates a conversation with Shariputra by asking why he is working so hard at removing the flowers. Shariputra responds that the flowers are not in accordance with the dharma (*bu rufa* 不如法). His point can be understood as saying that as a monk he is not supposed to adorn his body and he considers flowers as an adornment, so they are improper. This position on the flowers can be defended with the vinaya rules of monastics, but the goddess addresses it from the deeper issue of hierarchy and discrimination. The goddess is looking at the problem from a holistic perspective. There is a higher purpose for such rules, and that is to assist people in achieving the broader objectives of Buddhism, which demands equality. After the flower issue is settled, there is the following dialogue.

> Shariputra said, "Why do you not transform your female body?" The goddess said: "For the past 12 years I have been seeking the female form but could not obtain it. What is there to change? As an example, if a magician conjured a phantom woman, and someone asked, 'why not transform your female body' would that be a legitimate question?" Shariputra said: "no, phantoms lack fixed forms, what is there to change?" The goddess said: "all the various dharmas are like this, they lack a set form, why do you ask about my not transforming my female body?" At that time the goddess used here supernatural powers to transform Shariputra so he appeared as the goddess. The goddess transformed herself to look like Shariputra and asked saying "Why do you not transform your female body?" Shariputra, appearing as a goddess, replied saying "I do not know how I transformed into a woman?" The goddess replied "Shariputra, if you can transform this female body, then all women will be able to transform. If Shariputra, who is not female looks like a woman, then all females are also in

> the same situation. Although appearing in female form, but they are not female. Therefore, the Buddha says all the various dharmas are neither male nor female." At that time the goddess withdrew her supernatural power, Shariputra's body returned to its former state. The goddess asked Shariputra saying "What about your body's appearance?" Shariputra said: "The appearance of my female body is not present and also not absent." The goddess said: "All the various dharmas are also like this, they are not present and also not absent. These not present and not absent things, is what the Buddha described."

> 舍利弗言：「汝何以不轉女身？」天曰：「我從十二年來，求女人相了不可得。當何所轉？譬如幻師化作幻女，若有人問：『何以不轉女身？』是人爲正問不？」舍利弗言：「不也！幻無定相，當何所轉？」天曰：「一切諸法亦復如是，無有定相，云何乃問不轉女身？」即時天女以神通力變舍利弗，令如天女。天自化身如舍利弗，而問言：「何以不轉女身？」舍利弗以天女像而答言：「我今不知何轉而變爲女身？」天曰：「舍利弗！若能轉此女身，則一切女人亦當能轉。如舍利弗非女而現女身，一切女人亦復如是。雖現女身，而非女也。是故，佛說一切諸法非男非女。」即時天女還攝神力，舍利弗身還復如故。天問舍利弗：「女身色相今何所在？」舍利弗言：「女身色相無在無不在。」天曰：「一切諸法，亦復如是，無在無不在。夫無在無不在者，佛所說也。」[26]

The above dialogue began to be depicted with frequency in the Tang Dynasty and by the Song it started to be represented independently. By the 18th century its popularity underwent a significant increase, which continued to at least the early 20th century. "Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flowers" was a play written to explore this scene from a woman's perspective more fully in 1917. The role of the goddess was first performed by the male actor Mei Lanfang in Beijing in 1919, and Paul Demiéville saw the play in 1920.[27]

At the heart of the role of the goddess is her ability to move her consciousness into the body of Shariputra and simultaneously move his consciousness into her own body. The role of the supernatural connects in interesting ways

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26 Huang, *Fan Han Dui Kan Weimojie Suo Shuo Jing*, 214–219.

27 Paul Demiéville (1895–1979) Sara Boin-Webb trans., "Vimalakīrti in China" *Buddhist Studies Review* 21.2 (2004): 179–196; Sophia Tingting Zhao, "Reorienting the gaze in Mei Lanfang's lyrical theatre: performing female interiority" *Asian Theatre Journal* 33.2 (2016): 395–419; Liu, "Flowers Bloom and Fall"; Heyrman, *The Meeting of Vimalakirti and Manjusri*.

with several other parts of the sutra. It is through the supernatural transformation of his body that Shariputra comes to understand the true reality of the human body. Previously he believed that males were superior, but through his experience with being transformed he understands that the female gender is neither present nor absent. The supernatural enables him to experience a truth that had previously been beyond his grasp. As such, it would be wrong to consider the role of supernatural as ancillary. It is on the contrary a prerequisite for Shariputra to achieve true understanding.

The importance of this supernatural ability has been discussed by Edward Hamlin who sees it as an example of upaya. This term means skillful means, which has several meanings. The one he is most interested in is the idea that teachings must be adapted to suite the understanding of the audience. Hamlin sees the function of this as resulting from some people being best persuaded by an intellectual discourse, but others are more easily convinced by a display of the supernatural. This makes supernatural techniques one of a series of options for teaching the dharma.[28] There is no question that the sutra overall is aimed at teaching Buddhist practice, and the supernatural is part of this project.

As clarification of what is meant by these supernatural events, it is necessary to point out that they are not to be understood as mere illusions. The primary source humans have for understanding core concepts such as karma is our sensory organs which report to us information about our world. As cause and effect take place, the observer can begin to develop an understanding of causation. Unfortunately, human perception can also make errors and when what the senses report differs from reality, this is a problem. One example of this is the idea that one's vision could be cloudy, and this could cause a misidentification of reality.[29] In contrast to illusions, the supernatural events in the *Vimalakirti* are the opposite. They convey a deeper insight into the world than would otherwise be possible.

Some forms of supernatural abilities, in certain periods of Chinese history, became famous as a marker of heresy. The prevalence of religious groups being labeled as heterodox is something that increases in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and the earliest instance is likely the Song Dynasty. Part of the labeling of these groups as heterodox involved accusations of performing supernatural acts. It is not necessarily the act itself which is the deciding factor in being labeled as acceptable or heterodox. Instead, the affiliation of the person and

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28 Edward Hamlin, "Magical 'Upaya' in the 'Vimalakirtinirdesa-Sutra,'" *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies; Leuven, Belgium* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 1988): 89.

29 Christian Coseru, *Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 182–191.

group dictates if what is supernatural is accepted or not.[30] Since the *Vimalakirti* is consistently seen as part of mainstream Buddhism, the existence of supernatural abilities is not something that would attract criticism in premodern China.

The aspect of Buddhism that is most often cited as an example of acceptable Buddhist supernatural powers is the chanting of Dharani (*Tuoluoni* 陀羅尼). Davidson has discussed the history of the problematic association between Dharani and supernatural spells. The root of the problem is that what is chanted is only loosely derived from Sanskrit, which can create a degree of uncertainty by the practitioner as to the exact meaning of the words they recite. There is also a wide variety of Dharani in Buddhism, which adds to the confusion. Instead of spells, Davidson advocates seeing Dharani as an encrypted code that contains what is essential in scriptures.[31]

One specific area where Dharani are frequently believed to have power is their recitation for the purpose of miraculously healing the sick. The function of the Dharani recitation is that it calls forth the meaning of the scripture or code from where it was originally derived and then this healing power can be delivered to a specific person in need of healing. One interesting attribute is that the practice of recitation is not simply an external force. Instead of only relying on the power of a Bodhisattva to heal the sick person, chanting a Dharani is believed to help awaken compassion in the mind of the person performing the ritual. As such, it helps the person chanting the Dharani to further their own goals of self-cultivation. This goal in the Mahayana tradition usually involves becoming a Bodhisattva, so in essence the Dharani practice is both self-transformational and something that is believed to miraculously heal others.[32]

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30 Wu Junqing, "The Fang La Rebellion and the Song Anti-Heresy Discourse," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 45, no. 1 (2017): 19–37.

31 Ronald M. Davidson, "Studies in Dhāraṇī Literature I: Revisiting the Meaning of the Term 'Dhāraṇī,'" *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (2009): 97–147; Richard D. McBride II, "Enchanting Monks and Efficacious Spells Rhetoric and the Role of Dhra in Medieval Chinese Buddhism," *Bulgyohagbo* 72 (2015): 167–200.

32 William J. Giddings, "The Sūtra on the Dhāraṇī of the Vast, Complete, and Unobstructed Great Compassion of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara with a Thousand Hands and a Thousand Eyes," in *Buddhism and Medicine*, ed. C. Pierce Salguero, An Anthology of Premodern Sources (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 252–85; C. Pierce Salguero, "Healing Dhāraṇīs: A Collection of Medieval Spells from the Taishō Tripiṭaka," in *Buddhism and Medicine*, ed. C. Pierce Salguero, An Anthology of Premodern Sources (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 292–303; Gergely Hidas, "Reference to Faith in Dhāraṇī Lieterutre," in *Faith in Buddhism*, ed. Imre Hamar and Takami Inoue, Budapest

The performance of supernatural acts in the *Vimalakirti* resonates with certain areas of Buddhist Dharani practice. These moments from the sutra are depicted in abbreviated or stylized ways in standardized representations of the *Vimalakirti* sutra. Without the aid of one with knowledge of the sutra, the reference to these supernatural episodes would not be readily apparent to the observer. Dharani and the supernatural acts of the *Vimalakirti* have parallel functions in that they both impact the world directly as external forces while also resonating internally with those who interact secondarily with these forces. What this means is that while the person reciting a Dharani is on one level simply praying for another person to be healed, they are themselves being internally impacted.

The Vimalakirti sutra invokes supernatural powers to cause thrones to fly and the goddess uses her supernatural abilities to move Shariputra's consciousness into her own body. This is impactful, it resonates with the reader of the sutra or the observer of its artistic representation. Vimalakirti's supernatural acts continue to resonate with Buddhist practitioners who then struggle to comprehend their meaning. This search for meaning impacts the person who reads the sutra or observes its artistic representation. They themselves are not transformed directly as the sick person who is healed by the Dharani or Shariputra whose ignorance is alleviated by the supernatural acts of the goddess. Instead, the project of self-cultivation is aided as an indirect impact of supernatural performances experienced second-hand by the reader of the sutra.

Teaching gender equality through the supernatural is the image at the center of the Helian Ziyue Stele. Above and to the right are two other examples of supernatural moments in the sutra. The clearest is an image of a single flying throne, which is above the canopied enclosure where Vimalakirti is seated. The throne is close to the right edge of the stele, and on its right side an animal is galloping alongside it. This animal is presumably the lion which is part of the name of the throne in the sutra. Movement of the throne is conveyed by the lion running. This is shown by clouds, which appear to be moving below the throne in that their left sides are plumper, and their right sides are narrowed as if their shape were being distorted by a gust of wind. The throne itself is interesting for having a roof and curtains on its sides, a reflection on a smaller scale of Vimalakirti's enclosure, which is directly below it. On the left side of the throne is a flying heavenly goddess with a wind-swept robe. This goddess also resembles two other figures who are more centrally featured, carrying bowls of rice. In Chapter 10 of the sutra, this rice is brought by a phantom

Monographs in East Asian Studies; 6. (Budapest: Institute for East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2016), 15–23.

Bodhisattva (*hua pusa* 化菩薩) from the parallel universe called Multitude of Fragrance (Zhong Xiang 眾香).[33]

Although the initial mention of flying thrones in the *Vimalakirti* is from the beginning of Chapter 6, these thrones are also part of the story of rice being delivered in Chapter 10. The initial delivery of chairs happens because of Shariputra wondering where people will sit in Vimalakirti's house. Later, Shariputra starts worrying what people will eat, which prompts Vimalakirti to send a phantom to retrieve fragrant rice from a land where communication is done through fragrance. The Buddha of that world provides a bowl of rice to the phantom, and when this happens nine million Bodhisattvas who live in that world decided they wanted to come with the phantom back to our world to see Sakyamuni Buddha and Vimalakirti. In order to provide the multitude with seats, Vimalakirti conjures up (*hua zuo* 化作) nine million seats for the Bodhisattvas. Conjuring up seats is different from what happened in Chapter 6, when they are sent or dispatched (*qian* 遣) to Vimalakirti's room. This difference is significant and makes it unlikely that this is a depiction of only Chapter 10.

More importantly, since the Helian Ziyue Stele is part of a standardized depiction of the goddess encounter in the sutra that carries through Dunhuang, each of the depictions in the upper section of the scene must be referencing separate scenes from different chapters. In Cave 220, above the canopy bed where Vimalakirti is seated there are references to events from three different chapters. The first is on the far-right side where Vimalakirti is shown carrying the retinue who are in his house in the palm of his hand, which appears as a cloud emanating from his right hand. This scene comes from the start of Chapter 11 of the sutra. Adjacent to this to the left are three thrones with lions running next to them and clouds attenuated on one side indicating motion. This is a reference to Chapter 6. Again, to the left of this is a depiction of the phantom Bodhisattva carrying a bowl, which in Chapter 10 is said to contain fragrant rice. This Bodhisattva is wearing a flowing robe which is a typical of the way flying heavenly goddesses are represented. In addition to Cave 220, Cave 335, Cave 138, and Cave 61 also combine the Chapter 7 meeting of Shariputra and the goddess with scenes from chapters 6, 10, and 11.

The point is that when depicting the *Vimalakirti* sutra in art, it was popular to include Shariputra encountering the goddess. Hyerman points out that the pair was especially popular in Dunhuang where only "three caves of the

33 "Stele Commissioned by Helian Ziyue (赫蓮子悅) and a Devotional Society of Five Hundred Individuals, China, Eastern Wei Dynasty (534–550)," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed July 28, 2022, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/40406.

22 for which photographs are available definitely do not include the pair."[34] The pairing of these two figures is also often done prominently and centrally as is the case with the Helian Ziyue Stele. These two figures represent an important social commentary on gender equality, but this needs to be contextualized within an additional interest in depicting a variety of supernatural episodes in the sutra.

Understanding the supernatural aspect of *Vimalakirti* is one reason why the sutra is said to be incomprehensible. This is fundamental to the sutra and its artistic representations. In the conclusion of the Kumarajiva edition, it states that the sutra should be known as "That Which is Explained by Vimalakirti; it is also called The Dharma Gate of Incomprehensible Liberation." This claim of being beyond comprehension is an important clarifier to the start of this chapter where I stated that instances of conflict enabled people to attain higher states of consciousness. Consciousness is something that is inseparable from bodily experience, and as such it is something felt rather than cognized. These experiences of the body are difficult to express in words, and this is linked to the seminal moment in Chapter 9 of the sutra where nonduality is expressed through silence by Vimalakirti. The reason this complex concept is ineffable relates to the title of the text; it is beyond comprehension. However, being beyond comprehension does not mean that it cannot be understood through bodily experience. There are abundant examples in the text where self-cultivation is understood as experiential in nature. Recognizing the inherent challenge of comprehending bodily experience is an idea that has been well explored in Shusterman's critique of Bourdieu for dismissing somaesthetics. It is easy to dismiss aesthetic experience as subjective and irrational, but when using the right methodology, it can also present an opportunity for concrete understanding.[35]

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34 Heyrman, *The Meeting of Vimalakirti and Manjusri*, 204.

35 Richard Shusterman, "Pierre Bourdieu and Pragmatist Aesthetics: Between Practice and Experience," *New Literary History* 46, no. 3 (2015): 435–57.

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CHAPTER 5

Dreaming and Waking Bodies

Investigating the Oneiro-Poetics of Medieval Chinese Buddhism

Christopher Jensen

Recent scholarship (by Campany, Greene, Jensen, and others) has demonstrated that dream experiences - and, in particular, the experience of intentionally sought dreams[1,2] - were an important source of religious revelation and verification for Chinese Buddhists in the Sui and early Tang dynasties (late 6th to mid-7th c. CE). But how were such dreams understood? Considering this question in light of Richard Schusterman's somaesthetics, and, in particular his multivalent notion of the body (*soma*) as a material object in the world, a locus of subjective knowing, and a palimpsest upon which cultural values and social power relations can be inscribed,[3] inspired me to reframe the contours of this inquiry, focusing in on dreamt bodies as depicted in medieval Chinese Buddhist sources. This approach prompts a host of new questions, such as: Where were meaningful dreams understood to take place? What sort of relationship was posited between the sleeping and waking body? Which kinds of experiential signs were used to determine if particular dreams were meaningful? How did Chinese Buddhists imagine the relationship between their fallible, impermanent human bodies and the idealized bodies of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and how did dreams figure into this imaginative process?

In attempting to outline the oneiro-poetics of dreamt bodies in this particular context, the present paper explores the implicit and explicit perspectives on dreams propounded by two influential Buddhist intellectuals of the early

1 My thanks to James Benn, Ruifeng Chen, Rob Campany, and Kenneth Holloway for comments on drafts of this paper. Any remaining issues are, of course, my responsibility alone. Also: I would like to thank Kenneth Holloway and Richard Shusterman for including me in the *Bodies of Buddhism* conference at which this paper was originally presented, as well as to my co-panelists for their thoughtful responses and overall collegiality. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

2 For a discussion of the utility of "dream incubation" as a cross-cultural comparand, see: Kimberly C. Patton, "'A Great and Strange Correction:' Intentionality, Locality, and Epiphany in the Category of Dream Incubation," *History of Religions* 43:3 (2004), 194–223.

3 Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 19–22.

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Tang: the renowned Vinaya master and monastic biographer Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667 CE), and the polymathic editor Daoshi 道世 (d. 683 CE).[4] I will be focusing, in particular, on the dream discourses included in Daoxuan's hagiographical collection *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 [T. 2060])[5] and in the "Dream" chapter[6] of Daoshi's *Forest of Pearls from the Garden of Dharma* (*Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 [T. 2122]).[7] Focusing on the perspective(s) of these two figures is apposite for a number of reasons. First, as both were erudite editors and compilers, their respective textual products represent the distillation of the centuries of Buddhist translations, commentaries, and stories that would have been available to a seventh-century Chinese audience. Second, their works continued to be read, cited, and circulated for centuries thereafter, attesting to their salience for a Chinese Buddhist readership. Finally, the genres of the two collections under consideration, (namely, anthology and hagiography), suggest that both were intended to serve as guides and reference works for their Chinese Buddhist audience, which makes them more normative than contemporaneous texts in other genres, such as strange tales collections. In a culture where many individuals had direct, personal experiences of visionary dreaming, it is understandable that dream reports (and the narratives derived from them)[8] were deemed wor-

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4 On Daoxuan and his influence, see: Chen Huaiyu, *The Revival of Buddhist Monasticism in Medieval China* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); on his hagiographical collection, see: John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997). On Daoshi and his editorial practice, see: Alexander O. Hsu, *Practices of Scriptural Economy: Compiling and Copying a Seventh-Century Chinese Buddhist Anthology* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2018); for another example of Daoshi being treated as a prototypical seventh-century Chinese Buddhist intellectual, see: Alan Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Standford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 115–128.

5 Subsequent citations punctuated as per: *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, collated and punctuated by Guo Shaolin 郭紹林 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014).

6 I chose to focus on the "Dream" chapter of the *Forest of Pearls* because it represents the most sustained discussion of the topic, including more than one quarter (127) of the instances of the term "dream" (*meng* 夢) in this hundred-fascicle text (478 total). I am currently working on a paper that explores these usages across the entire text, in order to more fully elucidate Daoshi's perspective.

7 Citations punctuated following *Fayuan zhulin jiaozhu* 法苑珠林校注, edited and punctuated by Zhou Shujia and Su Jiren 周叔迦, 蘇晋仁 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003).

8 On the relationship between dreams and dream reports, see Robert Ford Campany, *The Chinese Dreamscape: 300 BCE–800 CE* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2020), 126–130. He situates this discussion with a helpful citation from the anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano, who notes that dream reports (and even the act of narrating a dream to oneself upon waking) "change the experiential register [of the dream]. They create a distance between the experience of the dream and its articulation" (126).

thy of inclusion in both anthologies and hagiographical collections, even given the generally dim view of dreams suggested by the vast majority of Buddhist doctrinal sources (as will be discussed below).[9]

The decision to approach dreaming as an embodied phenomenon, with a particular focus on the role of dreaming and waking bodies in dream narratives, helps shed light on the complex and multifarious understandings of the oneiric realm that were held and employed by medieval Chinese Buddhists. In addition, focusing on oneiric bodies in these texts has inspired me to reflect upon the somatic qualities of certain dreams described in these sources, which, in turn, led me to propose the following comparative typology of dream narratives, based on the spatial logics employed therein. Specifically, I would suggest that such narratives can be broadly subdivided into three types:

1. Superpositional: oneiric experiences wherein the dreaming body is seen as co-extensive with the waking body;
2. Interpositional: oneiric experiences wherein the dream body is seen to exist in a liminal or interstitial space, albeit one linked to the waking world;
3. Transpositional: oneiric experiences wherein the dream body is transported to a known (and often impossibly distant) realm.

While the final two categories are comparatively common both cross-culturally and in other Chinese sources, I was struck by the prevalence of superpositional dreams in the two collections under investigation: an observation that could be explained by the fact that such narratives are utterly commensurate with the practice of sought dreaming. This finding can be seen as a localized contribution to Campany's larger project of mapping the historical Chinese dreamscape.[10]

In the pages that follow, I employ this typology to explore the medieval Chinese Buddhist perspectives on oneiric embodiment present in these texts, considering their implicit assumptions of a world in which dreams are loci of interaction between humans and extrahuman beings, dream experiences enliven Buddhist statuary, and embodied dreams transform waking bodies.

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9 On sharing dream stories as a social practice in late classical and early medieval China, see Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 17, 74–75, 158–159, and *passim*. On "dream telling" in the *Eminent Monks*, see: Christopher Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between: Oneiric Narratives in Huijiao and Daoxuan's* Biographies of Eminent Monks (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2018), 69–99.

10 Campany defines the "dreamscape" as "the shape or structure of the things extant texts had to say about dreams over the centuries in question – a sort of *imaginaire* of dreams" Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 4.

Before beginning this analysis, however, it is necessary to briefly situate this discussion with regard to Shusterman's somaesthetic framework.

1 The Somaesthetics of Sleep and Dreams

As mentioned above, Richard Shusterman's somaesthetic theory provides both a theoretical and practical framework for engaging meaningfully with embodiment (defined broadly). This perspective is grounded on the following characterization of the body:

> [It] forms our primal perspective or mode of engagement with the world, determining (often unconsciously) our choice of ends and means by structuring the very needs, habits, interests, pleasures, and capacities on which those ends and means rely for their significance. This, of course, includes the structuring of our mental life.[11]

This structuring process, in turn, also provides a locus for cultural perspectives and assumptions to be inscribed onto our (understandings of) bodies, and for such embodied realities to shape culture. Inspired by this approach to a specific, embodied phenomenon (i.e., dreaming), the current project can be categorized as a form of *analytic somaesthetics* (in Shusterman's terminology), as it represents a descriptive attempt to explain "the nature of our bodily perceptions and practices and their function in our knowledge and construction of the world"[12] within a specific discursive, historical, and cultural context.

While the underlying premises of somaesthetics are commensurate with the type of analysis proposed above, it should be noted that the present project was predicated on a different approach to sleep and dreaming than the one put forward by Shusterman. For example, in much the same way that traditional Buddhist discourses have tended to denigrate sleep and dreaming (as will be discussed below), Shusterman also often makes use of this sort of language, positing, for example, that "[t]oo many of our ordinary somatic pleasures are taken hurriedly, distractedly, and almost as unconsciously as the pleasures of sleep."[13] Likewise, engaging with Emerson and Thoreau on the philosophical project of seeking eudaimonic well-being, Shusterman states that "to

11 Shusterman, *Body Consciousness*, 2–3.
12 Shusterman, *Body Consciousness*, 23.
13 Shusterman, *Body Consciousness*, 6.

live philosophically means living in a waking rather than sleeping state."[14] Continuing this line of argument, and drawing in examples from Zhuangzi, Descartes, and the Buddha, Shusterman reiterates a ubiquitous, anti-oneiric trope:

> philosophy, however, can provide a means of reawakening us so that we can see things more clearly, experience them more fully than we can in sleep (real or figurative), when our eyes are closed, our senses dulled, and our minds either blank or *obscured by dreams*.[15]

In contrast, many medieval Chinese Buddhists viewed dreaming as a significant, meaning-generative activity: one they engaged with not only through the active social processes of dream telling and dream interpretation, but also through the more somatic process of dream incubation. This helps to explain the ubiquity of accounts in which significant life changes were precipitated by dream experiences.

Illustrating this contrast, Robert Campany's discussion of Chinese dream interpretation narratives notes that oneiric experiences are often described in resolutely non-psychological terms, with "psychological" here referring to the perspective that dreams represent or are generated by the mental life of the dreamer. Instead, such dreams are understood in "cosmo-semiotic" terms, representing signs impressed upon the dreamer by external causal forces.[16] Likewise, dreams of direct interaction with others (be they animals, gods, ghosts, or other denizens of the extrahuman realm), which Campany describes as "visitations," are also an ontologically and epistemological distinct category, with such narratives predicated on a world where oneiric intercourse between beings can literally occur.[17] In light of these considerations, while I am firmly convinced of the utility of the somaesthetic framework in inspiring reflection on the central role of bodies in lived experience, I am curious about how this approach could be expanded to engage more productively with dreams.

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14 Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetic Awakening and the Art of Living: Everyday Aesthetics in American Transcendentalism and Japanese Zen Practice," in *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 288–314, 289 (emphasis added). Later, he further elaborates on this image (drawing on Ralph Waldo Emerson's musings on the qualia of experience) and offers the following assessment of the appositeness of this metaphor: "living in a state of sleep is a potent metaphor for the unexamined life" (291).

15 Shusterman, "Somaesthetic Awakening and the Art of Living," 292.

16 Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 121.

17 Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 135–141.

2 *Background: the Epistemology of Dreams in the* Continued Biographies *and the* Forest of Pearls

Daoxuan and Daoshi's editorial choices about which episodes to include in their respective collections highlight a cultural dilemma related to the epistemic reliability of oneiric experiences. On one hand, traditional Chinese theories of dream interpretation[18] suggest that a reasonable percentage of dream experiences are vacuous and devoid of meaning,[19] positing such causes as imbalances of bodily energies, the continued influence of waking thoughts on the dreaming mind, and even the evanescent impressions left by the dreamer's soul(s) wandering outside of the body.[20] Such perspectives parallel a common Buddhist simile that highlights the impermanence of existence by comparing it to dreams and illusions, which – significantly – are set up as parallel terms.[21] With that said, however, both monks lived in a cultural context in which oneiric revelations were playing an increasingly large role in medieval Chinese monastic practice, where they served as indicators of attainment in meditation and of the ritual efficacy of confession.[22] Moreover, extent textual evidence suggests that both monks and laypeople (including Daoxuan himself)[23] also sought dreams for a variety of other purposes, run-

18 For an overview of these theories, see: Robert Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 69–91. I have also synthesized together many pre-2018 sources related to this topic in the introduction to *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 1–32.

19 Kelly Bulkeley's *Big Dreams* offers a helpful cross-cultural overview of the phenomenon of differentiating between the titular "big dreams" and "little dreams," in which the former category refers to those dreams that seem pregnant with meaning and import, and the latter to the chimeric "wisps" that we typically encounter night after night. *Big Dreams: The Science of Dreaming and the Origins of Religion* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2016).

20 On dream etiologies, see Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 32–52.

21 For a simple example, a full-text search of Edward Conze's *Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961) brings up 108 results, the vast majority of which consist of exactly this usage.

22 See: Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 128–148. Also see: Eric M. Greene, *Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (PhD diss., University of California, 2012); Kuo Li-ying, *Confession et Contrition dans le bouddhisme chinois du Ve au Xe siècle* (Paris: EFEO, 1994); Kuramoto Shōtoku 倉本尚徳, "Hokuchō jidai ni okeru hōdōzan to kōsōgyō" 北朝時代における方等懺と好相行, *Bukkyō bunka kenkyū ronshū* 仏教文化研究論集 12 (2008), 50–80; Nobuyoshi Yamabe, "Visionary Repentance and Visionary Ordination in the Brahmā Net Sutra" in *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*, edited by William Bodiford (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 17–39.

23 See: John R. McRae, "Daoxuan's Vision of Jetavana: The Ordination Platform Movement in Medieval Chinese Buddhism," in *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*, edited by William Bodiford (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 68–100.

ning the gamut from providing revelations about the posthumous destinations of loved ones, to allowing women to become pregnant and give birth to healthy offspring.[24]

Both Daoxuan and Daoshi cut this Gordian knot in a surprisingly effective way: in the rhetoric of the *Continued Biographies* (both reported and in Daoxuan's own editorial insertions), and in the textual citations Daoshi assembled in the first half of the "Dream" chapter, they often gesture to the traditional position on the unreliability of dreams,[25] whereas in the narrative material, they both select sources that present dreams as true and significant. Moreover, and strikingly, both sets of narratives contain very few accounts of individuals doubting the significance of dreams.

While Daoxuan's monastic protagonists occasionally question the proper interpretation of these experiences, their overall meaningfulness is not open to debate. Rhetorically, the fact that the *Continued Biographies* is focused on exemplary monks probably helped to alleviate this tension. This putative connection between idealized human conduct and significant dreams is undergirded by the overall logic of stimulus / response (*ganying* 感應), whereby human actions prompt specific responses from the "unseen realm" - a profoundly influential cosmological precept that served as a cornerstone of the medieval Chinese worldview.[26] Thus, in Daoxuan's corpus, he often cites dreams in lists of what I have referred to as "parallel miracles"[27] (e.g., visions, miraculous scents or illumination, rains of celestial flowers, disembodied

24 See: Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 128–148.

25 See, for example, the unremarked-upon description of renunciant monk Zhiyan's (智巖) attitude in the *Continued Biographies*, where his diligent eremetic practice is motivated by his conviction that "all worlds are like an illusion, like a dream" (蒙此幽屬，精勵晨昏，一切世間，如幻如夢 [T. 2060: 602b17–18]). Daoshi's introduction to the "Dream" chapter provides a measured response to this issue, concluding: "Although dreams communicate the Three Natures [i.e., wholesome, unwholesome, and indeterminate (a schema that Daoshi uses to organize the chapter)], it is also the case that some have consequences [whether informational, retributive, or karmic (*bao* 報)], and others do not. If [you] wish to learn about such matters, [consult] the scriptures cited below." (雖夢通三性，然有報無報. 欲知斯事，如下經說 [T. 2122: 533b18–19]).

26 For an excellent overview of this cosmological system in the context of Buddhist miracle tales, see the section on "cosmographic rhetoric" in Robert Ford Campany's *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 321–334. Also see Robert Ford Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China – A Study and Translation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 49. The classic study of Chinese Buddhist translators and exegetes making use of this framework, whether consciously or unconsciously, is Robert H. Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 77–97.

27 See: Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 31–32.

voices): all of which can be "stimulated" (*gan* 感) by exemplary human actions. This is an apt rhetorical strategy for a compiler with personal convictions related to the significance of dream experiences, as including dreams in such lists also helps to ascribe them with the same significance, even when they occur on their own: a sort of portentous halo effect.

In Daoshi's case, we seem this same dynamic replicated even more overtly: in the textual citations that open the "Dream" chapter, he assembles a variety of materials to present a polyvocal position on oneiric matters; in the second half, in contrast, he exclusively cites narratives that demonstrate the meaning and significance of dreams. In particular, after a brief introductory comment, this chapter begins with an extensive citation from the Vinaya commentary *Shanjianlü piposha* 善見律毘婆沙 [T. 1462], which offers both an etiology of dreams as well as an explanation of their karmic characteristics.[28] In so doing, it divides them into what Bulkeley would describe as both "little" dreams (i.e., meaningless ones originating within the dreamer's own mind or body) and "big" dreams (i.e., meaningful ones originating from karma and/or contact with external forces).

The remainder of this section draws on the previous text's typology for its organization, considering, in turn, wholesome (*shanxing* 善性),[29] unwholesome (*bushan* 不善),[30] and indeterminate dreams (*wuji* 無記).[31] The first of these two sections include, among other material, lengthy narrative selections in which the Buddha's (accurate) dream interpretations are contrasted with the (inaccurate and often manipulative) readings offered by *brahmin* soothsayers. These accounts, once again, put forth an ambivalent view of dreams, given that they highlight the possibility – and even the danger – of seeking out improper dream interpretations: a salient (and even mildly polemical) point, given the variety of individuals, both professional and otherwise, that a member of medieval Chinese society could turn to for their oneiromantic needs.[32] Finally, the section on indeterminate dreams is mostly drawn from a Vinaya discussion of the problem of falling asleep while meditating, which means that it can safely be ignored in the context of the present paper.

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28 T. 2122: 533b21–533c9. For background on the *Shanjianlü piposha*, as well as an overview of its dream typology, see: Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 59–60.

29 T. 2122: 533c–534c.

30 T. 2122: 534c–535c.

31 T. 2122: 535c–536a.

32 On dream-telling in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* and *Continued Biographies*, see: Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 69–98. On sharing dreams as a social practice, with significant potential consequences, see: Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 116–117, 126–127.

In contrast with the previous materials, and highlighting an important parallel between Daoxuan and Daoshi's collections, the remainder of the "Dream" chapter is explicitly made up of stories that are grouped together under the heading "Accounts of Stimulus-Response" (*ganyingyuan* 感應緣): a section included in various chapters of the *Forest of Pearls*, in which indigenous Chinese narratives are employed to demonstrate the veracity and continued applicability of particular Buddhist doctrines and theories in the Chinese context.[33] We will consider each of the accounts selected for inclusion in this section below, but we must first turn our attention to the role of dreams in Daoxuan's collection.

3 *The Ontology of Dreams (and Dream Bodies) in the* **Continued Biographies**

Though the *Continued Biographies* contains over a hundred dream episodes, many of them are surprisingly devoid of descriptive narrative details, with the most typical structure being: Monk X dreamt of Figure Y, who told him Z. In some cases, the actual contents of the dream experience themselves are not even reported, with the narrative merely acknowledging that it was an auspicious experience. This is, of course, a far cry from the perplexing phantasmagoria that most humans tend to behold on a nightly basis. We cannot know whether this homogenization of dream contents is the result of communal dream telling, the fact that certain rituals required specific dream confirmations, or the excesses of hagiographical normalization.[34] That said, this collection nonetheless contains enough specific details – and, in particular, enough details pertaining to issues of embodiment – to allow for certain patterns to become apparent.

3.1 *Encountering Buddha Bodies: Introduction*

Unlike the stereotypical Western characterization of the Buddhist tradition as a bloodless, disembodied quest for personal perfection, proponents of historical Buddhisms have reliably demonstrated great interest in the physicalities of both historical and celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas.[35] This tendency became especially pronounced amongst Mahāyāna Buddhists, who integrated

33 As noted in Hsu, *Practices of Scriptural Economy*, 23–24.

34 Discussed in Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 69–80.

35 See, for example, John Powers, *A Bull of a Man: Images of Masculinity, Sex, and the Body in Indian Buddhism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Susanne Mrozik,

earlier Buddhist teachings about the particular traits of buddha bodies (such as their oft-discussed Thirty-Two Marks) with the notion that such bodies could (eventually) be attained by practitioners of the Greater Vehicle.[36] Thus, among medieval Chinese Buddhists, many of whom actively employed dreams to verify spiritual attainment, we would expect to find dream narratives concerned with these sorts of exemplary bodies, especially within hagiographical storytelling.

3.2 *Encountering Buddha Bodies: Attaining the Ideal*

First, the *Continued Biographies* contains two oneiric episodes related to the attainment of a buddha body (or at least aspects thereof). In the first, the prolific translator monk Narêndrayaśas (*Naliantiyeshe* 那連提耶舍) is described continuing his strenuous Buddhist practice into his old age, until "in a dream, he achieved a verificatory vision[37] of his own body transforming into a Buddha's."[38] Highlighting the epistemic role of dreams in Daoxuan's worldview, and, in particular, their status as reliable signs of stimulus-response in action, this account continues with a brief editorial aside: "these sorts of spiritually-potent omens were various, and such examples abound."[39]

A more subtle case can be seen in the biography of the monk Jingshao (警詔), in an episode that takes place when the youthful novice was preparing to return to his hometown to receive the full precepts at age twenty. At this

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Virtuous Bodies: The Physical Dimension of Morality in Buddhist Ethics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

36 Stephen F. Teiser and Jacqueline Stone present an eloquent introduction to this theme (as discussed in the *Lotus Sutra*) in "Interpreting the *Lotus Sutra*," in *Readings of the Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 1–61, 20–22.

37 For this translation, see DDB (境界):

> Greene (2012) argues at length that in a core group of chan/meditation scriptures from the first half of the fifth century (esp. T 613, T 620), *jingjie* is best interpreted as 'verificatory vision,' and throughout his work, he translates accordingly. This interpretation of this term is closely linked to Greene's central thesis, that passages interpreted in prior scholarship as stipulating 'visualizations' practices are best interpreted in many contexts as describing spontaneous visions which, by a process like divination, signify the success or failure of a practice, the prior karma of the practitioner, etc.

38 夢得境界，自身作佛 (T. 2060: 433a9). This concern with the karmic particulars of embodiment continues soon after, when the elderly monk realizes the nearness of his own death and offers a final counsel to his disciples, warning them: "a human body is difficult to obtain, be conscientious about not wasting it" (人身難獲，慎勿空過. [T. 2060: 433a13]).

39 如此靈祥雜沓，其例非一. (T. 2060: 433a9–10).

point another monastic has a dream that reveals Shao's exemplarity in embodied terms:[40]

> There was a śramaṇa named Daolin who had invited [Shao] to sojourn in their hometown. Thereupon, he dreamed that Shao's tongue characteristic was broad and long, and so he wanted to take and sever it. Upon awakening, he thought deeply about [Shao's] stay and the passions [it stirred in him], realizing that this had caused him to slide into error.[41] He remorsefully repented his prior request, and promptly urged [Shao] to make haste in departing from the city. [Shao] then spread the teachings broadly, and the transmission of the lamp was not severed.
>
> 有沙門道林請留鄉土，乃夢韶舌相廣長，而欲將斷，既寤，深惟留戀，斯成墜失，愧悔前請，便勸出都。於即大弘法，化傳燈不絕.[42]

While this account offers some compelling details about oneiric guilt and the practice of dream telling in medieval China, it is relevant for our purposes due to its use of somatic-descriptors in its language. Specifically, by describing Jingshao's "tongue characteristic" (舌相), it explicitly invokes one item from the canonical list of the thirty-two "marks" (lakṣaṇā 相) of a great man.[43] Moreover, the young monk's possession of this trait is clearly not seen as false, illusory or even merely symbolic, even though it was only experienced by Daolin in a dream; instead, the surrounding narrative material attests to the fact that Jingshao was indeed an individual with the capacity to broadly propagate Buddhist teachings. Thus, while the Narêndrayaśas account concerns his attainment of a Buddha body in a subsequent life, and Jingshao's concerns his current bodily characteristics (albeit oneiric ones), they both would have been read as evidence for the attainability of this special physical form: a doctrinal mainstay of many popular Mahāyāna scriptures.

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40 T. 2060: 479c21–24.

41 This is a bit of a loose rendering. Moreover, one reader of this paper suggested an apter translation would involve downplaying the nature and extent of Daolin's transgression (i.e., by suggesting that Shao's tongue was going to be severed [in general], and that Daolin had simply realized that his request could endanger his monastic colleague). While this reading is more grammatical in places, it feels out of step with Daolin's waking response (remorseful repentance 愧悔) and doesn't seem to fully account for the role of craving or desire (欲).

42 T. 2060: 479c24–27.

43 See the discussion in Mrozik, *Virtuous Bodies*, 62–65.

3.3 *Encountering Buddha Bodies: Direct Interaction with Named Buddhas and Bodhisattvas*

One of the most common tropes in the *Continued Biographies*' dream episodes is the exemplary monk engaging directly with specific, named buddhas or bodhisattvas: often those with whom they have pre-existing bonds due to their histories of practice and devotion. The prevalence of such accounts is notable, as it reinforces the fact that Daoxuan viewed such dream contacts as meaningful forms of interaction, worthy of being preserved in his often terse biographical sketches. That said, many of these accounts are curiously nondescript, including no relevant details about the circumstances of these interactions or characterizations of the beings involved; as such, they lack the oneiropoetic details that would make them useful for the present analysis. As such, the following section will consider some examples that make specific references to the bodies of those involved, though the conclusions offered here would likely also apply to the less-elaborated examples discussed elsewhere in the text.

In the biography of the monk Zhiman (智滿), the titular character sought guidance about his future path as a teacher. So, he performed the *fangdeng* repentance ritual, which is commonly associated with dream incubation,[44] seeking a sign and, in response, he

> dreamt of the Buddha stroking the top of his head whilst discoursing on the Dharma. It all had the same characteristics as the scriptures, so from then on, [Zhiman] took this as his receipt of the Dharma.[45]

In addition to providing a clear example of a sought dream, this account also features highly symbolic physical contact between the two figures. Specifically, the Buddha stroking a monk's head (*moding* 摩頂) is associated in numerous texts with the disciple's receipt of the teaching, the precepts or both; as such, this essentially transforms this oneiric interaction into a form of visionary ordination.[46] Though this account does not specify where the dreamed inter-

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44 For an overview of prior scholarship on this ritual, and its role in dream incubation, see: Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 129–134.

45 方等行道，要取明證，夢佛摩頂，并爲説法，宛如經相，方爲授法. (T. 2060: 583a19–21).

46 DDB (摩頂): "to lay the hand on the top of the head. (…) In Buddhist sutras, the Buddha pats the head of those who receive his Dharma, or precepts, with his right hand." Moreover, Yamabe notes in his discussion of the *Brahma's Net Sutra* that this specific image (a buddha rubbing one's head) is attested as one of the named auspicious signs that can be sought in a vision (Yamabe, "Visionary Repentance and Visionary Ordination in the Brahmā Net Sutra," 19).

action took place, it is clearly being described as a case of direct, unmediated bodily contact (a "visitation," in Campany's terms).

The biography of Huisi (慧思) features a similar account:

> He also dreamt of following along after Maitreya and the members of his retinue, who were all joining together for the dragon flower [assembly]. In his mind, he thought: "I have been upholding the [*Scripture of the*] *Dharma Flower* in the final age of Śākyamuni's Dharma. Having now met Maitreya, I feel sorrowful and weep." He suddenly understood clearly and awoke. As he zealously made [spiritual] progress, [such] supernatural omens piled up one on top of another.
>
> 又夢隨從彌勒，與諸眷屬同會龍華，心自惟曰：「我於釋迦末法受持法華，今值慈尊，感傷悲泣．」豁然覺悟，轉復精進，靈瑞重沓…[47]

This account, unlike the previous one, clearly depends on transpositional spatiotemporal logic, given that the Dragon Flower Assemblies were understood to take place in either a heavenly realm or in the future, after Maitreya's attainment of buddhahood.[48] Regardless of exactly where (or when) this interaction was taking place, the event itself is described in clear, straightforward terms, up to and including the monk's emotional reaction to it. Moreover, and as if attesting to the propriety of Huisi's emotional reaction, the account then goes on to suggest that this dream should be parsed as one in a sequence of auspicious omens, thus reinforcing Daoxuan's assessment of the significance of such experiences.

The biography of Sengrong (僧融) also includes a case of direct oneiric interaction between a devotee (here, an unnamed laywoman imprisoned by brigands) and a Buddhist deity (here, Guanyin), though its spatial logic is entirely inverted. Instead of the devotee being transported elsewhere, Guanyin appears at her side, releases her shackles, and opens the gate. Emphasizing the logic of superposition, she then wakes to find that everything happened exactly as she had dreamed it, and proceeds to make her escape.[49] In such cases, oneiric encounters serve as proofs, whether they be prospective (confirming that a

47 T. 2060: 562c23–25.

48 For a discussion of the desire to participate in Dragon Flower Assemblies among early medieval Chinese Buddhists, as well as a discussion of the various posited locations at which these assemblies were imagined being convened, see: Cuong T. Mai, *Visualization Apocrypha and the Making of Buddhist Deity Cults in Early Medieval China* (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2009), 132–156 and *passim*.

49 T. 2060: 645b–c. A longer version of this tale is also found in *Mingxiangji*, and is translated in Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 190.

future course of action will be appropriate) or retrospective (confirming that one's prior religious practice was effective). More broadly, the somatic details contained therein likely made them more viscerally compelling to the discourse community that circulated them.

In addition to serving as proofs, however, such experiences also seemed to motivate subsequent religious activities. In particular, the *Continued Biographies* contains a variety of accounts of monks oneirically engaging with particular buddhas and bodhisattvas, and then seeking to commemorate these experiences through image-making practice. For instance, Huisi's biography also describes him dreaming of Maitreya and Amitābha teaching him the dharma, which inspires him to construct images of both and make offerings to them.[50] We see a more elaborate version of this trope in the biography of Xuanhui (玄會), who

> dreamt of climbing into the hand of a buddha named "Immeasurable Life." He thereupon constructed an image of Amitabha. He constantly set his mind on it, [seeking] to make [his] body the same as the one he had observed [in his dream].
>
> 夢登佛手號無量壽，遂造彌陀像一座。常擬繫心，作身同觀.[51]

While the image of a (tiny?) monk climbing in the hand of an (enormous?) buddha is an evocative one, more relevant to our purposes is the fact that Xuanhui is depicted treating his oneiric vision as an accurate source of information about buddha bodies and as a call to practice. This is in keeping with Campany's general contention that such "visitation" dreams presume the veridical quality of direct oneiric interactions, and the notion that dreams provide an "interpersonal space" within which such interactions can take place.[52] More broadly, the process evidenced in these last two accounts, which has precedent in Huijiao's prior hagiographical collection,[53] implies a particularly potent bond between the Buddhist deities encountered in dreams and the physical representations of them constructed, and later venerated, by the dreamers and their communities. The linkage between such deities and their

50 T. 2060: 562c.
51 T. 2060: 542c29–543a1.
52 Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 135.
53 For one example, the biography of the monk Huiji 慧基 describes the monk seeing the bodhisattva Puxian in a dream, discussing the matter with a monastic superior, and then having an image of the figure made for a newly-constructed temple (T. 2059: 379a).

manufactured material forms, and the role of superpositional dream encounters in reinforcing it, will be considered in the next section.

3.4 *Encountering Buddha Bodies: the Oneiric Enlivening of Buddhist Statuary*

Discussing the putative animacy of Japanese Buddhist images, Robert Sharf argued that "Buddhist icons, in short, are vivified as much through their participation in religious narrative and myth as they are through sacerdotal ritual and liturgy."[54] In the *Continued Biographies*, we see many examples of this process of narrative vivification in action, but - for the purposes of the present paper - the most salient are those that feature individuals interacting personally with animate versions of specific Buddhist icons in dreams.

For instance, the text's discussion of the layman Wu Cangying (吳蒼鷹) sees him tasked with tracking down a renowned Buddha image. After he discovers that ten identical copies had been made, the image itself appears to him in a dream and informs him which of the statues was the original, which allows him to successfully retrieve it.[55] The *Continued Biographies* also includes an account of the monk Fajun (法均) dreaming of a beautiful golden image chanting Sanskrit syllables from far away, which inspires him to seek it out. He eventually finds it at the bottom of a deep river and collaborates with local authorities to dredge it out.[56] Both of these accounts enliven their respective buddha images, transforming them into intentional agents capable of communication. Moreover, they imply via their spatial logics that these dream encounters must be taking place in the material world, whether superpositionally or interpositionally.

This implication becomes an assertion in the next two examples. In the first case, the monk Fajing (法京) becomes seriously ill, and his fellow monks attempt to effect a cure by engaging in a seven-day image veneration ritual. Thereafter,

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54 Robert H. Sharf, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Japanese Buddhist Icons," in Robert H. Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf, *Living Images: Japanese Buddhist Icons in Context* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 1–18, 15.

55 T. 2060: 692b.

56 T. 2060: 507c. Translated in Alexander Coburn Soper, "Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China," *Artibus Asiae* (Supplementum) 19 (1959), iii–296, 52. As an aside, the spatial logic of this account is somewhat ambiguous, given the simultaneous description of the monk's vision (implying nearness), with an explicit mention of the sounds being distant: 夢見金容希世，梵音清遠 (507c3–4).

> a śramaṇa named Fatai (法泰) dreamt that the image went to Fajing's room. The lay server Yuanzhi (遠志) personally saw the image come from Fajing's room and return to the great hall. That very day, [Fajing] promptly recovered.[57]

In addition to describing a buddha image ascribed with the powers of locomotion and healing, this account also features an overt superposition of the dream and waking worlds, with Fatai and Yuanzhi experiencing the same event through these two experiential lenses (i.e., sleep and wake).

This theme is also treated in the *Continued Biographies* account of Sun Jingde (孫敬德): a lay devotee of a personal Guanyin statue who is falsely arrested. On the eve of his execution, he dreams of a śramaṇa (a common oneiric guise for Guanyin) who teaches him to recite the *Guanyin Sutra*. Barely completing his thousandth recitation by the time he reaches the place of punishment, he is then shocked when the executioner's blade shatters upon his neck three separate times. This portent prompts the local magistrate to free him. Upon returning home, Sun discovers three deep gouges on the neck of his Guanyin image and is filled with awe.[58] Even more than the Fatai account, this tale deals extensively with the spatial logic of bodily superposition. Not only does Guanyin appear oneirically to Jingde in his time of need, instructing him in the necessary ritual techniques, but he also miraculously takes the layman's place at the end of the executioner's sword. Furthermore, this second event sheds additional light on the first: rather than simply identifying Jingde's oneiric interlocutor as Guanyin, we are clearly meant to see it as his personal Guanyin statue.

Describing the role of devotional images in the Buddhist miracle tale collection *Signs from the Unseen Realm* (*Mingxiangji* 冥祥記), Robert Campany notes that, in this cultural context, images were "companions, they were the subject of dreams and visions, and they were regarded as being alive with the

57 晩抱危疾，諸僧像前七日行道．沙門法泰夢像至於京房，淨人遠志親覩像從京房返於大殿，爾日即愈 (T. 2060: 556b25–27).

58 T. 2060: 692c–693a. Discussed in Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 144–145. More broadly, as he argues elsewhere, episodes like this one promote Buddhist alternatives to the notion of "replacement" (*dai* 代), which postulates a world wherein a family member (or even a humaniform grave good) can receive chthonic punishment instead of the protagonist (130–133). Robert Campany, "Religious Repertoires and Contestation: A Case Study Based on Buddhist Miracle Tales," *History of Religions* 52:2 (November 2012), 99–141.

presence of the august beings they represented."[59] Michelle Wang elaborates on this observation:

> In miracle tales, the movements and utterances of Buddhist sculptures not only demonstrate their roles as passive objects of worship or vehicles of anomalies from the unseen world, but also the real agency that they possess as animated bodies. By considering their somatic existence, we look at Buddhist sculptures in ways that account for the conceptualization of sculptures as living presences capable of imposing their own sensibilities upon those around them. Furthermore, the agency of Buddhist sculptures was apparent not within ritual spaces or contexts but in mundane and even secular settings.[60]

In all these cases, we see the ways that dream experiences helped bridge the gulf between human devotees and celestial buddhas / bodhisattvas, serving as locales in which direct interaction could take place and personal bonds could be formed. Moreover, the sort of direct, unmediated contact that such dream experiences allowed was clearly an important factor in investing specific, local Buddhist statues with perceived animacy, agency, and character.

3.5 *The Porous Boundaries of Oneiric Bodies: Conception*

One particular feature of many oneiric bodies described in the *Continued Biographies* is the porosity of their boundaries: a trait that allows dreamers to envelop, consume, or otherwise internalize the objects or entities encountered in their dreams, often with undeniable consequences upon their waking bodies. Among these superpositional encounters, a prototypical example is dream conception.

Accounts of oneiric fecundation are remarkable for at least two reasons: first, they are relatively ubiquitous, as the collection includes fourteen conception/ pregnancy dreams associated with the early lives of twelve different monks; second, they represent undeniable cases of implicit superposition, given the unavoidably somatic character of impregnation (and its observable consequences upon the bodies of these mothers-to-be).[61] Though the particulars

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59 Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 56–57.

60 Michele Wang, "Early Chinese Buddhist Sculptures as Animate Bodies and Living Presences," *Ars Orientalis* 46 (2016), 13–38, 31–32.

61 Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 149–219. Also see: Hsin-Yi Lin, *Dealing with Childbirth in Medieval Chinese Buddhism: Discourses and Practices* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2017), 96–109.

vary, the overall narrative logic of these episodes is remarkably consistent: a woman, who is often overtly seeking a pregnancy, dreams of a positively-valenced object or individual;[62] she then inserts it (or has it inserted) into her body,[63] which causes her to wake up enceinte. Given that I have discussed these narratives at length elsewhere, I will simply cite a representative example here, from the biography of Lingrui (靈睿):

> On the eighth day of the second month, his mother went to a Daoist temple and held a *zhai*[64] because she wanted to pray for a son. Upon returning home, she had a dream vision that she was seated beneath a pine grove when a seven-jeweled alms bowl flew down from the top of the trees and entered her mouth. Immediately upon waking, she was pregnant. Soon thereafter, she found that she could no longer enjoy the taste of the five pungent roots. After she gave birth, if someone was eating [them], both mother and child would develop a headache, and so they eliminated them [from their diets].
>
> 其母以二月八日道觀設齋，因乞有子，還家夢見在松林下坐，有七寶鉢於樹顛飛來入口，便覺有娠，即不喜五辛諸味。及其誕已，設或食者，母子頭痛，於是遂斷.[65]

62 By "positively-valenced," I mean that they would have been interpreted as auspicious by contemporary audiences, which is the only consistent trait shared amongst these objects / entities. Intriguingly, the accounts in the first two *Eminent Monks* collections run the gamut, with some intertextually employing imagery that is also seen in accounts of the auspicious births of future rulers, whereas others use specifically Buddhist iconography. See: Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 186–194. For some examples from the late fifth-century *Book of Song* (*Song Shu* 宋書), see: Tiziana Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China: Han, Three Kingdoms, and Six Dynasties*, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XXXIX (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 2001), 266, 269, 274–275.

63 As I note in *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, two of the most common forms of "insertion" involve the mother-to-be either swallowing the dreamt object whole (*tun* 吞) or it miraculously penetrating her chest (*ruhuai* 入懷). That said, in one particularly notable case, the mother of Zhiyan is depicted floating through space and then seating herself upon the tip of a stupa's spire prior to being impregnated: a rather graphic image whose sexual connotations are nigh undeniable (198–200).

64 On *zhai* practice in early medieval China, see: Sylvie Hureau, "Buddhist Rituals," in *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two: The Period of Division (220–589 AD)*, edited by John Lagerwey and Pengzhi Lü (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1207–1244, 1213–1230; Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 51–55. On *zhai* halls as sites for familial religious observance, see: Robert Ford Campany, "Abstinence halls (*zhaitang* 齋堂) in lay households in early medieval China," *Studies in Chinese Religion* 1:4 (2015), 323–343.

65 T. 2060: 539c13–17.

While this account generally hews to the template outlined above, it features several notable details. First, and in keeping with other narratives of this type, a dreamt object is inserted into the mother's body (here, via the mouth) and produces waking bodily effects, including pregnancy and a change in her tastes. Second, the power of a Buddhist dream trumps the ritual context in which the female protagonist sought it,[66] given that Lingrui's mother explicitly performed her ritual request for a child at a Daoist temple. Her non-Buddhist character is also attested by the fact that she clearly fails to recognize the Buddhist resonances of her subsequent dream (i.e., the symbolism of the alms-bowl),[67] or its waking effects upon her gustatory predilections and those of her child (i.e., their involuntary adherence to Buddhist dietary precepts). Third, her young son's innate aversion to the five pungent roots was clearly meant to be read as representing his precocious Buddhist virtue:[68] an "inherited" character trait attesting to the continued influence of oneiric stimuli upon his waking body.

The account continues as follows:

> When he was eight, his parents took him to a Daoist's place, where he was ordered to chant the "Cantos on Pacing the Void."[69] Suddenly, blood came out of his facial orifices and he was unable to complete the recitation. Returning home, he entered a field, where he happened to encounter the Dharma Teacher Zhisheng. Right then, he said: "The members of my household revere the Dao, but I personally desire to revere the Buddha." Following the [Dharma] teacher, he left the householder's life.
>
> 八歲，二親將至道士所，令誦步虛詞，便面孔血出，遂不得誦．還家入田，遇見智勝法師，便曰：「家門奉道，自欲奉佛．」隨師出家.[70]

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66 For dreams as a rhetorical medium for inter-religious competition, see: Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 289–376.

67 On the symbolism of the alms bowl in China, see: John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 107–112.

68 On this topic, see: Miriam Levering in "The Precocious Child in Chinese Buddhism," in *Little Buddhas: Children and Childhoods in Buddhist Texts and Traditions*, edited by Vanessa R. Sasson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 124–156; Christopher Jensen, "Rhetorical Uses of the Exemplary Child Trope in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* and *Biographies of Nuns*," *Studies in Chinese Religions* 7:1 (2021), 63–111.

69 On these Daoist poems, see: Edward H. Schafer, "Wu Yün's 'Cantos on Pacing the Void,'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41:2 (1981), 377–415. For a particular discussion of their history (as a genre of Daoist religious performance), see 388–392. Based on the context, it is possible that the Daoist is here intending to test whether Lingrui had successfully learned these poems (and/or the ritual associated with them) (Campany, personal communication).

70 T. 2060: 539c17–20, translated in Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 372 ff. 234.

If there was any doubt in the reader's mind about the meaning of the specifically Buddhist signifiers featured in the conception narrative, young Lingrui's constitutional inability to intone a non-Buddhist poem serves as the ultimate demonstration. Just as he is physically unable to tolerate the presence of non-Buddhist foodstuffs, so too is his head unable to countenance the presence of Daoist hymns. In both cases, this account suggests that his mother's oneiric conception granted him a very particular type of body: namely, one that is, by nature, an exemplary Buddhist. Many of the other oneiric conception narratives included in this collection follow the same pattern.

3.6 *The Porous Boundaries of Oneiric Bodies: Transformed Minds*

The notion that knowledge, characteristics, or attitudes could be transmitted through a form of embodied, oneiric transfer is not exclusive to the *Continued Biographies*' tales of miraculous conception. One instance of this sort of somatic knowledge transfer can be seen in an early section of the biography of Baogong (保恭):

> When he was eleven, [Baogong] was given to Dharma Master Jiong, who intended to test his spiritual capacities.[71] So, he recited the *Guanyin* [*Sutra*] [to him]. By the first watch of the night, [Baogong] immediately and expediently took [the sutra's] measure,[72] and [the Dharma Master] said to himself that it was as if he had been listening to it for a month. Immediately thereafter, [Baogong] left the householder's life. At the time of [Dharma Master] Jiong's death, [Baogong] had a dream in which he saw two snakes coming from the soles of the [Dharma] Master's feet and entering his own. [Baogong] was suddenly startled awake and felt that his mind and will were excellent, and his corporeal form was pacific and tranquil.[73]

71 Attested by HYDC as equivalent to 神彩, which can refer to some combination of mental acuity, bearing, and countenance. My reading *may* overemphasize the *shen* 神 in the compound.

72 While 度 is much more often used in the context of Buddhist liberation, given the context, I can't help but feel as if it is a reference to the youth's "crossing over" in his understanding of this specific named text.

73 Note: HYDC's second definition refers to propriety, surety, and adequacy … As a result, I suppose this passage could also be read as "his bodily marks [had become] properly arranged" (i.e., had become commensurate with the physiognomic signs of an exemplary person).

> 十一投炅法師．將欲試其神采，乃以觀音誦之，初夜一時，須臾便度，自謂聞之如經月頃，即度出家．會炅亡沒，夢見兩蛇從師脚出，入恭脚中，忽爾驚覺，自覺心志弘雅，身相安怙.[74]

While the youthful Baogong is clearly seen to possess superlative intellectual capacities from the outset (based on his immediate mastery of the *Guanyin Sutra*), the account suggests that he nonetheless received a tangible dharmic inheritance from his deceased former teacher: an oneiric transmission that transformed both his waking body and mind, thus evidencing implicit superpositional logic. This interpretation is borne out by a subsequent section of his biography, which describes the young monk continuing on to Kaishan and making a name for himself as a superlative exegete.[75] Unfortunately, this account is so terse that it is not possible to determine where, when, or how this bodily transformation was understood to have taken place, but, in any case, existing cultural assumptions attest to the fact that this would have been seen as the locus of a real and meaningful encounter, with the youth's subsequent transformation serving as proof (as per Campany's "visitation" paradigm).[76]

A final notable feature of this account is its idiosyncratic imagery. For instance, it is unclear whether the reader is intended to associate the undersides of the master's feet with the dharma, as one does in the context of the Buddha's miraculously wheel-inscribed soles.[77] Similarly puzzling are the snakes themselves. It seems extremely unlikely that the snakes represent "hatred" (in the context of the Three Poisons, as depicted in the center of the Wheel of Life)[78] or that they serve as metonyms for dangerous wilderness creatures (as they so often do in the *Eminent Monks* and its sequel).[79] As such, perhaps they are meant to convey the notion of unending life, as suggested by the image of a snake shedding its

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74 T. 2060: 512c4–8.

75 T. 2060: 512c.

76 As an aside, this account is also a bit of an edge case for this paradigm, given that the ideal types described by Campany in *Chinese Dreamscape* all consist of direct, *communicative* interactions. Even examples of oneric visitation with animals (such as ants [132–134] and crabs [143]) feature those beings communicating with dreamers via human speech. In contrast, while this episode does have the veridical quality of Campany's visitation dreams (including *post facto* confirmation), there is clearly no verbal communication. Instead, the snakes, which seem to be an anguiform embodiment of the master's wisdom, seem to represent a sort of body-to-body transmission of the dharma.

77 Powers, *A Bull of a Man*, 9, 16.

78 Stephen F. Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist Temples* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 11–13.

79 As discussed in: Koichi Shinohara, "Animals in Medieval Chinese Biographies of Buddhist Monks," *Religions* 10:6 (2019), 1–19, 9–13.

skin, or the figure of the dharma-protecting *naga*, who is more often presented in Chinese sources as a dragon (an image that also occurs in the account of Shiyu [see below]). That said, it is also possible that this account began as an actual dream report, in which case attempting to "decode" it without possessing Baogong's particular, embodied mind is an exercise in futility.[80]

The *Continued Biographies* account of Shiyu (世瑜) includes a similar case of somatic knowledge transfer via dream, though his case is rendered more dramatic by his previous monastic history. Specifically, he is described as tall and physically impressive, but not terribly intellectual, yearning to understand Buddhist doctrine but lacking the wherewithal to do so;[81] as such, his monastic practice focused on austerities and solitary living.[82] The account then abruptly states:

> In the first year of [Tang Taizong's] Zhenguan reign period [627 CE], [Shiyu] dreamt of four dragons coming and entering his mind's eye. Upon waking, he was profoundly enlightened [concerning] the teachings of the Three Treatises.[83] He thereupon went to Dharma Master Lingrui's[84] lecture. Both the words and principles he heard were all as if he had studied them previously, and he was immediately [able to] restate them.
>
> 貞觀元年，夢有四龍來入心眼，既覺，大悟三論宗旨，遂往靈睿法師講下，所聞詞理宛若舊尋，即而覆述.[85]

Here, the monk is no precocious youth, but rather a mountain ascetic known for his starvation diet and numinous ability to affect his environment.[86] Thanks to his auspicious, superpositional encounter with four dragons (who specifically "come to" and "enter" his mind's eye [心眼]),[87] he radically shifts his practice and begins to concern himself with the particulars of Buddhist

80 That said, the semiotic "decodeability" of dreams was a basic premise of medieval Chinese dream interpretation, both in general (Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 72–75, 80–90) and in the specific context of sixth- and seventh-century Buddhism (Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 99–119).

81 身形偉壯，長八尺三寸．希向佛理，無由自達。(T. 2060: 595a9–10).

82 T. 2060: 595a.

83 This phrase is slightly ambiguous, depending on whether it is parsed as the "teachings" (*zhi* 旨) of the "Three Treatises School" (*Sanlun zong* 三論宗), or the "main teachings" (宗旨) of the "Three Treatises" (*Sanlun* 三論).

84 Note: this is the same Lingrui discussed above.

85 T. 2060: 595a19–21.

86 On thaumatuge monks in this literature, see: Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk*, 67–111.

87 On *xin* as the seat of mind in classical Chinese literature, see Edward Slingerland, *Mind and Body in Early China: Beyond Orientalism and the Myth of Holism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 100–138.

doctrine: a narrative development that once again depends upon the logic of oneirically breached bodily boundaries to explain the subsequent transformation of the monk's intellectual capacities.

3.7 *The Porous Boundaries of Oneiric Bodies: Healing Narratives*

Another prototypical instance of dream experiences impacting waking bodies can be seen in the *Continued Biographies*' healing narratives. Sharing numerous similarities with the oft-discussed example of the monk Fayi (法義) being cured through a dream of intestinal surgery and lavage (as described in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks*),[88] the parallel episodes in Daoxuan's follow-up volume make the same assumptions about the oneiric body's porous boundaries and the identity of the sleeping / waking bodies. More broadly, his rationale for including such episodes must have been informed by the role of Buddhist monks (and Buddhist practices more broadly) in the "religio-medical marketplace" of the early Tang,[89] which would have increased both the salience and the proselytic efficacy of accounts like those considered below.

For our first example, we turn to the *Continued Biographies* account of Tanqian (曇遷), whose titular monk finds himself afflicted by a serious illness, and who then chooses to rely only on the Three Treasures (as opposed to other forms of medical treatment).[90]

> That night, he dreamt that the moon fell down and entered his bosom. Then, he split it apart and ate it. It was brittle, like a chip of ice. He was extremely astonished by its fragrant deliciousness. When he woke up, he was cured from that which had been ailing him. For more than ten days thereafter, its permeating flavour was in his mouth.
>
> 夜夢月落入懷，乃擘而食之，脆如氷片，甚訝香美，覺罷，所苦痊復，一旬有餘，流味在口.[91]

As can be seen, the basic features of this healing narrative rely upon the superpositional continuity between the monk's oneiric and waking bodies: a point rendered explicit by the fact that the miraculous flavour of the moon - consumed in a dream - persisted in his mouth for over a week after he was healed.

88 For a discussion of this episode, including an overview of potential contemporary sources for the dream surgery trope, see: C. Pierce Salguero, *Translating Buddhist Medicine in Medieval China* (Philadelphia: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 131–133.

89 On medieval China's "religio-medical marketplace" and the place of Buddhism within it, see: Salguero, *Translating Buddhist Medicine*, 60–66.

90 遂感心熱病，專憑三寶，不以醫術纏情. (T. 2060: 572a3–4).

91 T. 2060: 572a4–6.

Also striking is the fact that this account seems to include two incommensurate descriptions of the breaching of the monk's bodily boundaries: namely, the fallen moon both "entering his bosom" and "being eaten."[92] Intriguingly, both of these somatic processes are attested in contemporaneous accounts of auspicious omens, so it is perhaps the case that the author / redactor simply wanted to capitalize on all available intertextual references.[93] Conversely, this ambiguity could also be the result of a genuine attempt to capture the ambiguous, phantasmagorical quality of dream imagery.

A similar example can be seen in the biography of the youth who will eventually be ordained as the monk Zhizao (智璪), who encountered a severe illness at age seventeen while mourning his parents. One night, after realizing the futility of relying on medical treatments, he decides to entrust himself instead to a Buddhist alternative, at which point he picks up a cane and drags himself out into the courtyard:

> There, he faced the moon and lay down, focusing his heart-mind on the thought: "Moonlight Bodhisattva, I respectfully request that your great compassion deliver me from my profound chronic illness." In this way, he held fast to this thought and passed through a number of days.[94] In the middle of the night, he had a dream vision of a person whose body and physiognomy were not typical. He came from the eastern direction and called out to Zhizao, saying: "I am coming here now in order to cure your disease." He then brought his mouth close to Zhizao's body and sucked in [at each spot] in sequence. For three nights, it was just like this. As a result, [Zhizao] was gradually cured.
>
> 出到中庭，向月而臥，至心專念月光菩薩，唯願大悲濟我沈痾．如是繫念，遂經旬朔，於中夜間夢見一人形色非常，從東方來，謂璪曰：「我今故來，爲汝治病．」即以口就璪身，次第吸嗽，三夜如此，因爾稍痊.[95]

Even more than the previous case, the particulars of Zhizao's body figure into the resulting oneiric cure, given that the bodhisattva is depicted physically

92 For a detailed discussion of these tropes in the context of oneiric conception narratives, see: Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 194–198.

93 On "ingesting" celestial bodies as an intertextual trope, see Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens* (as cited above, in ff. 62).

94 As per the *Grand Ricci*, 旬朔 can refer to a span of either ten days or a month.

95 T. 2060: 585b17–23. For an alternate translation of this episode, see: April D. Hughes, *Waiting for Darkness: Judgment, Salvation, and Apocalyptic Eschatology in Medieval China* (PhD Diss., Princeton University, 2014), 146.

sucking the illness out of it. Likewise, this account also speaks to the possibility of Buddhist dream incubation as a method of healing, given that the bodhisattva only appears after the youth spends at least ten days laying in his courtyard, concentrating upon the moon[96] and aspiring to be cured. Finally, this account clearly relies upon the logic of superposition: rather than Zhizao's sleeping body being located in an interstitial realm or travelling to Prince Moonlight's domain, the bodhisattva is clearly depicted arriving at the youth's side to effect a cure.

We see similar themes reflected in an account of the healing of the monk Huisheng (慧勝), which is preserved in the biography of the autocremator[97] monk Sengyai (僧崖). In this account, the ailing monk dreams of Sengyai appearing by his side and surrounding his recumbent body with flammable incense, which he claims will drive out the monk's illness. Upon waking, the patient finds that he is indeed in superlative health.[98] Here too we see an oneiric cure that depends upon a visitation by a named spiritual entity, though in this case it is an apotheosized monk.[99] Also, regardless of whether this represents an instance of clever composition or the unconscious genius of metaphorical cognition, it is interesting that this account links the curative power of incense fumigation (a common procedure in medieval Chinese medicine)[100] with the types of aromatics often used by autocremators when burning their bodies.[101]

The examples discussed above demonstrate the variety of insights into the medieval Chinese Buddhist dreamscape that result from paying close attention to the role of bodies (whether human or superhuman, dreamt or waking) in the *Continued Biographies* as a collection, and, in particular, the extent to which their narrative logic often relies upon the assumed superpositional identity of the sleeping and waking body.

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96 Hughes also comments on the significance of the moon in this account, positing that the celestial orb itself (as opposed to iconic statuary) may have served as an object of worship for Prince Moonlight's devotees (Hughes, *Waiting for Darkness*, 146–147).

97 On this term, see: James A. Benn's *Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 9–10.

98 Translated in James Benn, "Written in Flames: Self-Immolation in Sixth-Century Sichuan," *T'oung Pao* Second Series 92:4/5 (2006), 410–465, 456.

99 Intriguingly, the various accounts of Sengyai's life include other mentions of his posthumous appearances (oneiric or otherwise) to devotees, and that tales of such personal visitations were much more common than descriptions of miracles associated with his relics (as discussed in Benn, "Written in Flames," 443–445).

100 See, for example, Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, edited by Bernard Faure, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 247–248.

101 Benn, *Burning for the Buddha*, 34–39.

4 *The Ontology of Dreams in* the Forest of Pearls: *Bodily Perspectives*

Though Daoxuan's collection features a broad swath of dream accounts, determining the perspective(s) on dreams contained therein is an inferential process, given that such elements are often tangential to the text's hagiographical goals. This can be contrasted with the narrative episodes included in the *Accounts of Stimulus-Response* section of Daoshi's "Dream" chapter, given that they were explicitly chosen as illustrative examples, meant to illuminate the textual excerpts included in the first half of the chapter. As such, I would argue that it makes sense to address them each in sequence rather than approaching them purely thematically. In so doing, and especially while attending to the role of oneiric / waking bodies in these tales, I noticed the presence of many of the same themes seen in the *Continued Biographies*, including sought dreams, dreams being positioned as vectors of communication, and the frequency with which the spatial logic of superposition was invoked to describe the bodily experience of dreaming.

In addition, many of the dreams included therein could be interpreted as instances of Campany's "visitation" paradigm in action, whereby dreams afford the possibility of "communication across some distance, boundary, or ontological, or taxonomic gap."[102] In discussing this paradigm, he also notes that – in certain instances – dream communication between the living and the dead seems to depend on the proximity of the dreamer to the mortal remains of their interlocutor:[103] an observation that is borne out in several of the accounts treated below.

The first dream account included in this section was excerpted from the strange tales collection *Records of the Search for Spirits* (*Soushenji* 搜神記).[104] It describes a Han Dynasty official named Wen Ying (文穎) who sets up camp in the wilderness and subsequently has a dream encounter with a ghost. As in the previous accounts, the spatial logic of superposition is clearly at play, as the ghost's ability to interact with Wen seems to be predicated upon the propinquity of his campsite:

> Long ago, my father interred me *here*. Water flowed in, inundating the grave, and my coffin became flooded, accumulating water [up to] its halfway point. Thus, I have no way to warm myself up."[105]

102 Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 141.

103 Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 37, 152.

104 For an overview of this text, see: Campany, *Strange Writing,* 55–62.

105 昔我先人葬我於此，水來湍墓，棺木溺，漬水處半，燥然無以自温。聞君在此，故來相依. (T. 2122: 536a20–22, emphasis added). Likewise, ghost describes his

When the official finally agrees to seek out and rebury the man's corpse, both the distance of the sodden coffin from his previous sleeping place and its waterlogged state are exactly as described in his dream.[106] This discovery is especially salient because it belies the faulty dream interpretations offered by Wen's foolish colleagues, who initially suggested that the dream was not worthy of consideration. Thus, by including a tale like this one, Daoshi could have – at least in theory – been subtly encouraging his readers to consult Buddhist interpreters and to take their interpretations seriously: a possibility made more salient by the fact that the previous section of the "Dream" chapter includes several scriptural accounts describing the Buddha as a superlative dream interpreter (as noted above).

I will briefly defer the discussion of the second episode, as it provides the most grist for the analytic mill, and continue with the third account, which was excerpted from Yan Zhitui's (顏之推, 531–590 CE) *Tales of Vengeful Ghosts* (冤魂志 *Yuanhunzhi*). It features a woman's dream interaction with her murdered son, who first confirms his identity by mentioning various facts about his father, and then reveals the grim details of his death by drowning, bemoaning his subsequent (i.e., posthumous) shame, pain, and rage. The episode continues in a fashion that would not be out-of-place in Hollywood thriller:

> The ghost also said "[My] urgent travels have left me utterly exhausted, and I will therefore go lie down on the bed below the window, using the windowsill as a pillow. Mother, [when you] behold your son's sleeping place, you will know that [this dream] has not been false."
>
> Lady Chen [his mother], mournful and distressed, was startled and jumped up; she took a flame in hand to illuminate her son's sleeping place. The soaking wet [area on the bed] was just like the shape of a man's body.
>
> 又云：行速疲極．因臥窓下床上，以頭沈窓。母視兒臥處，足知非虛矣。陳氏悲怛驚起，把火照兒眠處，沾濕猶如人形.[107]

impetus to seek Wen's assistance in similarly situational terms (i.e., implying that his ability to communicate with the living man was dependent upon Wen's sleeping place being proximate to his burial site): "When I heard that you were here, milord, I came to rely on you [for help]" 聞君在此，故來相依. (T. 2122: 536a20–22).

106 T. 2122: 536a. Cf., Kenneth J. Dewoskin and J. I. Crump's translation in *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 187–188.

107 T. 2122: 536c5–6. Cohen translates some aspects of this tale differently in his *Tales of Vengeful Souls: A Sixth Century Collection of Chinese Avenging Ghost Stories*, (Taipei: Ricci Institute, 1982):

Here as well, oneiric communication between the living and the dead seems to depend on proximity, given that the revenant was only able to report his murder to his mother by returning home: a process that he describes as having been extremely taxing. Moreover, the subsequent confirmatory miracle (i.e., the appearance of a sodden spot upon the bed in the shape of a man 猶如人形) suggests that the spirit's journey, his oneiric communication with Lady Chen, and his seeming dissolution after his return, all took place within the same (superposed) space: a space in which human dreamers can see, understand, and speak with embodied ghosts.[108] Also important, given the epistemological issues mentioned above, is the fact that this narrative concludes with local authorities being informed of the oneiric accusation, investigating the crime, and discovering that the circumstances were all exactly as they had been described in the grieving mother's dream.[109] Thus, in spite of Daoshi's rhetorical insistence on the various qualities of dreams, this represents another case where they reliably convey unimpeachable truths. Finally, both previous accounts are potentially compatible with a traditional Chinese dream etiology, namely, dreams as produced by wandering souls,[110] though in neither case would they have needed to travel very far.

The fourth episode included in the "Dream" Chapter was drawn from the early Chinese Buddhist miracle tale collection *Signs from the Unseen Realm* (*Mingxiangji* 冥祥記),[111] which describes a lapsed Buddhist named Ma Qianbo (馬虔伯) having a monitory dream that convinces him to resume his Buddhist practice. This dream also features the spatial logic of superposition seen above,

> When his mother woke up the next morning and looked at the place where her son slept, she knew that this was truly no illusion. Then, nee Chen became frightened, picked up a lamp, and shined it on the place where her son was sleeping. Sure enough, there was some damp and sopping thing in the form of a man!" (5).

Whereas I assume that the first part of this selection represents a continuation of the son's previous discourse (based on the shift in reference between "Mother" and "Lady Chen"), Cohen clearly reads 母視兒臥處 as a return to the narrative. Likewise, given that 沾濕 can refer to the dampening of cloth (CJKV), I don't think it is necessary to reify the wet spot into a "damp and sopping thing."

108 As Mu-chou Poo notes, there was no medieval consensus on the embodiment of ghosts: "Some believed that ghosts and spirits were formless and invisible beings; others regarded ghosts as having a concrete or tangible existence." Mu-chou Poo "Images and Ritual Treatment of Dangerous Spirits," in *Early Chinese Religion: Part Two – The Period of Division (220–589 AD)*, edited by John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1075–1094, 1077.

109 T. 2122: 536c.

110 See Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 41–44.

111 For a complete translation, see Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 209–210.

which is striking given the prevalence of "return-from-hell" narratives in such texts and the fact that such narratives are usually transpositional (i.e., involving an individual's spirit journey to the underworld, and their experiences of its horrors).[112] While he is depicted interacting with the denizens of the supernatural bureaucracy, all of whom were working away at tabulating the remaining lifespans of living people (a common trope), this encounter does not take place in a distant chthonic court. Instead, his dream narrative seems to be occurring in his immediate vicinity, as the protagonist's actions consist merely of focusing his gaze. First, he looks up and sees some imposing figures in the sky; they warn him about future dangers and advise him to ameliorate his conduct.[113] After he receives their admonition, he then casts his gaze downward and happens to see eight of his associates in chains, as well as a local Daoist, who is buried up to his waist in the ground.[114] In this way, this account situates Qianbo's vision of posthumous judgment by associating it with shifts in his (oneiric) body's point of view, tracking his gaze first up and then down. In so doing, it also serves as a clear instance of a particular, cross-culturally ubiquitous embodied metaphor: Up is Good; Down is Bad.[115] More intriguing, however, is a subsequent confirmatory miracle in this account: Qianbo's eight associates all expire according to the schedule that he had overheard being discussed by the celestials.[116] While this seems like a standard case of dream revelation and subsequent confirmation (a common trope in this literature), the particulars of the dream imagery suggest some difficult questions about the implicit worldview of the teller. Specifically, given that all eight of these men were still alive at the time of Qianbo's initial dream experience, how was the reader intended to interpret the eight manacled figures (or the buried

112 See: Robert Ford Campany, "Return-From-Death Narratives in Early Medieval China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 18:1 (1990), 91–125.

113 得夢，見天際有三人，長二丈餘，姿容嚴麗，臨雲下觀，諸天伎樂，盈牣空中. (T. 2122: 536c14–16).

114 時俯見相識楊暹等八人，並著鎖械，又見道士胡遼半身土中. (T. 2122: 536c18–20).

115 On the roots of such metaphors in embodied experience, see: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). The specific identification of "up" with a variety of positive signifiers (consciousness, control, status, goodness, morality) is discussed in Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* [Updated Edition] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 15–16.

116 In Campany's translation: "Divine personages in the heavens were calculating the year and month on which the allotted life spans of the eight of them would run out; it was only to Liao that they said, "If you can cultivate yourself and establish merit, you can lengthen your life further." Yang Xian and the others all [later] died according to the schedule he [Qianbo] had overheard" (*Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 209).

Daoist, for that matter)? Can one chain a "destiny"? Were these figures meant to be read as a precognitive vision of future bodily punishments? While such questions present niggling doctrinal doubts about the compatibility of this narrative with Buddhist notions of karma and rebirth, such issues of "theological incorrectness"[117] are much more pronounced in the account of Chen Xiuyuan, with which we conclude this section.

The fifth episode in the *Forest of Pearls*' "Dream" chapter is drawn from the *Continued Biographies* itself,[118] and it makes use of the "visitation" paradigm to return to the theme of direct interaction of individuals and animate Buddhist icons. This example includes two particular cases of oneiric communication: the first of which sees the image appearing in the dreams of local devotees to complain about damage to one of its fingers, and the second of which involves it appearing to torment a thief who stole ornaments from its hall. Paralleling the descriptions of dream visitation by Buddhist images discussed above, the image is here seen bemoaning its "injury" in strikingly bodily terms, saying: "I am suffering from pain in my finger."[119] Discussing this and related accounts, Wang provides an eloquent summary of this discursive trope, noting that "the human vocabulary of discomfort and physical malady is used to convey the predicament of the statues. They are not described as damaged but rather as injured and in pain."[120] Later, when the image appears to confront a malefactor and convince him to repent, this episode relies on the logic of superposition, as it literally describes his "dream of an eighteen foot man entering his room to berate him (夢丈八人入室責之).[121] While the petrified brigand seems unaware of the character of his oneiric interlocutor, describing him merely as an enormous man, this account playfully demonstrates his true identity to the reader, describing the height of his accuser as precisely the same as that of the Buddha image:[122] a further demonstration of the link between dreamt and physical bodies. In both cases, the underlying logic largely parallels that discussed in

117 As outlined in Slingerland, "theological incorrectness" describes the situation where "there is a gap between our intuitive, natural 'hot' view of the world and a theological, philosophical, or scientific theory that we are capable of developing or entertaining while in our 'cold' mode" (Slingerland, *Mind and Body in Early China*, 279). Thus, it arises in situations where intuitions (defined broadly) do not match with normative discourses.

118 Cf., T. 2060: 693c15–694a4.

119 吾患指痛 (T. 2122: 537a14). For the translation of a variant version of this account, see Soper, "Literary Evidence," 115.

120 Wang, "Buddhist Sculptures as Animate Bodies," 29.

121 T. 2122: 537a16.

122 For the image's height, see: T. 2122: 537a7–8; for the apparition's height, see: T. 2122: 537a16–17.

the “Enlivenment of Buddhist Statuary” section above, so we need not dwell on it further.

The sixth narrative included in the *Forest of Pearls*’ “Dream” chapter, which is also found in Daoxuan’s tome, describes an unnamed, deceased layman appearing to his wife in a dream, informing her about his death and subsequent descent into an earth prison, and requesting that she sponsor a ritual at a nearby monastery to free him from his inauspicious fate. After having this dream several times, it is correctly interpreted for her by a local spirit medium (*wu* 巫), and its accuracy is confirmed with the subsequent arrival of emissaries bearing news of her husband’s death.[123] Unfortunately, this account is particularly terse in its description of the oneiric context, suggesting only that the man communicated with his wife in a dream (通夢其妻曰),[124] and the dream report itself consists merely of his narration. As such, it is clear that this account, with its implicit transpositional logic, confirms the possibility of oneiric communication between the living and the residents of the earth prisons, providing evidence for the literal truth of the Buddhist mortuary cosmology and the efficacy of Buddhist rituals, and thus justifying its inclusion in the “Dream” chapter. Thus, there is no need for us to consider it further here.

The final remaining episode in the “Dream” chapter, and the most directly pertinent to issues of embodiment, was also excerpted from *Signs from the Unseen Realm*. It begins by outlining the life and exemplary practice of Chen Xiuyuan (陳秀遠): a pious lay Buddhist who served as an official in the [Liu-]Song Dynasty (420–479 CE). After sixty years of zealous practice, he began to wonder about the particulars of karma, and sought out answers from the oneiric realm:

> As night fell, he lay idly before falling asleep, sighing as he bore [the following] in mind: “[though] the ten thousand things all die and are [re]born, [the particulars of] their transmigrations are undetermined. As for my own body, where might it have come from?” He prayed with a focused mind, wishing for the communication [of the answer] in a *gan* dream.
>
> 於昏夕間，閑臥未寢，歎念：萬品死生，流轉無定。自惟己身，將從何來。一心祈念，冀通感夢.[125]

123 T. 2122: 537a18–b15. Cf., T. 2060: 695c. Also, I consider this episode as part of a discussion of the characterization(s) and narrative employment of non-Buddhist dream interpreters in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* and *Continued Biographies* (T. 2059 and 2060) in Jensen, *Dreaming Betwixt and Between*, 342–344.

124 T. 2122: 537a23.

125 T. 2122: 536b11–13. For an alternative (and excellent) translation, see: Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 243–244. My decision to re-translate this passage simply results from my attempt to pay especial attention to the descriptions of embodiment found therein.

The fact that *Signs from the Unseen Realm* includes a description of dream incubation, with a specific invocation of the *ganying* framework, highlights the prevalence of such practices. That said, narratives like this one would have continued to be salient in Daoshi's time, given the established role of oneiric communication and verification in seventh-century Buddhism (as discussed above).

The narrative then continues by describing Xiuyuan's dream: a phatasmagorical account that blurs the line between superposition and transposition in its description of the location and function of dreamt bodies.

> At this time, the evening had become completely dark and there were no lamps in the room. That instant, [something] resembling a firefly appeared near his pillow, scintillating and shining as it flitted away and was gone. Very soon, the entire room was completely illuminated, from [below] up into the sky, as [bright as] dawn. Xiuyuan promptly rose from his seat, joined his hands and gasped to catch his breath for a few moments. Four or five *zhang* above, he saw a central courtyard containing a bridge with a vermillion balustrade standing there in empty space.
>
> 時夕結陰，室無燈燭。有頃見枕邊如熒火者，冏然明照，流飛而去。俄而一室盡明，爰至空中，有如朝晝。秀遠遽起坐，合掌喘息頃。見中庭四五丈上有一橋閣焉。欄檻朱彩，立於空中.[126]

Once his bedroom and the cosmic thoroughfare are superposed, this vertiginous sense of bi-location is further emphasized when Xiuyuan, without waking, moves through space until he sees "himself seated at the side of the bridge."[127] The narrative continues:

> Atop the bridge, he saw men and women coming and going, filling up the thoroughfare, their style of dress not unlike that of worldly people. At the end [of one of the lines], there was an older woman, whose years could have been around thirty. Above she wore a blue tunic and below she wore a plain white skirt. She reached Xiuyuan's left side and stood there. At that moment, there was also an adult woman whose entire body was dressed in plain white cloth, [her hair] partially bound up in a bun, holding flowers and incense in her hand.[128]

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126 T. 2122: 536b13–17. Also see: Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 244.

127 Campany's translation of 而已自見平坐橋側 (*Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 244).

128 For a discussion of the potential significance of the second woman's hairstyle, see: Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 244 ff. 907.

> She came before [Xiuyuan], standing there and addressing him, saying: "You want to observe your prior body? It is none other than mine. Because I made this splendid offering to the Buddha, it resulted in a transformation of [my] body, which created yours." She turned and pointed to the older woman [in] white, saying: "This, once again, is none other than *my* prior body." [Once she] finished speaking, she left, and, after her departure, the bridge also gradually became hidden.
>
> 見橋上士女往還填衢，衣服莊束，不異世人。末有一嫗，年可三十許，上著青襖，下服白布裳，行至秀遠左邊而立。有頃，復有一婦人通體衣白布，爲偏環髻，手持華香，當前而立。語秀遠曰：汝欲覩前身，即我是也。以此華供養佛故，[故]得轉身作汝。迴指白嫗曰：此即復是我先身也。言畢而去。去後橋亦漸隱。秀遠忽然不覺，還下之時，光亦尋滅去.[129]

The account concludes with Xiuyuan unconsciously [or unknowingly] progressing back downward and the mysterious illumination guttering out.

This account is fascinating in its idiosyncrasy. First, in terms of its spatial logic, it seamlessly blends superposition and transposition, with the protagonist's sleeping chamber dramatically expanding upward to encompass a celestial thoroughfare. Second, while I have not yet found a doctrinal precedent, the image of a bridge representing the process of transmigration can also be found in iconographic depictions from medieval China and Central Asia, where such bridges are occasionally included in representations of the Wheel of Life and the courts of the Ten Kings.[130] While the graphical examples cited by Teiser are considerably later than the composition of *Signs from the Unseen Realm* (late 5th c. CE), it is certainly possible that such depictions existed much earlier. Moreover, given that medieval Buddhists often used illustrated manuscripts as teaching tools, especially when lecturing to the laity, the replication of such a detail in the dream of a pious layman is especially plausible. That said, it is also possible that this image could simply represent a case of either authorial creativity (if the dream episode is an intentional fiction) or subconscious metaphoricity (if it represents an actual, albeit possibly embellished, dream report): after all, a bridge is an obvious symbol for the liminal act of crossing between two locations (or, in this case, two lives).[131]

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129 T. 2122: 536b18–25. Also see: Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 244.

130 See: Stephen Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 33, 174; Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel*, 180, 244.

131 Aside: the image of crossing a bridge is described in Dunhuang dream manuals as an auspicious "sign of a long life" See: Jean-Pierre Drège, "Clefs des Songes de Touen-Houang"

Regardless, I was most taken with the author's repeated emphasis of the quotidian qualities of this bridge and its inhabitants, as both the mass of individuals and the two particular women are described as appearing much like everyday people, down to specific details of their dress and accessorization. While it is perhaps a hermeneutic overreach, I cannot help but wonder if the reader is intended to infer anything from its benign and pacific description of the process of transmigration. Given that contemporary audiences would have been intimately familiar with tales and images of the unimaginable bodily torments of the Buddhist earth prisons, perhaps we are meant to interpret this vision of a calm, metempsychotic queue in light of the fact that it was ascribed to a pious lay Buddhist, highlighting the pleasant path of transmigration he had travelled in the past (and likely would again in the future). Finally, the theological incorrectness of this account can hardly be overstated. While the doctrines of *anatman* and the five aggregates might not have been terribly well-known or understood in early medieval China,[132] their temporal logic is clear and unequivocal: an individual lives, dies, and is reborn, with the qualities of subsequent rebirths depending on previous ones. It is a unidirectional, sequential process. Thus, even though Buddhist literature is rife with accounts of monks (and others) remembering their past lives,[133] the powers described in such tales are epistemic: prior lives are seen or remembered; they are not interacted with. In contrast, this tale describes three transmigrated bodies (身) standing in a single-file line on a celestial bridge, like a succession of hominids in a natural history museum display, demonstrating the karmic progression from past to present. More shocking still, these metempsychotic doppelgangers are seen conversing with one another. Though this account is clearly not commensurate with standard doctrinal views of the samsaric cycle, perhaps Daoshi chose to include it thanks to its vivid concreteness: a quality it gains due in no small part to the compelling ways that it engages with both Buddhist bodies and the possibility of seeking answers in dreams.

in *Nouvelle Contributions Aux Études de Touen-Houang*, edited by Michel Soymié (Paris: Librarie Droz, 1981), 205–249, 229.

132 Jan Yun-Hua, "The Chinese Understanding and Assimilation of Karma Doctrine," in *Karma and Rebirth: Post-Classical Developments*, edited by Ronald W. Neufeldt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 145–168, 152–153.

133 This is a common trope across Buddhist literature. See, for example, Mrozik's discussion of the memory of past lives as one of the characteristic features of a bodhisattva practitioner, as outlined in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (*Virtuous* Bodies, 71). Likewise, Campany's comments on this story note: "Knowledge of one's previous rebirths was normally reckoned to be an advanced spiritual attainment. Here it is granted to a pious layman" (*Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 244).

As we have seen, the "Dream" chapter of the *Forest of Pearls* includes a variety of episodes testifying to the significance of dreams in medieval Chinese Buddhism, providing specific examples of the veridical nature of (certain) dream experiences, the possibility of dream communication with both the dead and Buddhist deities, and ways that oneiric visions could be cited to provide evidence for the veracity of Buddhist cosmological claims. Moreover, many of these dreams employ the logic of superposition, suggesting that – for early medieval Chinese Buddhists – the dreamt body was, in a very real sense, one with the waking body.

5 Conclusion

While this study has been somewhat far-ranging and heterogeneous, I would like to think that it has simultaneously highlighted the value of dream narratives for thinking about bodies, and of embodiment for thinking about dream narratives. In both cases, the episodes selected and discussed by Daoxuan and Daoshi – two elite seventh-century Buddhists – suggest that many organizing dichotomies of our contemporary worldview (sleep/wake, true/false, human/buddha, living being/statue) would have been quite alien to them and their discourse communities. Moreover, approaching these episodes with issues of embodiment in mind allowed me to notice the prevalence of dream experiences described as being situated in or around the sleeping body; this, in turn, inspired me to posit a descriptive typology for analyzing the spatial logic of such accounts (i.e., superpositional, interpositional, and transpositional), and to hypothesize that superpositional accounts might be more common in cultural contexts with a strong tradition of sought dreaming. While this heuristic device may be a specialized tool, I nonetheless hope that it may find some use in the hands of future "oneirographers" in their quests to map particular dreamscapes.

More broadly, I would argue that studies like this one highlight the situatedness of modernist, Western perspectives on dreams as purely subjective, psychological phenomena[134] by demonstrating the diverse ways that intellectuals and religious actors[135] in different historical and cultural contexts

134 That said, it is obviously an overstatement to ascribe a single normative perspective on dreams to modern Westerners either, especially one that presumes the "disenchantment" narrative, as Campany notes based on both informal survey data and a variety of contemporary studies (Campany, *Chinese Dreamscape*, 9–12).

135 Which are, of course, not mutually exclusive categories.

understood their oneiric experiences. While some dreams were indeed seen as nothing more than nocturnal illusions, both Daoxuan and Daoshi also overtly attest to the fact that others (especially those characterized as "visitation" dreams in Campany's typology) were seen as reliable sources of insight into the workings of the world and as sites for Buddhist practitioners to personally (somatically) encounter specific buddhas and bodhisattvas. On its face, this understanding appears to be at least somewhat incompatible with the somaesthetic framework proposed by Shusterman in his various books and essays. For instance, the typology of conscious states invoked in both *Thinking through the Body* and *Body Consciousness* positions them as points along a continuum, in which the "lowest" (least self-aware) state is "deep, dreamless sleep," and the highest is reflexive, conscious self-monitoring.[136] This seems to implicitly discount the potential significance of dream experiences. This interpretation is reinforced by attending to the other mentions of dreams in his published works, which tend to hew to the "dream as illusion" trope so common in Western philosophical discourse (as outlined above). Could such statements and observations be harmonized with those espoused in a religious context in which, for one example, confirmatory visions received in dreams were at times ascribed equivalent value to those seen in meditation?

A deeper reading of Shusterman suggests several ways that somaesthetic philosophy is already primed to engage productively with such cultural contexts. First, and as articulated in his first extended treatment of the topic, one goal of somaesthetics is to recover the meaning and significance of non-discursive experience, in an explicit contrast with "textualist" and linguistic approaches to meaning that would deny this possibility:[137]

> Philosophy needs to pay more critical attention to the variety of somatic practices through which we can pursue our quest for self-knowledge and self-creation, for beauty, potency, and pleasure, for the reconstruction of immediate experience into improved living. The philosophical discipline that would treat this embodied pursuit could be called "somaesthetics." Experience, in this somatic sense, should belong to the practice of philosophy.[138]

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136 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 197–198; Shusterman, *Body Consciousness*, 53–56.

137 Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatics and the Philosophical Life* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997). For the critique of "textualism" (as it pertains to embodied experience), see 173–174.

138 Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, 177.

While we can obviously only engage with the dreams of others linguistically (i.e., via the process of dream telling and the associated processes of writing/reading dream narratives), and though dreams are not treated in Shusterman's corpus as one of these significant types of non-discursive experience, this general orientation is nonetheless compatible with taking dreams seriously as sources of meaning and value. Second, some of Shusterman's discussions of somaesthetics in practice acknowledge the curious mental bifurcation required to engage in skilled embodied activity: namely, even though practice requires thoughtful engagement, the successful performance of most embodied activities (from dance to sport) requires the deep internalization of these learned skills, which thereupon allows them to manifest themselves "naturally" (the famous flow state).[139] Just as contemporary psychological studies have demonstrated that intentional effort can improve success in oneiric practices like dream recall and lucid dreaming,[140] one could argue that dream practice in medieval China could be productively interrogated by applying Shusterman's understanding of skilled, somatic activity. Though an individual dream, like a moment of flow in a ballet performance or on a basketball court, is not necessarily subject to conscious control or evaluation in the moment, the skillful ability to attain certain oneiric states, and to remember them afterward, seem to reflect a similar role for thoughtful, intentional embodied practice. Finally, Shusterman's somaesthetic framework is an intentionally meliorative philosophical project, aiming to increase human happiness and flourishing by recognizing the fundamental importance of embodiment in our experience of and engagement with the world. As the examples treated above have demonstrated, oneiric practice in medieval China was clearly imagined in similar terms, with embodied dream experiences seen providing various and sundry religious goods that were clearly understood to enrich the lives of Buddhist actors. For these reasons, one could argue that dreaming was part of the somaesthetic project of medieval Chinese Buddhism, and, thus, that new somaesthetic theories and approaches could be developed to take the embodied elements of these experiences more seriously.

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139 See, for example, the discussion in Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 197–216.

140 For a detailed empirical investigation of the "logbook enhancement hypothesis" (which provides compelling evidence that this practice effectively improves dream recall), see Denholm Aspy, "Is dream recall underestimated by retrospective measures and enhanced by keeping a logbook? An empirical investigation," *Consciousness and Cognition* 42 (May 2016), 181–203. For a sober, but still somewhat optimistic, assessment of the learnability of lucid dreaming, see G. William Domhoff, *The Emergence of Dreaming: Mind-Wandering, Embodied Simulation, and the Default Network* (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018), 292–294.

Abbreviations

DDB: Charles A. Muller (editor), Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/
HYDC: Hanyu dacidian 漢語大辭典 (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 1993 / 2010). [Accessed digitally via Pleco];
T: Taishō Tripitaka (CBETA version), 《大正新脩大藏經》與《卍新纂續藏經》, 中華電子佛典協會 (Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association), (2020). http://www.cbeta.org/

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CHAPTER 6

The Anatomical Architecture of Myōan Eisai

A Case Study of Visceral Visualization and Kaji in the Synthesis of Chinese Medicine and Buddhism

Stephen D. Torowicz

This essay will be an introduction to the 12th century Japanese monk Myōan Eisai 明菴栄西 and his application of the esoteric term *kaji* 加持 (empowerment), utilized in the unique practice of *visceral visualization* contained within the Body Mandala outlined in his text, the *Kissa Yōjōki* 喫茶養生記. The attempt of this essay is to convey an appreciation of the uniqueness of this type of *visceral visualization* and to initiate a dialogue as to why Eisai chose to preface his *Kissa Yōjōki* with this unusual excerpt taken from the no-longer surviving text of the *Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* 五藏曼荼羅儀軌. This essay will examine Eisai's visualization method and make some tangential associations to its origins in the *nourishing life* 養生 tradition of China. Our point of departure from these associations center upon the usage of the term *kaji* within the practice of *visceral visualization* in the esoteric Body Mandala. Through a brief discussion of the history of *kaji* and its function within *visceral visualization*, an understanding will emerge of how crucial this term is in uniting both esoteric Buddhism and Chinese medicine within the thought of Eisai. The argument offered to answer the above question is that the inclusion of this citation and its novel use of *kaji* was a deliberate and calculated choice because of its unique nature amalgamating both esoteric Buddhism and classical Chinese medical concepts. It is precisely this union of the spiritual and medicinal, conceivably gathered from his journeys in China, which provided Eisai with an exclusive therapy to which both Japanese Buddhism and medicine were ill equipped to handle during the end times of *mappō* 末法. An analysis of this term and its usage within the *Kissa Yōjōki* will reveal a more refined application of *kaji* and exhibit an evolution of technique, thus distinguishing Eisai's text from previous uses and associations.

1 Introduction

Myōan Eisai 明菴栄西 was a Japanese Buddhist monk of the 12th and 13th centuries. Eisai is customarily most notable for not only the introduction of

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Zen to Japan, but also for his book of tea, the *Kissa Yōjōki* 喫茶養生記; both being associated with his modest reputation. However, it is Eisai's esoteric view of the body and his method *visceral visualization* which are of pertinence to this essay and oddly enough, found in his book of tea.

Eisai appears to have been heavily influenced by the thought of China and made two separate trips there: one in 1168 and a second longer stay from 1187–1191. It was Eisai's second journey which made quite an impression on the esoteric dimensions of his thought because "during his second stay in China, from 1187 to 1191, [Eisai] wrote the first draft of the *Shukke taikō* 出家大綱, which was completed in 1200, and re-drafted the *Ingo shū*, newly titled the *Hiso ingo shū* 秘宗隠語集 (Collection of Hidden Terminology in Esoteric Buddhism)."[1] Along with this, the influence of esoteric thought upon Eisai is further evidenced by the fact that upon his return to Japan he subsequently composed his *Kissa Yōjōki*; this text also reveals the inspiration of Chinese Medicine upon his thinking in that it was written under the rubric of *yojo* / *yangsheng* 養生.[2]

James Benn in his excellent study *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, has a concise erudite chapter dedicated to Myōan Eisai and his *Kissa Yōjōki*. Benn notes that Eisai's considerable time spent in China offers a "first-hand experience with the consumption of tea and other decoctions there [which] informs his work."[3] Benn continues to highlight the importance of the *Kissa Yōjōki* and why it merits study:

> He offers a unique perspective on religious and cultural aspects of tea in China, including important eyewitness accounts of methods of tea production and consumption in late Southern Zhejiang – a time and

1 Shinya Mano, "Yōsai and Esoteric Buddhism," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles Orzech, Richard Payne, and Henrik Sørensen (Brill, 2011), 829.

2 Eisai's *Kissa Yōjōki* is an early Buddhist text which employs the terms (Jp. *yojo*) (Ch. *yangsheng*): *nourishing life*. For the purpose of this paper, I refrain from delving into the history of Daoist breathing exercises and gymnastics and whether or not they preceded the creation of Chinese medicine, thus being separate traditions distinct from one another. This essay takes a holistic view that presently all therapeutics aimed at health fall under the rubric of Chinese medicine.

3 James A. Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 145. I must express my gratitude to Albert Welter for introducing me to the works of Myōan Eisai and his book of Tea. In addition, acknowledgment must be expressed at the outset of this essay to James Benn and Jinhua Chen. Benn's translation of the *Kissa Yōjōki* has been an indispensable aid for the research of this paper and Chen's book *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Tendai Esoteric Buddhism in Japan* is a wealth of information. My research is simultaneously a continuation, yet departure from the scholarship of both Benn and Chen.

> place for which we have little data … Eisai's creative display of knowledge, techniques, concepts, and language from the mainland offers an excellent opportunity to reflect on the meanings of tea in China.[4]

For James Benn, Eisai's travels in China and his writings are an indispensable guide for understanding the history of tea in China: "… if we understand it in its early thirteenth-century context it has much to tell us about how Eisai and his contemporaries understood the role and function of tea in a Buddhist context."[5] For Benn, he centers upon tea to be the locus of his research as Eisai's text not only engages upon its varied history, uses, and consumption, but also in the fact that it titles his writing. However, as Benn's study notes, Eisai's text is also a miscellany of additional information and ideas:

> … it also deals with such diverse topics as the harmony of the five viscera within the body, the use of esoteric mantras and mudras for healing, the decline of the Buddhadharma, varieties of disease and demonic possession that may be cured by ingesting mulberry in various forms, and the benefits of consuming ginger and various of other aromatic substances.[6]

It is with these statements here in which we depart from Benn's emphasis of research, as I am of the opinion that the least significant aspect of this text, happens to be, tea. Furthermore, it is the contention of this chapter that what is vital to Eisai's text is not the introductory characters to its title, *kissa* 喫茶 (*drinking tea*), but rather the *yōjō* 養生 (*nourishing life*).

2 A Collection of Ideas: a Summary of Eisai's Thought

A cursory glance at the title of Eisai's text the *Kissa Yōjōki*, lends itself to the readily apparent fact that it is indeed a record of *Drinking Tea for Nourishing Life*. However, if we take into consideration the conjoined characters of its title in division rather than in unison, the text reveals much about the thought of Eisai. Directing our intention upon the concept *nourishing life* in isolation rather than in its relationship with *drinking tea*, the importance of this practice emerges and initiates its significance. Furthermore, if we engage the method of meditation he proffers at the outset of his text, we are privy to a fascinating

4 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 145.
5 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 146.
6 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 146.

aspect of Eisai's thought that is more profound than any other portion of his writing.

Though superficial and obscure at first, a brief but detailed therapeutic prelude to the *Kissa Yōjōki* introduces the reader to a rather extraordinarily interesting piece of the text. Eisai, in positioning this healing technique to commence his writing, outlines a medical, physiological, and anatomical architectural design for us to follow. Regarding this, Eisai reveals his strategy:

> Use the secret mantras to cure.
>
> The liver equates with the Buddha Akṣobhya in the East, and with Bhaiṣajyagururāja Buddha. It is in the Vajra section [of the mandala]. Forming the single-pronged *vajra* (*dugu*/*dokko*) mūdra and intoning the a syllable mantra will empower (*jiachi*) [*kaji*] the liver viscera, so it will be eternally free of disease.
>
> The heart equates with the Buddha Ratnasambhava in the South and Ākāśagarbha. It is in the Treasure section. Forming the "Precious Form" (*baoxing/hōgyō*) mūdra and intoning the *hrīḥ* syllable mantra will empower the heart viscus, so it will be free of disease.
>
> The lungs equate with the Buddha Amitābha in the West and with Guanyin/Kannon. They are in the Lotus section. Forming the Eight-petaled [lotus] (*baye*) mūdra and intoning the *trāḥ* syllable mantra will empower the lung viscus, so it will be free of disease.
>
> The kidneys equate with the Buddha Śākyamuni in the North and with Maitreya. They are in the Karma section. Forming the karma mūdra and intoning the *aḥ* syllable mantra will empower the kidney viscus, so it will be free of disease.
>
> The spleen equates with the Buddha Mahāvairocaṇa in the Center and with the Bodhisattva Prajñā. It is in the Buddha section. Forming the Five- pronged vajra (*wugu/goko*) mūdra and intoning the *vaṃ* syllable mantra will empower the spleen viscera, so it will be free of disease.
>
> When the five sections [of the maṇḍala] are empowered, then this is the means of curing the interior. When the five flavors nourish life, then these are the cure for external diseases. Interior and exterior mutually aid and protect the body and life.[7]

This is an exceptionally rich and interesting excerpt as it is a vessel of a variety ideas from several disciplines: Daoism; the *nourishing life* tradition; Chinese

7 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 159–160.

medicine; esoteric Buddhism; and Buddhist medicine. If Eisai's text, as Benn notes, can tell us much about the medicinal and cultural 13th century milieu around tea, this excerpt within his text can also tell us much about the esoteric thought of Eisai and his practice of *visceral visualization* within the *nourishing life* tradition. With this, we may begin to understand why Eisai chose this therapeutic passage to prelude his text.

Having introduced the main subject of our essay, the question must be asked: Why did Eisai situate this obscure method of meditation at the beginning of his text about tea? However, before delving into the attempt at explaining the rationale behind the inclusion of this excerpt, a brief explanation of the *nourishing life* tradition of China is needed to better grasp the title of his text and its relation to *visceral visualization*.

3 The Nourishing Life Tradition

As we now know it today, the *nourishing life* tradition is a series of medical techniques within the compendium of Chinese medicine and the healing arts. Known as *yangsheng* in China and *yōjō* in Japan (養生), *nourishing life* encompasses but is not limited to acupuncture, herbology, qigong, martials arts, meditation and/or contemplation. Chinese medicine is a unique form of therapy and distinguishes itself from western medicine in that it is preventative rather than reactionary; the western medical model which predominates modern conceptions of health and wellness tend to treat the individual when ill rather than when healthy. This is an important note as the name *yangsheng* itself defines the tradition:

> Yangsheng 養生 means nurturing or nourishing life. It is about health and health cultivation. The term that has been around for two thousand years or so first appeared in the manner in which we now understand it in the *Yangsheng lu* 養生錄 ('Records of Cultivating Life') of Ji Kang 稽康 in the Three Kingdoms Era (220–265 CE). This was the period that followed the disintegration of the Han Empire. Yangsheng represents and encompasses many strands of rich discourse on health, philosophy and 'the art of living' that stretch back at least two and a half thousand years in Chinese history to the mid-Warring States era.[8]

8 David Dear, "Chinese Yangsheng: Self-Help and Self-Image," *Asian Medicine* 7, no. 1 (2012): 1–33, 1.

Furthermore:

> The core philosophy behind Yangsheng is an epicurean sense of balance—nothing in excess, nothing to be denied. Historically its main focus is on exercise, either gently dynamic or relaxational, dietetics and sexology. Along-side this one can find a myriad of prescriptions and prohibitions that will enhance or protect one's vitality. This vitality would generally be categorized as *qi* 氣 (or Ki) in East Asia. A shared philosophy and vocabulary around the idea of *qi* intimately links Yangsheng with medicine, martial arts, moral philosophy and religious meditative practices all over East Asia.[9]

The *nourishing life* tradition gradually entered Japan via Japanese monks who gathered medical works through their missionary efforts in China. As Sakade Yoshinobu notes, one of the earliest medical works dealing with *nourishing life* techniques was the *Setsuyō yōketsu*, emerging between the years 823 and 833. Perhaps one of the most famous work dealing with *nourishing life* and medicine overall is the *Ishinpō*, compiled and completed by the official acupuncturist of Japan's imperial court, Tamba no Yasuyori, and presented to the court in the year 984.[10]

The *Ishinpō* is composed of thirty chapters dealing with the principles of healing, disease, pharmacology, acupuncture and moxibustion and their accompanying anatomical points and channels. The healing exercises of the *nourishing life* tradition are mentioned in various chapters dealing with facial treatments, dietetics, and the sexual techniques of immortality.[11] It is important to note that longevity plays an essential role in the early *nourishing life* regiment as all these techniques and practices had as their goal the conservation and the prolonging of one's *qi*, with one aim being that of immortality: "In China the arts of nourishing life developed from a rather early time as the techniques of the school of divine immortality (*shenxianjia* 神仙家)."[12]

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9 Dear, "Chinese Yangsheng: Self-Help and Self-Image", 2.

10 Yoshinobu Sakade, *Taoism, Medicine and Qi in China and Japan* (Osaka: Kansai University Press, 2007), 148.

11 Sakade, *Taoism, Medicine and Qi in China and Japan*, 150–152.

12 Sakade, *Taoism, Medicine and Qi in China and Japan*, 145. Regarding this comment, Michael Stanley-Baker takes issue with Yoshinobu's loose association of Daoism and *yojo* / *yangsheng* practices such as immortality; this is a point in need of further clarification as it is important to note the web of connections here between immortality, Chinese medicine, and Daoism. When discussing *nourishing life,* the concept of immortality arises, and with that, Daoism and its influences on health and science. The connections here are

This goal of immortality and prolonged longevity, a practice of certain Daoists throughout the ages and considered to be distinct from Confucianism and Buddhism, is an oddity in that Eisai adopted and adapted these *nourishing life* techniques.[13] However, as we shall soon see, Confucians and Buddhist did indeed adapt these techniques and in particular the contemplation method of *visceral visualization*. Having explained the meaning behind the name of the *Kissa Yōjōki*, an understanding emerges as to why Eisai chose such a title when we analyze his fears; let us delve into the reasons behind the composition of the *Kissa Yōjōki*.

often not as straightforward as we would like and are passionately discussed and debated, and it would do well to briefly acknowledge these difficulties.

As Nathan Sivin notes in seminal article in 1979, common thought tended to group Daoism into either the two camps of *daojia* 道家 or *daojiao* 道教; *daojia* denoting the philosophies and Laozi and Zhuangzi, while *daojiao* referencing those that had immortality in mind. As Sivin notes, these neat distinctions are the "creation of modern historians." Sivin also exposes the tenuous evidence linking certain historical individuals' interest in magic, medicine, and alchemy to any connection with "large scale Daoist organizations." Venturing further, Sivin demonstrates that the widespread interest in immortality and breath control were commonplace between all strata of Chinese culture and were not exclusively Daoist practices; this essay will also demonstrate this fact. Regarding the copious amounts of esoteric ideas associated with Daoism, Sivin suggests possible connections between a penchant for preservation, opportunistic personalities and their desire for any knowledge of salvation, and the safeguarding of older traditions against the encroachment of Buddhism. See Nathan Sivin, "On the Word" Taoist" as a Source of Perplexity. With Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China," *History of Religions* 17, no. 3/4 (1978): 303–30. In a more recent, multifaceted approached article, Michael Stanley-Baker continues to uncover the difficulties in finding a link between practices and the populace. Baker reveals that the ideological concept of "Daoist medicine" is a is a neologism and again a modern product of historians. In their attempt to compress the historical practice of medicine across time, a grand narrative arose associating Daoism with medicine. Baker states: "That is, we need to examine, compare and contrast how individuals in different times identified curing practices with the universal *Dao* or the little *dao*s, or practices from specific lineages, rather than bludgeon our historical material with unsophisticated categories in an attempt to force it into modern, ill-fitting conceptual frames. In so doing we can better understand the history of how the *Dao* was reproduced in therapeutics through new and varied discursive means over time." Michael Stanley-Baker, "Daoing Medicine: Practice Theory for Considering Religion and Medicine in Early Imperial China," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 50, no. 1 (2019): 21–66, 54.

13 An important note to this statement here has to do with the overall composition of the *Kissa Yōjōki* in that immortality is antithetical to the Buddhist mind set.

4 Eisai's Problem

When reading the *Kissa Yōjōki*, we witness a man who was passionately concerned with the present situation of the day occurring in Japan: *mappō* 末法.[14] At this point in Eisai's life, his vocation was simply that of the salvation of his fellow man. As an ideology, *mappō* was running rampant in Japan with little assistance from the medical practitioners of the day; this was a major concern for Eisai. This worry is evidenced by a number of statements made at the outset of the *Kissa Yōjōki*:

> It is now over 2,000 years since Jīvaka (Ch. Qipo, J. Kiba) passed away in India. In these latter times (*moshi*), who knows how to take the pulse of the blood correctly?"[15]

Eisai laments further:

> So, lacking anyone whom one can consult on the signs of illness, there is pointless suffering and pointless injury.[16]

These statements attest to not only Eisai's fears of *mappō*, but also his concerns that the practitioners of the day were rare indeed in understanding illness. Furthermore, Eisai's troubles are not only directed towards to the physicians themselves, but to the practice and state of medicine in Japan:

> But now, humans are gradually declining and getting weaker. It is as if the four great elements (*sida*) and the five viscera (*wuzang*) were rotting. This being so, when we employ acupuncture and moxibustion they both cause harm, and when one uses decoctions (*tang*) as a cure they are also ineffective. So, those who are treated with these cures gradually become weak and die, which is indeed lamentable. If these medical techniques from the past are not modified, but continue to be used in order to cure people of the present, then it will be rare indeed that they are appropriate to circumstances![17]

14 The final and degenerative age of the Buddhist Dharma where individuals are left unto their own means.
15 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 157.
16 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 157.
17 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History,* 157.

Eisai's concerns were that the answers to *mappō* were not to be found with the outdated medicine and medical practitioners available in Japan. In addition, these proclamations are not only indicative of his investigation towards a contemporary cure for illness, but more importantly, expose a personal conviction suggesting the inadequacies of Buddhism itself alone as a salvation for illness.

5 The Solution

For Eisai, as we have seen, the current medical practices of the day in which he was familiar with in Japan were insufficient in treating the afflictions of the people in these times of *mappō*. Secondly, the practitioners themselves, who were primarily Buddhists, were ineffectual at dealing with these illnesses.[18] For Eisai, one needed a unique healing therapy; these were found in the *nourishing life* practices of the Chinese tradition. The practices specifically emphasizing the *five viscera* (*wuzang*) 五藏 of Chinese medicine were particularly important:

> As for humans' preserving the whole of their lifespan, guarding life (*shouming*) should be considered worthy. The source of preserving one's whole lifespan is in nourishing life. To manifest this technique of nourishing life one must keep the five viscera at peace.[19]

Eisai's statement here is a proclamation: *nourishing life* comes only through harmony of the *five viscera*.

As mentioned earlier, although certain therapeutic practices of the *nourishing life* tradition entered Japan early on with one principal piece of writing being that of the *Ishinpō* in the 10th century, from Eisai's statement it appears that he was either unfamiliar with this practice or more than likely unhappy with its results.[20] We can deduce this because he is now turning to

18 This is an interesting point that Japanese Buddhist, who were a class of physicians in Japan, were incompetent in Eisai's view of treating illness.

19 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History,* 157.

20 As mentioned above, the *Ishinpō* is a fundamental medical text of Japan dating from the 10th century espousing *nourishing life* practices and traditional Chinese medical therapies such as acupuncture. Confirming Eisai's denial of the influential weight of this text, the *Ishinpō* advocates that practice of acupuncture, and Eisai, as mentioned previously, clearly finds the practice of needling to be harmful and ineffectual. It is of wonder why Eisai found acupuncture needling ineffective and of what other practices in the *Ishinpō* he thought ineffectual?

China to emphasize the *nourishing life* practice as it was applied in China, not in Japan:

> It would be better to investigate customary practice in China (*daguo*), and to make known recent methods of treatment there.[21]

Eisai's statement here is yet an additional proclamation which leaves us little doubt that the methods of treatment he puts forth in his text are of Chinese provenance. This is further evidenced by the fact that this treatise was composed shortly after his return home from a four year stay in China. So, what were these medical practices which impressed upon Eisai so much that he had to write about them to save all of Japan?

> I therefore present two general approaches and make known the signs of illnesses prevalent in these latter times. I hope that they will be of use to later generations, and will benefit all beings.[22]

Eisai outlines two methods of treatment prevalent in China:

1. *The Harmony of the Five Viscera* 五藏和合門
2. *The Exorcism of Demons* 遣除鬼魅門[23]

Although two methods of treatment are enumerated by Eisai, this study will narrow its lens upon The Harmony of the Five Viscera as one of the main treatments against the degenerative age of mappō. Under this rubric, Eisai provides two medical therapeutics which are citations from two texts:

1. *The Harmony of the Five Viscera*
   a *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*
   b *Secret Excerpts from the Procedure for Destroying the Hells with the Utmost Excellent Dhāraṇīs*.[24]

The Harmony of the Five Viscera is of paramount importance to our inquiry because this is where we witness the practice of *visceral visualization* cited

21 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 158. The exact phrase Eisai uses here is: 不如訪大國之風示近代治方乎. The Chinese characters of 近代 *jindai* (recent, modern times), very much suggest that Eisai was exposed to something very unique while in China. Taken from the online database CBETA, Taisho Tripitaka. 0175, *Kissa Yōjōki* 喫茶養生記西; paragraph [0419a05] http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/B32n0175_001.

22 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History,* 158.

23 Translation of titles adopted from James Benn.

24 Translation of titles adopted from James Benn.

from the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* and introduced as the first healing technique of the *Kissa Yōjōki*.[25] Moreover, what we can extrapolate from Eisai's statement here in his proposal of the *Harmony of the Five Viscera* suggests that this practice was either not present in Japan, or not practiced effectively to reflect how it was performed in China.[26]

Our question begins here as to why Eisai was so adamant on the *nourishing life* aspects of the *five viscera* of China? The *nourishing life* tradition and certain visualization techniques within Body Mandala practices predate Eisai by several hundred years in Japan; why not apply these indigenous practices? As this paper suggests, the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* cited in the *Kissa Yōjōki* was a unique merger of Buddhism with classical Chinese medical concepts all amalgamated by the term *kaji*. Furthermore, its categorization under the *nourishing life* rubric suggests a fascination with the esoteric milieu taking place during Eisai's excursions abroad. Observing these *nourishing life* practices, especially that of *visceral visualization*, perhaps influenced Eisai in crafting his approach to healing. If Eisai's text is a first-hand experience of tea practices in China as mentioned by Benn, is his text also a first-hand experience of the *visceral visualization* techniques taking place in China? To better realize why Eisai cited from such unique esoteric texts to form the foundation of his *Kissa Yōjōki* and its treatment method, we need to appreciate the esoteric environment during his travels in China.

6 An Esoteric Environment: Visceral Visualization

Although the *Kissa Yōjōki* has been acclaimed as a book of tea, it is the anatomical architecture of its *visceral visualization*, often overlooked, which is vital to the thought of Myōan Eisai. This visualization technique is among the more unique methods of East Asian meditation in which the practitioner contemplates on the divinities residing within the inner organs. This method of meditation intersects the borders between both esoteric Buddhism and the early Daoist *nourishing life* medical tradition with each belief system seating their own unique divinities within these organs. In esoteric Buddhism, this practice has been usually associated with the architectural design of a Body Mandala. However, as we are demonstrating, Eisai's method in which he cites from the

25 To clarify, although tea is introduced immediately at the outset of the text as a transcendent healing herb, I do not yet consider the ingestion of tea as a healing technique.

26 This is an important point as we shall later attempt to distinguish Eisai's citation from contemporary visceral visualization methods / Body Mandala examples of his time.

Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera, appear to be unusually different focusing upon the technique of *visceral visualization* as the key method for achieving health and is a unique synthesis of esoteric Buddhism with that of the anatomical architecture of Chinese medicine.

Visceral visualization has its origins in the Daoist *nourishing life* tradition. Two of the earliest Daoist examples to demonstrate this type of contemplation are the *Taiping jing* 太平經 and the *Huangting jing* 黃庭經. Both these examples appear relatively early on in the first millennia and stress the act of inward visualization. The *Taiping jing* appears late in the 2nd century and is one of the "earliest texts containing references to the gods of the five viscera."[27] One such passage in the *Taiping jing* discussing meditation and visualization on these gods of the viscera is detailed below:

> Make it so that in the empty room there is nobody around you. The pictures should be in accordance with the color of the organ [where they reside], and correspond to the qi of the four seasons. Hang up [the images] amid the light from the window(s), and contemplate them. Above is the image of the organ, and beneath are the ten homesteads (?). When lying down, contemplate and go near the suspended image. If you contemplate this way without ceasing, the deities of your five viscera will be able to respond to the breaths of the twenty-four times, and the deities of the five agents will also come to your assistance. The myriad diseases will be cured.[28]

In this excerpt we see that contemplation upon a diagram of the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine function as a meditational road map where a spiritual and medicinal transformation takes place. When a practitioner does this the gods of the *five viscera* having an earthly connection and responding to the cycle of the seasons, reward you with the *qi* of the 24 solar terms. Upon completion of this contemplation, the gods of the *five viscera* then free you from disease. What is fascinating about this meditational technique is that although it is written nearly a millennium before the time of Eisai, there is a continuation of this *visceral visualization* which does not terminate into obscurity, but is a practice continued beyond Eisai's travels in China.

At the time of Eisai's arrival, the greater Hangzhou region was an area teeming with both Buddhism, Daoism, and the esotericism in which their

27 Fabrizio Pregadio, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Daoism A-Z.* (New York: Routledge Press, 2008), 81.

28 Stephen Eskildsen, *Daoism, Meditation, and the Wonders of Serenity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2015), 42.

amalgamation thrived.[29] The city of Hangzhou itself was a bubbling metropolis just decades from Mongol rule and their preference for esoteric Buddhism; Hangzhou was also heavily imbued with Daoist thought. This fascinating environment must have spawned numerous and remarkable teachings throughout the region including meditation; and there was one particular meditation technique stemming from the *nourishing life* tradition which appears to have been quite *en vogue* in the area: *visceral visualization*. The popularity of this practice was such that it traversed the sectarian borders of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism.

One famous Confucian poet and scholar having been acquainted with the Hangzhou region and advocating the use of *visceral visualization* was Su Shi 蘇軾. Su Shi was a famous Literati and passed the civil service examination to attain his *jinshi* degree cementing his legacy as a member of the Confucian Literati. The citation below is fascinating because we not only see the pervasiveness of *visceral visualization* in the Song Dynasty China, but also its extension into the Confucian Literati realm escaping the jurisdiction of "Daoist medicine:"

> Inwardly contemplate on the five storehouses: the lung white, the liver blue green, the spleen yellow, the heart red and the kidney black. Seek to have permanently a diagram [i.e. a body map] of the five storehouses suspended on a wall. It lets you perfectly know by heart the forms and appearances of the five storehouses and six hoards.[30]

This is just one brief step taken from an elaborate *nourishing life* regiment put forward by Su Shi. The visualization component of this exercise is accompanied a series of hand gestures and ritualistic operations which an individual must engage in:

> … with crossed legs, knocking the teeth 36 times, grasping tightly {with both thumbs grasp the third fingers, or with the fourth fingers grasp the

29 Henrick Sørensen, *The Apocrypha and Esoteric Buddhism in China.* In Orzech, Charles D., Henrik H. Sorensen, and Richard K. Payne, (eds.) *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia.* Vol. 24 (Brill, 2011), 191.

30 Rudolf Pfister, "On the Meditative Use of the Body Maps Found in the Composite Text 'Songs of the Bodily Husk' (*Ti ke ge*)," *Journal of Medical Anthropology* 39, no. 1 (2016), 56–75, 64–65. Pfister's interesting article provides much of the foundational information here for the usage of the viscera as a meditational map. My aim here is to link Eisai's technique with the already established scholarship in this area and to also situate Eisai in an esoteric milieu.

> thumbs; both hands are supported between hips and belly}, and hold the breath {holding the breath is one of the most profoundly wondrous positions of the Daoist adepts; one must first hold the breath, discard thinking, and sweep away one's (deep-)seated [mental] appearances [alternative version: 'one must first close the eyes, purify one's thinking, and sweep away one's reckless thoughts']; cause the heart to clarify, that no cogitation arises; sense by yourself how outgoing and incoming of the breathing is modulated, thereupon close up and fix upon mouth and nose}.[31]

Another scholar official from the Jinjiang (Fujian) region named Zeng Zao 曾慥 (?–1155) authored and compiled the Pivot of the Dao 道樞.[32] In this Pivot of the Dao, we again see the esoteric practice of *visceral visualization*:

> Inwardly observe the five storehouses and six hoards, the three origins and the nine palaces, with this white of the lungs, blue green of the liver, yellow of the spleen, red of the heart, and black of the kidneys. Whereby did I know that it looks like that? I made a map of the five storehouses and observed it daily; thereby one knows it in detail.[33]

Here we have two accounts of this esoteric practice: one in Zhejiang province and one in neighboring Fujian province. These two provinces border each other and clue us into the philosophical thought that was occurring at the time and place when Eisai was in China.[34]

Moving further along down into the Southern Song Dynasty, we encounter another example of this type of *visceral visualization* occurring in the writings of Zhoumi 周密 (1232–1298):

> To gaze inwardly at the five organs and come to see the lungs [as] white, the liver green, the spleen yellow, the heart red, and the kidneys black, first acquire the Picture of the Five Organs or another chart by Yanluozi. Hang the images on the wall. Scrutinize them daily to become familiar

31 Pfister, "On the Meditative Use of the Body Maps Found in the Composite Text 'Songs of the Bodily Husk' (*Ti ke ge*)", 64.

32 Pregadio, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Daoism*, 329.

33 Pfister, "On the Meditative Use of the Body Maps Found in the Composite Text 'Songs of the Bodily Husk' (*Ti ke ge*)", 67.

34 Helpful comments to this paper have suggested that the locations of both Su Shi and Zeng Zao are perhaps somewhat too tenuous to suggest a geographical link. Nevertheless, this circumstantial evidence is included but will require further research.

> with the shapes of the five organs and six viscera. Then try to imagine that your heart is a flaming fire and its light penetrates into the Lower Cinnabar Field, which is located three cun below the navel.[35]

This is yet another example of the proliferation of this visualization technique occurring during the Southern Song Dynasty. Although this text is written after Eisai's visits to China, it speaks to the perseverance of these esoteric practices in Song China. When viewing Eisai's version of this *visceral visualization* technique as the Body Mandala, we see a therapeutic practice that reflects these *nourishing life* practices of China.

7 The Kissa Yōjōki and the Body Mandala: an Analysis

> Use the secret mantras to cure.
>
> The liver equates with the Buddha Akṣobhya in the East, and with Bhaiṣajyagururāja Buddha. It is in the Vajra section [of the mandala]. Forming the single-pronged vajra (*dugu/dokko*) mūdra and intoning the *a* syllable mantra will empower (*jiachi*) [*kaji*] the liver viscera, so it will be eternally free of disease.
>
> The heart equates with the Buddha Ratnasambhava in the South and Ākāśagarbha. It is in the Treasure section. Forming the "Precious Form" (*baoxing/hōgyō*) mūdra and intoning the *hrīḥ* syllable mantra will empower the heart viscus, so it will be free of disease.
>
> The lungs equate with the Buddha Amitābha in the West and with Guanyin/Kannon. They are in the Lotus section. Forming the Eight-petaled [lotus] (*baye*) mūdra and intoning the *trāḥ* syllable mantra will empower the lung viscus, so it will be free of disease.
>
> The kidneys equate with the Buddha Śākyamuni in the North and with Maitreya. They are in the Karma section. Forming the karma mūdra and intoning the *aḥ* syllable mantra will empower the kidney viscus, so it will be free of disease.
>
> The spleen equates with the Buddha Mahāvairocaṇa in the Center and with the Bodhisattva Prajñā. It is in the Buddha section. Forming the Five- pronged vajra (*wugu/goko*) mūdra and intoning the *vaṃ* syllable mantra will empower the spleen viscera, so it will be free of disease.

35 Shih-Shan Susan Huang. *Picturing the True Form: Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 71.

> When the five sections [of the maṇḍala] are empowered, then this is the means of curing the interior. When the five flavors nourish life, then these are the cure for external diseases. Interior and exterior mutually aid and protect the body and life."[36]

In this therapeutic preface to Eisai's *Kissa Yōjōki*, we see a curious amalgamation of esoteric ideas primarily incorporating Buddhist, *yangsheng* / Daoist, and Chinese medical concepts. It is quite possible that Eisai's inspiration and choice for this obscure medical therapeutic was derived from his travels in China and that his *Kissa Yōjōki* is a reflection of his time spent in there; this statement is not without contention which we will briefly touch upon later. However, the uniqueness of his version of the Body Mandala with contemporaneous models will become apparent by observing the merger of the anatomical architecture of Chinese medicine and Buddhist esotericism all designated under the *nourishing life* rubric.

Eisai forms his Body Mandala concept and prefaces his *Kissa Yōjōki* by quoting from the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*; as noted by James Benn, this text is no longer extant. This citation and its contents are exceptionally important in understanding the basis of his Body Mandala and the *visceral visualization* technique within the *Kissa Yōjōki*. What we have in this meditational therapeutic is an anatomical diagrammatic representation of the *five-phase* visceral interface system of Chinese medicine.[37] When viewing Eisai's schematic, it is quite useful to contextualize his representation of the Body Mandala with that of the *visceral visualization* occurring in the Daoist *Huangting jing* and the *Taiping jing*.

In the various versions of visceral visualization listed above, it is suggested that the practitioner hang a picture of these organs on a wall for the purpose of meditation, religious observance, and healing. However, with Eisai's therapeutic technique, he uses the esoteric medium of a mandala as an ancillary to the anatomical pictorial representation of the body used in the above examples. Nevertheless, Eisai's therapeutic technique partitions the mandala into esoteric sections (vajra, treasure, lotus, karma, Buddha), with each subdivision containing a viscera of Chinese medicine. Each of these sections when taken in toto form a graphic representation (mandala) of the anatomical architecture of Chinese medicine which in fact serve as a reproduction of the anatomical images hanging on a wall; only now it is construed as a mental image.

36 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History,* 159–160.

37 The *five-phase* visceral interface system will be explained in more detail below.

Understanding that the anatomical architecture of Eisai is not only structured to form a visceral mandala as a mental image, each of these viscera within their respective quadrants of the mandala are associated with both a Buddha and Bodhisattva to aid in healing. This is a unique unification of both the spiritual and medicinal which not only recognizes the importance of the anatomical architecture in which we are built upon, but also the spiritual significance of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. If we look at the Chinese *Huangting jing*, we see a similar amalgamation of the both the spiritual and medicinal taking place.

According to Sakade Yoshinobu, the "… *Huangting* jing is handed down to us in two different titles as the *Huangting neijing jing* 黃庭內景經 and *Huangting waijing jing* 黃庭外景經 … The *Neijing jing*, in which the genealogical tree of the gods in the body was arranged on the basis of the *Waijing jing*, has the clearest descriptions."[38] What can be observed from the passage below is that each of the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine have an associated Daoist divinity employing both their spirit and courtesy name:

> 心神丹元字守靈, 肺神皓華字虛成, 肝神龍禋字含明
> 腎神玄冥字育嬰, 脾神常在字魂停[39]

	Spirit Name	Courtesy Name		
–	Danyuan 丹元	Shouling 守靈	→	Heart
–	Haohua 皓華	Xucheng 虛成	→	Lung
–	Longyuan 龍煙	Hanming 含明	→	Liver
–	Xuanming 玄冥	Yuying 育嬰	→	Kidney
–	Changzai 常在	Hunting 魂停	→	Spleen

Along with the same method of *visceral visualization* being used in both the Daoist texts and the *Kissa Yōjōki*, Eisai employs an equivalent twofold spiritual schematic using Buddhas and Bodhisattva terminology in lieu of the Daoist Gods:

	Buddha Name	Bodhisattva Name		
–	Ratnasambhava 寶生佛	Ākāśagarbha 虛空藏	→	Heart
–	Amitābha 量壽佛	Guanyin 觀音	→	Lung
–	Akṣobhya 何閦佛	Bhaiṣajyagururāja 藥師佛	→	Liver
–	Śākyamuni 釋迦牟尼佛	Maitreya 彌勒	→	Kidney
–	Mahāvairocaṇa 大日如來	Bodhisattva Prajñā 般若菩薩	→	Spleen

38 Sakade, *Taoism, Medicine and Qi in China and Japan*, 56.

39 Taken from the *Huangting Neijing jing*. Sakade Yoshinobu details these names occurring in the 8th chapter of the *Neijing jing*.

Eisai's use of *visceral visualization* and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas rather than the Daoist deities is in congruence with a long line of Buddhist accommodation of indigenous Chinese ideas of meditation and spirituality; this is also an occurrence that takes place vice versa between Buddhism and Daoism. Buddhist medicine specialist Pierce Salguero succinctly states this phenomenon as: "Rather than Indian influence and Chinese sinicization, many scholars now prefer to think in terms of 'Buddho-Daoism,' and almost all emphasize the syncretism of Chinese religions."[40] Eisai's text appears to be an archetypal example of this.

Eisai's Body Mandala diverges from Daoist tradition not only with the substitution of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in lieu of Chinese traditional deities, but now also with the inclusion of both mudras and mantras; a practice similar to the aforementioned ritualistic operations recommended by Su Shi.[41] While the early Daoist tradition recommends meditating on these divinities, the Buddhist tradition employs these mantras and mudras as a way of healing the organ itself: "Forming the karma mūdra and intoning the *aḥ* syllable mantra will empower the kidney viscus, so it will be free of disease." Herein lies the uniqueness of Eisai's Body Mandala: *kaji* (empowerment). For Eisai, the mudra and mantra are needed to channel *kaji* to a particular organ to keep it free from disease. To further an understanding of how Eisai's employs this unique application of *kaji*, a short history of its evolution is crucial to understanding its importance.

8 Kaji 加持

To properly understand the importance *kaji* within the context of Eisai's text of the *Kissa Yōjōki* and its uniqueness, its *Sanskrit* etymology and history within esoteric Buddhism must be briefly explained. *Adhisthana*, 加持 *kaji* in Japanese and *jiachi* in Chinese, is originally a *Sanskrit* word which found its way to East Asia with the expansion of Buddhism. There are a number of definitions of the term: "standing by; being at hand, approach; standing or resting upon; a basis

40 C. Pierce Salguero, *Translating Buddhist Medicine in Medieval China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2014), 5.

41 It is difficult to traverse the many nuances of mudras and mantras from one tradition to another. At their most fundamental level, mudras are hand gestures while mantras are words cited in repetition. These are tools and techniques performed to assist the practitioner in moments of sacredness.

or a base; the standing place of a warrior upon a car…a position, site, residence, abode, seat; a settlement, town; standing over …"[42]

In a more religious sense of the meaning, *adhisthana*, derived from *adhi* (beside, over)—*i*/*stha* (to stand) literally means that which stands beside or over. It is a 'position,' specifically an 'authoritative position' which stands over, and the 'power' associated with such a position. In this sense it comes near the 'grace' or 'blessing' of Christianity.[43] This blessing or grace, is exceptionally important within the esoteric dimension of Buddhism as *kaji* "indicates a powerful benediction or blessing that energizes its recipient with the enlightening power of the universal Buddhahood."[44]

Kaji, is particularly tied to esoteric Buddhism as it uses the three mysteries (*sanmitsu* 三密) of mind, body and speech to understand its power. This is particularly important for Kukai and the esoteric sect of *Shingon* where the combination of mantra and mudra direct the mind towards samadhi. When these three mysteries of mind, body and speech resonate, mystical union and final realization are able to take place.[45]

Pamela Winfield, in her excellent article "Curing with *Kaji*: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan," provides us with the etymology of *kaji* and its process:

> The first character *ka* 加 therefore means to add, as in the Great Sun Buddha adding his powerful sun-lightenment to one's own. This expresses typical Mahayana *hongaku* 本覺 sentiment, since it presupposes the inherent existence of one's original Buddha nature. According to Mahayana Buddhist doctrine that predominates in Japan, all sentient beings already are enlightened, they just have not realized it yet. Thus when Dainichi adds his illumination to one's own original enlightenment, one's spiritual potential is fully augmented and actualized. For this reason, Buddha's "grace" is another term that is often associated with the definition of *kaji*. The second character ji 持 means to hold, as in the practitioner's embrace of Dainichi's universal light. This embrace by extension indicates an oceanic self-expansion and self-identification with universal Buddhahood.

42 Monier-Williams. *A Dictionary, English and Sanskrit.* Lucknow: Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad; (Sole Distributors: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, Delhi, 1957), 22.

43 Shozui Toganoo, *The Symbol-System of Shingon Buddhism* (1970): ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 35.

44 Pamela D. Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32.1 (2005): 107–30, 109.

45 David Lion Gardiner, *Kukai and the Beginning of Shingon Buddhism in Japan* (Stanford University: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1995), 252–253.

> Thus in the ubiquitous field of the Dharma realm, *kaji* describes the state in which 'Buddha enters me, I enter Buddha (*nyuga ganyu* 入我我入).[46]

Winfield continues to state that "*kaji* is said to actualize the reciprocal feedback loop between the root source and the practitioner's trace of Buddha's original grace."[47] Understanding these basic definitions will help elucidate how *kaji* functions within the *Kissa Yōjōki*. However, there is a further aspect demonstrating the far-reaching aspects of *kaji* which will foster a broader understanding of its application in Eisai's text.

In the above-mentioned aspects of *kaji*, we see that grace or blessings of the Buddha are channeled through the mediums of mantra, mudra, or mandala in order to activate enlightenment. But the applications of *kaji* can be extended even further when they are "combined with an initiated priest's prayer (*kito* 祈祷), [as] the energy of deity yoga accessed in *kaji* is said to have the ability to extend to almost any physical or mental object."[48] This act of "consecration" is further confirmed by Katja Triplett: "Through *kaji*, objects can be turned into medicine or protective objects, such as talismans that are through to have potent healing properties."[49] Furthermore, priests can use prayers and chanting, turning actual sounds into talismans imbued with *kaji* for healing applications: "the priests prayers and chants are thus integral to the *kaji* cure."[50] Having a firm grasp of these definitions and the various functions and application of *kaji* as base, blessing, and talisman, will broaden our understanding of the application *kaji* within the *Kissa Yōjōki*.

9 Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera: an Evolution of a Technique

Stressing this fusion of esoteric Buddhism with the *nourishing life* tradition, the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* positioned at the outset of the *Kissa Yōjōki* uses the tantric techniques of mantra, mudra and mandala in concert with the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine for the purpose of healing. While the techniques of mantra, mudra, mandala with that of

46 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 110.
47 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 110.
48 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 111.
49 Katja Triplett, "Magical Medicine? - Japanese Buddhist Medical Knowledge and Ritual Instruction for Healing the Physical Body." *Japanese Religions* 37, 1&2 (2012): 63–92, 85.
50 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 112.

kaji are not unique in the domain of medical discourse, what appears distinctive is the use of these esoteric techniques in conjunction with *kaji* to empower the organs of Chinese medicine. It will be useful here to comparatively situate Eisai's application of *kaji* with that of Shingon Buddhism and Kukai's application of the technique.[51]

As mentioned previously, the techniques of Kukai's *kaji* were for the purpose of union, the reception of grace, and to empower instruments. Kukai's healing hands technique were used in conjunction with rituals and prayers which became the dominant form healing supplementing the Chinese medical techniques of the day.[52] Although Eisai and Kukai are divorced by over 300 years, there is a relevance between them both as there had been an uninterrupted practice of *kaji* from its importation by Kukai, which "continued to be performed through the early modern period, and [has continued] to complement Western medicine in contemporary Japan."[53] However, the difference between Eisai and Kukai's application of the technique *kaji* lie in intention; *the recipient of its focus is an evolution in the technique*.

While Kukai's practice of *kaji* appears to use the priest as the "physician" or intermediary for the diseased, Eisai's practice and application of *kaji* is a self-healing model; it functions as an early self-help *Do It Yourself* manual for healing. In addition, while Kukai's exercise of *kaji* enables the energy of the deity yoga to extend to almost any physical or mental object to turn it into an *instrument of healing*, thus making ritualistic prayers and chants fundamental to the practice of *kaji*, Eisai's technique of *kaji* circumvents the necessity for an intermediary priest allowing the practitioner to perform this on his or herself by consecrating one of the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine, thus making it the instrument of healing.

Again, the difference of these two approaches lies in the recipient of one's focus. Kukai's application of *kaji* theoretically functions in several respects. One method is where a healer's application of an empowered mantra, mudra or mandala allows a hands-on healing approach in which the physician / priest administers "medicinal" chants and prayers. A second aspect of this type of healing is the divine intervention of the Mahavairocana Buddha through an individual's own application of esoteric techniques: "By extension, its sacred

51 While comparisons are made to Kukai's application of *kaji*, a more thorough analysis of his works are needed. In the number of secondary works reviewed for this article, I failed to find any techniques used by Kukai in which *kaji* was used on the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine.

52 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 108.

53 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 108.

esoteric sense also indicates a powerful benediction or blessing that energizes its recipient with the enlightening power of universal Buddhahood… *kaji* as the 'mutual empowerment' or universal energy exchange between self and Mahavairocana Buddha."[54] Since ultimately *kaji* allows for this divine exchange, a devout practitioner theoretically can harness this energetic exchange without an intermediary. The third type of *kaji* which could be used by either an intermediary or oneself, would be the consecration of an object: "*Kaji* can be performed for example, to consecrate a newly sculpted main image (*honzon kaji* 本尊加持), the altar (*kaji dan* 加持壇), perfumed water (*kaji kozui* 加持香水), incense and other ritual offering (*kaji kumotsu* 加持供物), or one's own rosary of one-hundred and eight mala beads (*nenju kaji* 念珠加持)."[55] This is where Eisai further refines the practice of *kaji*.

Eisai, in the citation he chooses, recognizes it as one of the most important esoteric rituals in bridging this bifurcation between the *spiritual and the medicinal*; Eisai's technique imbues the esoteric power of Buddhism within each individual organ of Chinese medical thought through the consecrated act of *kaji*. The technique or application of *kaji* laid out in the *Kissa Yōjōki* occurs by empowering the organs themselves, thereby performing an act of consecration in which *the organs of Chinese medicine become consecrated instruments of healing*: "Forming the karma mūdra and intoning the *aḥ* syllable mantra will empower the kidney viscus, so it will be free of disease." Here, the intermediary priest / physician is no longer needed. Furthermore, the real difference here is the acknowledgement of the anatomical architecture and physiology of the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine and the *five-phase* 五行 system of correspondence; in other words, this form of *kaji* operates within the physiology of the *five phases* visceral interface system.[56]

In the previous works reviewed above regarding their discussions of *kaji*, particularly Pamela Winfield's article, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan," there is no mention of the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine being consecrated through the act of *kaji*. However, this is not to say that *kaji* was not applied to areas of the body for healing prayers as Winfield reveals: "Many of these prayers often involve swallowing paper talismans with *kaji*-empowered water. One prayer said to cure eye disease involves two *reifu*

54 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 109.

55 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 111–112.

56 The Five Phases is an ancient system of science which explains the various functions and mechanisms of the body which all operate under and within the five main visceral-interface system of the body: Heart, Lungs, Liver, Spleen and Kidneys. I will use both the standard translation of *five phases* as the "system of correspondence" and the "visceral interface system." A brief explanation follows below.

霊符 paper talismans inscribed with the hiragana syllable me め, the Japanese word for eye."[57] This statement clearly demonstrates the use of *kaji* in Japan aimed directly towards physical aspects of the body through the consecration of *kaji* empowered water. Furthermore, this application also illustrates the contrast between Kukai and Eisai's intention of *kaji*. While the empowerment of water is used in conjunction with a paper talisman to heal the eye in Kukai's *kaji* therapeutic, Eisai situates *kaji* within the operation of the Chinese medical *five-phase* system of correspondence: "Forming the single-pronged vajra mūdra and intoning the *a* syllable mantra will empower [*kaji*] the liver viscera, so it will be eternally free of disease." Eisai demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of Chinese medicine realizing that in order to heal the eye itself, and any other bodily segment for that matter, the principles of Chinese medical philosophy must be applied and address the corresponding viscera related the diseased portion of the body:

> If a person's eye has a disease, one knows that the liver viscus is damaged. By using medicine with an acid nature one can cure it. If the ear has a disease, one knows that the kidney viscus is damaged. By using medicine with a salty nature one can cure it. If the nose has a disease, one knows that the lung viscus is damaged. By using medicine with a pungent nature one can cure it. If the tongue has a disease, one knows that the heart viscus is damaged. By using a medicine with a bitter nature, one can cure it. If the mouth has a disease, one knows that the spleen is damaged. By using medicine with a sweet nature, one can cure it.[58]

The importance of Eisai's recognition of the function of Chinese medical principles and the operation of the *five-phase* visceral-interface of the body cannot be understated. A brief explanation below of how important this system is to Chinese medicine will convey an appreciation of why Eisai chose this passage.

10 Eisai and the Five Phases: a Visceral Interface System

Regarding the body, Chinese medicine and the paradigm of the *five-phase* 五行 visceral-interface system correlate all human functions of both the psyche

57 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 112.
58 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 160.

and soma with the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine.[59] This *five-phase* visceral-interface system, more commonly known as the "system of correspondence," extends itself to the far reaches of the cosmos in which the body and mind respond accordingly due to changes in either an individual's immediate or extended cosmological environment. This bodily response, recognized early on due to changing environmental factors, was refined into a paradigm where the "medicine of systematic correspondence assumes that man must [also] live in harmony with the influences and emanation of all conceivable natural phenomena."[60]

Eisai touts this *five-phase* classification system early on in his book of tea, cited from a separate text titled the *Secret Excerpts from the Procedure for Destroying the Hells with the Utmost Excellent Dhāraṇīs*. Eisai illustrates this system of correspondence in order to inaugurate tea and its power of bitter flavor by associating each of the five flavors with the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine: the liver prefers acid flavors; the lung prefers pungent flavors; the heart prefers bitter flavors; the spleen prefers sweet flavors; the kidney prefers salty flavors.[61] Eisai continues to then exhibit a slightly more elaborate, however still condensed version of the classification system:

> 肝東也、春也、木也、青也、魂也、眼也、
> 肺西也、秋也、金也、白也、魄也、鼻也、
> 心南也、夏也、火也、赤也、神也、舌也、
> 脾中也、四季末也、土也、黃也、志也、口也、
> 腎北也、冬也、水也、黑也、想也、骨髓也、耳也.[62]
>
> The Liver is associated with the East and the Spring, with the element of Wood and with the color of Bluish-green, with the *hun* (soul) and with the eyes.

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59 The five fundamental organs of Chinese medicine, divided respectively into their yinyang pairings are: Liver / Gallbladder; Lung / Large intestine; Heart / Small intestine; Spleen / Stomach; Kidney / Bladder. Present also are the Triple Burner and Pericardium, but they are beyond the scope of this discussion.

60 Paul U. Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 68.

61 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 158.

62 See section [0419b11] in the *Kissa Yōjōki* 0175. James Benn translates this passage in his *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History* and represents it in a graph. I chose to display it in a more literary style to illustrate the chain of connections from one link to another. This was done to demonstrate the "system of correspondence" and how treatment to one link in the chain will inevitably affect other links along down the chain.

> The Lungs are associated the West and Autumn, with the element of Metal and the color white, with the *po* (soul) and with the nose.
>
> The Heart is associated with the South and Summer, with the element of Fire and with the color of red, with the *shen* (spirit) and with the tongue.
>
> The Spleen is associated with the center and the end of the four seasons (late summer), with the element of Earth and the color yellow, with the *zhi* (intention), and with the mouth.
>
> The Kidneys are associated with the North and the Winter, with the element of Water and the color of black, with the *xiang* (imagination) and with the marrow and ears.

Eisai is clever in noting the elaborate system of correspondence early on as it plays well into his overall therapeutic strategy for not only tea, but also for his *visceral visualization* method. What Eisai is attempting to express is that his therapeutic method employs a classical Chinese medical approach which is designed to treat the root cause of all disharmony and disease: the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine.

The history of these ideas is much to unpack and Paul Unschuld details much about the evolution of these concepts in his *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*. This type of therapeutic taxonomy has its origins in early notions of magic and medicine and can be said to have risen from the ideas of cause and effect. Concerning cause and effect, Unschuld details this relationship occurring along a continuous line:

> … namely that the phenomena of the visible and invisible world stand in mutual dependence through their association with certain lines of correspondence. The paradigm of correspondences concludes that manipulations of one element in a specific line of correspondence can influence other elements of the same line … In the science of systematic correspondences, however, magical concepts have been refined and combined with elements from the yinyang doctrine and the theories of the Five Phases, and all lines of correspondence have been integrated into one detailed system of mutual correspondence.[63]

These ideas of cause and effect between the body and environment and the early principles of magic were further refined once expressed within the philosophies of *yinyang* and the *five-phases*:

63 Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*, 52.

> It was recognized that not just one, two, or a limited number of elements form a line of correspondence, but that most, if not all, natural occurrences and abstract concepts can be incorporated into a single system of correspondence. The basis for this step was provided but the doctrines of yinyang and the Five Phases, both of which can be considered logical and systematic extensions of homeopathic magic.[64]

The *five-phases* are represented by the five primordial elements of nature: water; fire, metal; wood; and soil (earth). Because of this association, the translation often used when discussing this ancient classification system is that of the *five-elements*. However, although *en vogue* for present-day alternative medical specialist attempting to tap into ancient medical healing therapies manipulating one element with another in order to initiate some alchemical transformation in the body, it is erroneous to label each of these phases by their constituent element; the Chinese construct of elements is distinct from the Aristotelian concept of elements and it must always be remembered that the elements occur within and under the rubric of the *five-phases* 五行.[65] These *five-phases* are a moving process as Nathan Sivin succinctly explains a phase: "any one aspect of a thing of varying aspects; a state of change or development."[66] With this brief overview, we may now attempt to explain how this process is applied to Chinese medicine.

At one of the most sophisticated levels of Chinese medical theory, this line of correspondence may be said to begin with the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine.[67] In *five-phase* medical theory, every disorder can be seen to stem from

64 Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*, 54.

65 In his *History of Chinese Medicine*, Paul Unschuld notes this often mistranslation but points to the fact that throughout Chinese history sources do refer to the substantial necessities of not only grain, but the elements of water, fire, metal, wood, and earth.

66 Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 197. Please refer to Sivin's discussion in the appendix for a more detailed analysis of the elements within Chinese cosmology and their Greek counterpart.

67 It is beyond the scope of this paper to explain this in full, this discussion refrains from intricacies of the movements within the *five-phases* and stresses only the *generating* and *controlling* interactions. For an exceptional cerebral explanation of the *five-phases*, please refer to Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China, Volume II*. One may also refer to a basic textbook of Chinese medicine to grasp a basic understanding of how diagnosis and treatment may be applied via five-phase theory.

Briefly, there are several etiological factors of disease stemming from either environmental or human activities which can cause an imbalance and disharmony of either yinyang, the five phases (organs), *qi*, blood, fluids, essence, and spirit. The goal of Chinese therapeutics is to restore harmony and balance to either any excess or deficiency within one of these rubrics of health, either along the "system of correspondence" or through simple application of its harmonious counterpart to restore balance. Simplistically, if

an imbalance of the harmonious interplay of the *five-phase* visceral interface system; every phenomenon associated with a particular organ must have a healthy proportion avoiding either its excess or deficiency.[68] The five main viscera of Chinese medical theory do not operate independently of each other but work as a visceral interface system with each organ *controlling* and *generating* interaction. Within the *controlling* and *generating* phases, this *five-phase* visceral interface system is quite frequently represented by their constituent element in order to illustrate this ancient visceral interaction:

> Water overcomes [controls] fire; fire melts metal; metal – in the form of a knife, for instance – overcomes wood; wood – as in a spade – overcomes soil; soil – as in a dike – subdues water.
>
> Water / watering produces [generates] plants and trees, that is wood; wood brings forth fire; fire produces ash, that is, soil; soil brings forth metal; when heated, metals produce steam, that is water.[69]

It is quite possible that the *generating* and *control* cycles were symbolized by particular elements to convey the interface between organs in order to facilitate a level of comprehension. Just as modern medicine recognizes that heart disease can cause shortness of breath, these ideas would be easier to express with the analogy of fire controlling metal; if fire (heart) is weak, then fire cannot melt and control metal (lung).

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one has a disease and is running a fever (yang), administer cooling herbs (yin); if one's bodily fluids are dry, add moistening herbs; and if one has difficulties with any set of corresponding bodily phenomena associated with one of the organs of the *five-phases*, restore balance to the organ through proper treatment. For Eisai, as we shall see, this was his preferred method of treatment.

68 Each of the five viscera of Chinese medicine have an emotional component to them which can demonstrate nicely the "system of correspondence" and the delicate balance needed within these correspondences. The Heart is associated with joy; the Spleen with thinking; the Lungs with grief; the Kidneys with fear; and the Liver with anger. Taking the Heart as an example, a healthy amount of joy or laughter is appropriate for a balanced healthy lifestyle. If, however, at any point whether laughter or joy becomes excessive or for that matter deficient, there is an unhealthy balance. This would be one diagnostic indicator a physician would use to determine the root cause of illness. The Heart, being the house for happiness, would be suspected of being diseased. Or a physician may suspect a healthy unbalance within another organ along the movement of the *five-phases* which is affecting a neighboring organ.

69 Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*, 59. Paul Unschuld references Joseph Needham's monumental series of *Science and Civilization in China, Volume II,* in order to demonstrate the *generating* and *controlling* cycles.

Eisai appears to understand this complex relationship between *controlling* and *generating* cycles within the *five-phase* visceral interface system of Chinese medicine. As noted in the analogy above demonstrating the *controlling* cycle, the *generating* cycle can also produce dysfunction. As water generates wood, wood then generates fire; as fire generates earth, earth then generates metal; and finally, metal then generates water. Within this generation cycle there is a delicate balance of excess and deficiency within each of these phases /elements. If one element is "too full," having an abundance of any one of the set of correlates associated to its associated organ, it will spill over into the organ it generates. Plainly stated, if cup #1 is being continually filled with water, #1 will spill its contents into a separate vessel, cup #2, now upsetting the equilibrium in cup #2. Paul Unschuld elegantly illustrates this in an example of a classical Chinese medical diagnosis:

> In the case of the heart, the physician might realize that the patient was harmed by heat, and if these heat-influences were still confined to the heart, the heart would be diagnosed as being hit by its "regular evil." If, however, the heart was recognized to be subject to a secondary affection [infection], the physician would have to determine the source of the evil influences within the organism, and label the illness accordingly. In the sequence of mutual generation of the Five Phases, wood [liver] generates fire. The liver, accordingly, is the mother depot [organ] of the heart. Evil influences transmitted from the mother to child are called "depletion evil" ...[70]

This example put forward by Unschuld illustrates the complexity of Chinese medicine. An efficient diagnosis must determine if the imbalance is isolated to the set of correspondences related to the individual organ itself, e.g., excessive joy (the emotion related the heart) injuring the heart viscera. Or, perhaps, an excessive amount of anger (the emotion of the liver) is overflowing along the line of *mutual generation* and spilling over into the heart. Although this is a simplistic example, Eisai reiterates this sentiment and exhibits a comprehension of the dynamic movement of disease within the *five-phase* visceral interface system: "The five viscera are receptive to different flavors. If one flavor is over flavored and too much of it enters [the body], then that organ grows strong and oppressive and nearby viscera will respond by producing illness."[71] What Eisai

70 Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*, 87–88.

71 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 159. The original line in the *Kissa Yōjōki* reads as such: 此五藏受味不同好味多入則其藏強尅傍藏互生病. See section

is establishing from these examples is that disease requires a treatment to its root, not its branch; we will refer back to the ingesting of paper talisman and *kaji* consecrated water to better illustrate this contrast of treatments.

As mentioned above, The Chinese medical *five-phase* system was structured so that a treatment to an area may be addressed indirectly through treating its origin and correspondence within the *five-phase* paradigm. In other words, in the Chinese medical perspective, to treat the organ of the eye itself is a relatively inferior application of therapy unless physical trauma is present. To effectively administer a therapeutic treatment, a physician would need to identify the source of disharmony within the movement of the *five-phases*. At the most fundamental level, the source of discord in Chinese medicine for disorders of sight would be the liver viscera as the eyes are one major primary somatic segment associated to the liver viscera along the "system of correspondence."[72] Therefore, one would administer any one of the many *nourishing life*

[0419b20] in the *Kissa Yōjōki* 0175. Although Benn's translation of this passage may be interpreted as a movement of disease along the line of *mutual generation*, because of Eisai's knowledge of the *five-phase* paradigm, it is possible that Eisai may be referring to the more complicated movement of disease along the *controlling* cycle within the *five-phases* visceral interface. Here, Eisai uses the verb *ke* 尅 (restrain, control, overcome). The term *ke* 尅 is normally used to represent the *controlling* movement along the "system of correspondence" within the *five-phases*. However, a character analysis conducted of the Chinese medical classics on the online digital database Chinese Text Project (ctext.org), revealed a surprising dearth of the term of *ke* 尅 in both the *Huangdi Neijing Suwen Lingshu* (*Yellow Emperor's Classic of Simple Questions and Needle Therapy*) and the *Nan jing* (*Classic of Difficulties*); the classics seem to prefer the term *sheng* 勝 (overcome, keep in check). However, a variation of the character *ke* 尅 was found to be present in the *Shanghan lun* 傷寒論 (*Treatise of Cold Damage*): 肺屬金，金來剋木 (Lung is classified under metal; metal restrains (controls) wood.) It is not surprising that the classical medical text about the damage of cold would have an elaborate *five-phase* movement discussed in relation to the possibilities variations of cold damaging the lungs, but it is surprising to see Eisai employ this type of movement, if indeed it is what he suggests. I do not know when authors started using the term *ke* 尅 rather than sheng 勝, but we do see it used by Ming physicians. For a general discussion of generating and control cycles in the Ming dynasty, see Leslie de Vries (2012), *The Gate of Life: Before Heaven and Curative Medicine in Zhao Xianke's Yiguan,* [Unpublished dissertation]. Ghent University. More importantly though, is that Eisai is demonstrating a knowledge of the pathological movements along the "system of correspondence" in classical Chinese medical theory. More research needs to be conducted regarding this topic.

72 Unschuld offers an interesting discussion regarding the "system of correspondence" and the failure of cataract surgery to take traction within China. Introduced by Buddhist missionaries from India in the first millennia, cataract surgery failed to take hold even though having a successful history. Whether it was pre-existing prejudices against alien Buddhism or ideological differences in medical philosophy as a problematic factor, it

therapeutics which address the liver such as *visceral visualization*, herbal prescriptions, and or acupuncture.[73]

Having knowledge of this, Eisai was calculated in his choice of citing the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* due to its unique nature and emphasis on directing the empowerment of *kaji* upon the organs of Chinese medicine, which, as displayed above, *was the direct route of getting to the source of any disease*. To ingest a paper talisman consecrated with *kaji* (empowered) water to treat afflictions of the eye, does not align itself with classical Chinese medical principles. Eisai apparently was not satisfied with these types of local indigenous treatments. To reiterate Eisai's words: "It would be better to investigate customary practice in China (*daguo*), and to make known recent methods of treatment there."[74] It is this paper's contention that Eisai's citation was chosen for its unique and modernized application of *kaji* regarding classical Chinese medical concepts.

11 Discrepancies of Thought

The problem which brought about this study is that Eisai as a figure in Japanese Buddhism is continually overlooked: "While other important figures in Japanese Buddhism of the Kamakura period, such as Hōnen 法然, Shinran 親鸞, Dōgen 道元, Eizon 叡尊, and Nichiren 日蓮, have been studied and revisited by both sectarian and non-sectarian scholars, [Eisai] has not received much attention. He is still discussed in a single frame-work: as the founder of the Japanese Rinzai Zen school (Rinzai shū 臨済宗)."[75] In addition to Eisai being neglected as an important historical figure in the history of Japanese Buddhism, his text of the *Kissa Yōjōki*, the main text of this inquiry, has also avoided serious scrutiny: "Because Eisai's text does not fit particularly well into narratives about the development of *cha-no-yu* in Japan, it has often been

is interesting that surgery imported from India failed to develop in China. For further discussion see Unschuld's *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*.

73 The liver channel commences at the tip of the large toe, runs up the inner thigh, and then to the abdomen proximal to the liver itself; here the energetics of the channel submerge into the liver, meet at the lung, and then travels upwards towards the eye. Since the energetics of the channel here are submerged, one theoretically can treat disorders of the eye through stimulation of the acupuncture point anywhere along the channel from the foot to the abdomen, or corresponding liver points on other channels.

74 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 158.

75 Mano, *Yosai and Esoteric Buddhism*, 827.

given only cursory examination by historians or treated as little more than a somewhat eccentric curiosity.[76]

In addition to being a neglected figure in the history of Japanese Buddhism, there are several other difficulties which make this study relevant. The subjects of this study, *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Maṇḍala of the Five Viscera* and the term *kaji* enclosed within have garnered little attention. These subjects are worth discussing because firstly, the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Maṇḍala of the Five Viscera* is an enigma in that it no longer survives. And secondly, its citation and propagation by Eisai in a book concerning tea arouses curiosity. Regarding the healing medical technique of *kaji*, it was introduced by Kukai in the 9th century and "… rarely if ever sees it mentioned in the mainstream scholarly literature focusing on the history of medicine in Japan."[77] Moreover, as this study has revealed, the practice of *kaji* as seen in Eisai's text is remarkably engaged with Chinese medicine distinguishing itself from previous past practices of the application of this type of empowerment.

It is this study's hope that an examination of these subjects will further the understanding of the esoteric thought of Eisai which has eluded scholarship as "…the biggest problem for understanding [Eisai] is the fact that his earlier career as an esoteric Buddhist thinker has been so little studied. [Eisai's] esoteric thought was highly influenced by Taimitsu, and the scholarly neglect of this tradition, in comparison with Kūkai's Shingon, has also contributed to the gaps in our knowledge of [Eisai]."[78]

It is my contention that previous studies have overlooked the uniqueness of Eisai and the inclusion of this citation, thus underestimating the presence of the term *kaji* and the *nourishing life* practices all misguidedly subordinate to the text's advocation of tea, thus, being so important in establishing his esoteric thought. Furthermore, it is this unique of application of *kaji* within the *Kissa Yōjōki*, in contrast to previous usages of the term, which may possibly contradict earlier associations of the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Maṇḍala of the Five Viscera*, with what I believe to be are, erroneous correlations.

One possible reason that Eisai has garnered such little attention is the fact that scholars have attributed his citations to nothing more than a mere miscellaneous collection of quotes taken from the Buddhist texts of either *Taisho* 905 or *Taisho* 906. Shinya Mano in *Yōsai and Esoteric Buddhism*, attributes some of Eisai's citations used in the *Kissa Yōjōki* to *Taisho* 906: "[Eisai] connected the heart to one of the five steps in the meditative practice for obtaining a perfect

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76 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 146.

77 Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan", 108.

78 Mano, *Yosai and Esoteric Buddhism*, 828.

body, quoting from the *Zunshengtuoluoni podiyu yigui* 尊勝陀羅尼破地獄儀軌 (*T*. 906.18:912a–914c)."[79] In addition to *Taisho* 906 being seen as the scriptural source for some of Eisai's citations, Jinhua Chen complicates the situation further by arguing for an alternative text as the inspiration for Eisai's citation: "It is noteworthy that *Kissa Yōjōki* 喫茶養生記 (Account of Tea-drinking for Life Nurturing), a major text by the Zen master Eisai, also quotes from two texts that look like collections of excerpts taken from T905."[80] James Benn, in his book *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, corroborates Chen's assertion that both the excerpts cited in Eisai's *Kissa Yōjōki* are taken from Taisho 905. In Benn's opening statement, he addresses Eisai's first citation of the *five-phase* correspondence diagrammatic that Eisai charts:

> Although no text by the name *Secret Excerpts from the Procedure for Destroying the Hells with the Utmost Excellent Dhāraṇīs* survives, Chen Jinhua has demonstrated that the quotations within it bear and uncanny resemblance to another text called *The Esoteric Dhāraṇīs Related to the Three Kinds of Siddhi* [*attainment*] *Which Allow One to Destroy Hells, Transform Karma, and Transcend the Three Realms* … preserved as number 905 in the Taisho edition of the Buddhist cannon and there credited as

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79 Mano, *Yosai and Esoteric Buddhism*, 831.

80 Jinhua Chen, *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan* (Bruxelles: Institut Belge Des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 2009), 241. An outstanding work of research, a quick overview of Chen's argument is needed. Although complicated, there were three *siddhi* (magical) texts thought to have been composed in China by the Indian patriarch Śubhakarasiṃha (Ch. *Shanwuwei,* 637–735). These texts are (translated by Chen): The Esoteric *Dhāraṇīs* Related to the Three Kinds of *Siddhi* [Which Lead to] the Smashing of the [Torments of Hell], the Transformation of Karma and the Transcending of the Three Realms (Taisho 905); The Manual of *Dhāraṇīs* Related to the Three Ranks of *Siddhi* [Which Belong to] the Supreme Mind of the Buddhosnisa, [and Lead to] the Smashing of [the Torments of] Hells, the Transformation of Karma and the Transcending of the Three Realms (Taisho 906); and The Esoteric *Dhāraṇīs* [Which Belong to] Supreme Mind of the Buddhosnisa, [and Lead to] the Smashing of [the Torments of] Hells, the Transformation of Karma and the Transcending of the Three Realms (Taisho 907).

These texts were thought to have been translated into Chinese by Śubhakarasiṃha. However, being previously under scrutiny, and now with the arrival Chen's research, these texts are considered to have not been composed by Śubhakarasiṃha due to the considerable indigenous Sinitic influence within them such as the *five-phase* theory, anachronistic ideas which came after Śubhakarasiṃha such as sophisticated esoteric versions of the five-divisions and variations of the five-Buddhas, and the texts' influence on the certificates of esoteric transmission. The texts of Taisho 905, 906, and 907 are now thought to have been composed in Japan to legitimize Saicho and Tendai, with T-907 considered being first composed by Tendai monk Annen (841–904?); composed several hundred years before Eisai.

> a translation by the Indian esoteric master Śubhakarasiṃha (Shanwuwei, 637–735).[81]

Benn then refers to the citation under analysis in this essay, *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*, by further substantiating Chen's analysis:

> Having determined one of Eisai's proof texts to be a Japanese Buddhist apocryphon, we may be prepared for the identity of another source cited by Eisai: *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandalas of the Five Viscera* (*Gozo mandara giki sho*). This text not only correlates the five viscera with buddhas and bodhisattvas but it also instructs the practitioner how to strengthen the five viscera through forming mudras and intoning Sanskrit syllables … *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandalas of the Five Viscera*, like the other esoteric text quoted by Eisai, appears to be another collection of excerpts taken from *The Esoteric Dhāraṇīs Related to the Three Kinds of Siddhi* [Taisho 905] that I mentioned earlier.[82]

It is indeed quite possible that Eisai's uniqueness is overlooked due to the fact that he formulated his therapeutic method from a collection of previous sources. However, I believe the casualness towards his text as nothing more than a mere collection of citations has deprived us of the novelty of his therapeutic approach. Let us examine Chen's assessment of Taisho 905 as the scriptural source for Eisai's *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* in order to understand its uniqueness.

Chen in his summation of Eisai's citation, suggests it origins in Taisho 905:

> Given that almost all of these fivefold categories and Correlations can be found in T905, and that T905 seems to be the only known textual source for such a series of fivefold correlations, we can assume that the *Sonshō darani hajigoku hō misshō and Gozō mandara giki shō* [*Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandalas of the Five Viscera*] were two collections of excerpts cited from one or two versions of T905. This is confirmed by the fact that an alternate title of T905 is "Gozō mandara" 五臟曼陀羅. The fivefold correlation woven in the three siddhi texts centered on the five syllables, whereas the two fivefold correlations in the two

81 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 151.
82 Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*, 152.

collections, as they were quoted by Eisai, seem to have the five viscera as their most essential component.[83]

As we now know, the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* implore its practitioner to use the threefold tantric method of mandala, mudra and mantra to empower (*kaji*) a particular organ. If indeed Eisai's source text of the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* is a collection of quotes from either *Taisho* 905 or 906, it would be readily apparent in content and grammatical structure. However, an analysis of the contents within both *Taisho* 905 and 906 not only reveal a dearth of one of the most important terms, *kaji*, but leave us with little if any resemblance of this verb "empowerment" acting upon the viscera of Chinese medicine as seen in the *Kissa Yōjōki*.

A character analysis *Taisho* 905 reveals that *kaji* is used three separate times, while its appearance in *Kissa Yōjōki* amounts to six. The sum total within T-905 not only reveals discrepancies but also insinuates a lack of influence when compared to Eisai's text. However, its mere weight in appearance throughout the text is not enough to come to any conclusions; its syntax and function within the two texts will be more revealing.

Our first appraisal of the term *kaji* 加持 within T-905 appears similar in its function as verb acting upon object. However, the recipient of the empowerment is not one of the *five viscera* of Chinese medicine:

念誦加持。戰鼓上書。賊軍自降。一人不損名金剛鼓。

Recite the five syllables and empower the battle drums with them. Then one's enemies will be easily subdued, with no casualties of one's own. [This is] called the *vajra*-drum.[84]

Here we see the term used in conjunction with the act of recitation, 念誦, (to read aloud) in order to activate the esoteric *vajra* drums. In addition to this, the second appearance of term *kaji* 加持 again appears to be coupled with the act of recitation, only here we now have this recitation in the form of a mantra:

深妙真言加持法

The empowering methods with profound and wonderful mantras.[85]

83 Chen, *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan,* 243.
84 Chen, *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan,* 272.
85 Chen, *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan,* 273.

The application of empowerment in these two examples resembles Kukai's use of the newest technology of the day where the empowering methods of *kaji* are directed towards an instrument or object and the various methods of mantras. There is a consecration occurring in these examples, however, this consecration is upon an object and prayer rather than a visceral organ of the body. Although the term *kaji* is being used in the same method as the *Kissa Yōjōki* in the act of empowering, it is not in likeness to the objective of Eisai's intent: the viscera.

In the third final appearance of *kaji* 加持 within Taisho 905, we encounter its power lending itself to another esoteric image:

> 中心空具一切色 。即是加持世界 曼荼羅普門之會無處不有也
>
> The space at the [center], full of various colors, indicates the empowering of the *mandala* in the world and the assemblies of the universal gates which are present everywhere.[86]

Here, in the last time we see the use of *kaji* 加持, it appears in conjunction with the esoteric technique of a mandala.

With this, we note three occurrences of *kaji* in T-905 in which one works with empowering an instrument (drum) and the other two occurrences are in conjunction with empowering the esoteric techniques of mantra and mandala. With that said, these three instances bear little if any resemblance to the application of *kaji* in the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*. Furthermore, an analysis of T-906 reveals only one occurrence of *kaji* which appears in identical likeness to T-905 as seen above: 深妙真言加持法: "The empowering methods with profound and wonderful mantras." And although it is intriguing that T-905 has the alternate title of "*Gozo mandara*" (Five Organ Mandala), the absence of the esoteric term *kaji* 加持 is too noticeable to make the assertation of T-905 as the scriptural source for Eisai's *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*.

Lacking the time, space, or certainty to allocate a thorough argument to an alternative to Chen's assertation of T-905 as the scriptural source of *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*, perhaps we can tentatively offer a suggestion. Due to Chen's meticulous scholarship, he has noted that a number of texts were used for content for the composition T-905:

86 Chen, *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan,* 298–299.

> In addition to T907, a number of sources were used in T905. They include nine Buddhists texts that are briefly quoted (1. *Da zhidu lun*, 2. *Da Pilushe'na jing guanda yigui*, 3. *Cishi pusa luxiu yu 'e niansong fa*, 4. *Suxidi jieluo jing*, 5. *Jin' gangding chaoshengsanjie jing shuo Wenshu wuzi zhenyan shengxiang*, 6. *Da bore bolumiduo jing*, 7. *Fahua wenju ji*, 8. *Da boniepan jing*, 9. *Chengjiu Miaofa lianhua jing wang yuqie quanzhi yigui*), three non-Buddhist texts used at some length (*Changduan jing, Nanjing,* and *Huangdi neijing*), and two Chinese exegeses that were extensively employed: Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan*, Yixing's commentary on *Dari Jing*.[87]

One of these texts, the *Dari jingshu* 大日經疏 possibly contains one of the most important keys for unlocking the mystery of the origins of the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*.

In Chen's book *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Tendai Esoteric Buddhism in Japan*, he isolates the passage of the *wuzi yanshen guan* 五字嚴身觀, housed within the *Dari jingshu*, to illustrate the similar tantric practices occurring in Taisho 905, 906 and 907. The excerpt under scrutiny in this section "… is a group of five verses found in the seventh fascicle of *Dari jing*, which is taken as the *locus classicus* for the *wuzi yanshen guan*."[88] The wuzi yanshen guan uses the "five syllables which the practitioner, through visualization, places on the five specific bodily parts…"[89] This technique of visualizing syllables on bodily segments is very similar to the practice occurring in each of Taisho 905, 906, and 907 and the source of this technique is likely the *wuzi yanshen guan* 五字嚴身觀. Let us examine the five verses found in the seventh fascicle of *Dari jing* known as the *wuzi yanshen guan* 五字嚴身觀:

阿字遍金色 用作金剛輪	Syllable *a*, entirely in the color gold, is used as the vajra-cakra,
加持於下體 說名瑜珈座	empowered and held on the genitals, called the yogic throne.
鍐字素月光 在於霧聚中	Syllable *vam*, like white moonlight, spread amidst the heavy mist,
加持自臍上 是名大悲水	empowered and held on the navel, called the water of great compassion.

87 Chen, *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan,* 166.
88 Chen, *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan,* 206.
89 Chen, *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan,* 203.

囕字初日暉 形赤在三角	Syllable *ram*, like the rising sun, red and triangular,
加持本心位 是名智火光	empowered and held on the seat of original heart, called the light of wisdom fire.
唅字劫災焰 黑色在風輪	Syllable *ham*, Like the flames [that end] a kalpa, black and on the “wind
加持白毫際 說名自在力	cakra, empowered and held between the white eyebrows, named self -existent power.
佉字及空點 相成一切色	Syllable *kham* and the “dot of emptiness, manifesting themselves in the
加持在頂上 故名爲大空	“color of all colors,” are empowered and held on the top of the [acarya’s] head, are thus called “great space / emptiness.”[90]

In comparison, lets us analyze a paraphrased example of the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* from the *Kissa Yōjōki*:

誦[*a*]字真言加持肝藏永無病	… intoning the *a* syllable mantra will empower the liver viscera, so it will be eternally free of disease
誦[*hrih*]字真言加持心藏則無病	… intoning the *hrīḥ* syllable mantra will empower the heart viscus, so it will be free of disease.
誦[*trah*]字真言加持肺藏則無病	… intoning the *trāḥ* syllable mantra will empower the lung viscus, so it will be free of disease.
誦[*ah*]字真言加持賢藏則無病	… intoning the *aḥ* syllable mantra will empower the lung viscus, so it will be free of disease.
誦[*vam*]字真言加持脾藏則無病[91]	… intoning the *vaṃ* syllable mantra will empower the spleen viscera, so it will be free of disease.

90 Chen, *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan,* 206.

91 See section [0419b20] *Kissa Yojoki* 喫茶養生記西 0175.

Although the *Kissa Yōjōki* and the *Dari jingshu* demonstrate similar techniques of adorning the body with tantric syllables, it is not enough to argue for a parallel in texts between the *Kissa Yōjōki* and the *Dari jingshu*. However, if we take a look at the phraseology employed here analyzing the pattern of terms with the particular terminology of *kaji* 加持 in its relation to a specific part of the body, we may have a better example to hinge our argument upon.

In noting the practice of assigning syllables to particular parts of the body in T-905, 906, and 907 as originating in the *Dari jingshu* with the *wuzi yanshen guan*, Chen innocently overlooks the similarities with Eisai's citation of *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* which parallel in almost identical fashion. Simply put, what we have here in both texts of the *Kissa Yōjōki* and the *Dari jingshu* is the exact phraseology / syntax with a tantric syllable empowering a section of the body:

Dari jingshu: 阿字 遍金色 用作金剛輪 加持 於 下體 說名瑜珈座[92]
Kissa Yōjoki: 誦 (a) 字 真言 加持 肝藏 永無病也[93]

When looking at this, what is immediately apparent is a mantric syllable *zi* 字 is being used in conjunction with empowerment *kaji* 加持 on a specific body part *xiati* 下體 (genitals). The difference here lies in that the *wuzi yanshen guan* is stressing the empowerment of a wholly different system of anatomical architecture: the Indic Chakras. While T905, 906 and 907 may adopt and adapt this system of associating a *mantric* syllable to one of the organs of the *five-phases* of Chinese medicine, there is unequivocally no process of "empowerment" *kaji* being performed on these organs. There is actually very little difference in this phraseology excluding the intention of an organ being disease free *wubing* 無病.

Apparently, sometime after the translation of the *Mahavairocana* sutra and Yixing's commentary to it, the *Dari jingshu*, there may have been an offshoot or derivative text in which the composer altered and supplemented material with the intention of being directed towards the practice of esoteric Buddhist methods with Chinese medicine. It is quite possible that the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* was this derivative text, or a derivative text of the offshoot. In addition, we cannot exclude the possibility that Eisai altered this citation to suit his own needs of a unique therapy to address the concerns of *mappō*.

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92 Chen translates as such: "The syllable *a*, entirely in the color of gold, is used as the vajracakra, empowered and held on the genitals, called the yogic throne." 206.

93 "Chanting the *a* syllabic mantra will empower the liver viscera, thus being forever free of disease."

12 Conclusion

Here are some final comments on the uniqueness of the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* within the *Kissa Yōjōki*. It can be said that spiritual pursuits and medicine are consistent in their motives: the health of the individual. Detractors of this declaration may point to the inherent inconsistencies of both pursuits in that one is soteriological in its intent upon the spirit, while the other takes the soma as its object of care. In other words, spiritual pursuits and religion focus on redeeming the intangible through salvation while medicine may direct its therapy towards the tangible.

What is immediately striking in Eisai's text is his concern for illness and the proper therapeutic to thwart its progression. This is quite intriguing considering Buddhism's historical insistence on overcoming the physical existence of the body. Yet however, at times within Buddhism, techniques are suggested which did "use the body as its primary vehicle for refinement and cultivation and therefore is fundamentally Chinese, and not Buddhist, in character."[94] Eisai and this citation appear to fall into this category and are a reflection of contemporaneous representations of the anatomical architecture of both Buddhism and Daoism. While some previous esoteric Buddhist attempts at understanding the body focused on empowering the chakras, Eisai's intent is to take the latest anatomical medical knowledge from China, in lieu of chakras, to further refine a technique which employs both esoteric Buddhist and Chinese medical techniques.

This essay set out to accomplish one thing: to establish the uniqueness of the application of the term *kaji* within the citation *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* in Eisai's text of the *Kissa Yojoki*. We first established a solid background of Eisai's concern for *mappō* and the travels which necessitated the cultivation of a more refined application of this technique of *kaji*. Once this need was established, we loosely examined some previous uses of *kaji* within Japanese Buddhism which was imported by Kukai in the 9th century. This analysis of previous applications of *kaji* when compared to its function in the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*, demonstrated a uniqueness in function unseen before in regard to empowering the viscera of Chinese medicine. Although further research into Kukai's application of this technique and others prior to writing of the *Kissa Yōjōki* must be undertaken to further this argument, it is quite compelling that the secondary literature reviewed saw little mention of the activation of *kaji* upon the viscera of the body.

94 Sakade, *Taoism, Medicine and Qi in China and Japan*, 93.

Our next mission was to address the association of the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera* with a series of Taisho texts 905 and 906. Through a content analysis, we aptly demonstrated very little similarity in regard to *kaji*. This content analysis led us then to examine Yixing's commentary to *Mahavairocana* known as the *Dari Jingshu*. This examination revealed a usage of *kaji* that is almost identical in syntax and structure to that of the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*; the only difference was the recipient of empowerment was not a Chakra, but an organ of Chinese medicine which kept an individual free from disease.

Myōan Eisai's text of the *Kissa Yōjōki* is a text which bridges the pursuit of both redemption and recovery; a text intolerant of the bifurcation of body and mind which refuses to see the recovery of the soma as a subsidiary to the salvation of the soul. As an extension of this lineage of Buddhist appropriation of traditional Chinese medical techniques, the *Kissa Yōjōki* with the inclusion of the *Excerpts from the Rituals of the Mandala of the Five Viscera*, is a text which not only recognizes the anatomical architecture upon which we are built, but also ensnared within; and that in order to free the spirit we have to operate under the parameters that are set by the body. In other words, we have to operate according to the rules of anatomical physiology; if disease moves along a "system of correspondences," we must cure it at its root within this "visceral interface system." Just as higher states of consciousness and samadhi are only accessible through the physiological processes of *qi* 氣 and breath *xi* 息, the healing of disease must operate through the *five-phase* paradigm within the *Kissa Yōjōki*. Furthermore, as Eisai sees it, it is only this acknowledgment of the physiology of the *five-phase* visceral interface system coupled with *kaji*, which will be able to save us in this final age of the Dharma, *mappō*.

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CHAPTER 7

Menstruation, Gender Segregation, and a Kōan Concerning Miscarriage

On Gender and Embodiment in Contemporary Buddhist Practices

Sarah A. Mattice

> Buddhha's great, but sometimes you want a woman to talk to.
>
> SHAWNA[1]

The goal of this chapter is to relate some examples of how a few contemporary Buddhist women think about their gender and their bodies in connection with their Buddhist practice, in their own words as much as possible. This work comes from in part from research for my 2021 book, *Exploring the* Heart Sutra,[2] which involved a series of ethnographic interviews[3] conducted in 2018–2019.[4] The larger project involved seventeen women, ranging in age from late twenties to late seventies. Participants were American (white, Asian-American), Taiwanese, and Chinese, and practiced in Chan, Zen, (Taiwanese) Pure Land, Shin, Huayan, and Tibetan traditions. This essay begins with a discussion of the theoretical framing of the project in terms of feminist reclamation, and then organizes some of the participants' comments into three broad sections: responses to the importance of their gender/body to practice; gender segregation and discrimination; and woes and/or wonders of a woman's body. The

1 Shawna (pseudonym), interviewed by author, Florida, 5/12/2019.

2 Some material in this chapter is reprinted from chapter four of my recent book, *Exploring the* Heart Sutra (Lexington Books, 2021). All rights reserved. My thanks to Lexington for permission to reprint.

3 This work is not intended to provide generalizable data.

4 This ethnographic work was funded in part by an Academic Affairs Scholarship Grant from the University of North Florida. My thanks to Will Gilbert for his help in transcribing these interviews, and to Jason Simpson for his editorial expertise. For the purposes of this work, the category of "women" was intended to include all those who identify in some way as such, although I did not interview any persons who had formally transitioned genders.

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essay then concludes with a final story and some thoughts for what this sort of ethnographic work might imply in terms of future philosophical research.

1 Feminist Reclamation and Buddhist Philosophy

In conducting these interviews, I have been deeply humbled by and grateful to the many women who took time from their busy lives to talk with me. When I began my study, I was unsure of exactly who would be willing to talk with me, and what they might have to say. As a philosopher by trade and not an ethnographer, I had little experience in conducting "fieldwork" in any traditional sense of the word, but for a variety of reasons I was convinced that the opportunity to listen to contemporary women Buddhists—especially those who do not normally have a voice in academic discourse—was particularly important for my project. This conviction stems in part from my commitment to feminist reclamation, as both a project of ideo-archaeology aimed at uncovering the work of historical women philosophers, and as a methodology that implies the need for significant change in how we understand the discipline and canon of philosophy today.[5] In the context of this chapter, feminist reclamation pushes us toward greater inclusivity in a number of (inter-)related ways, including incorporating more women's voices in our canons, in terms of both academic philosophy and the Buddhist canon(s), transforming how we understand and interpret Buddhist texts/practices that have historically tended to either exclude or malign women's embodiment, and broadening the scope of philosophical practices to include ethnographic methods.

While feminist reclamation in East Asian philosophies is in its early stages, feminist reclamation in the context of Anglo-European philosophy has gained more ground. In describing the necessarily transformative effect of feminist reclamation on the discipline of philosophy, Sarah Tyson writes,

> The history of European and Anglophone philosophy is more than incomplete; it has been constructed through practices of exclusion that we can critique. We need practices of reclamation that comprehend the myriad modes of prohibition and erasure employed to deny philosophical authority… Given that systematic practices of exclusion have so shaped our understanding… feminist reclamation's goal should not be the supplementation of philosophy, but rather its transformation … we

5 Philosophy lags significantly behind other disciplines such as Religious Studies, History, and Sociology, in accommodating the methods and insights of feminist reclamation.

> need reclamation approaches that not only engage with historical women's texts as philosophical, but do so in ways that contend with how the contemporary field of European and Anglophone philosophy has been and is constituted through women's exclusion.[6]

In other words, once we are aware of the ways that we have inaccurately constituted our traditions—and of course not only with respect to gender—remedying these inaccuracies involves not only making space for the voices of those left out, but also reimagining and revising our practices. As Jonathan Ree explains, this is a complicated process:

> There is … no need to postulate a peculiarly virulent strain of sexism amongst dominant philosophers in order to explain the almost complete absence of women from the modern philosophical canon. The thoroughness of the exclusion of women from the history of philosophy (particularly in comparison with their role in literary canons) is more likely to be a result of the peculiar historical evolution of the schematization of the philosophical canon. The story can be summarized in terms of what might be called the triple incidence of canonicity. If a canon functions, in the first place, to give a present identity to an intellectual discipline by defining the past of which it takes itself to be the inheritor, it also serves, secondly, to shape its sense of its intellectual options for the future, and hence to determine the kinds of works that get written, and indeed the kinds of thoughts that get thought. But in the third place, changes in forms of canonicity can have retroactive effects, entailing wholesale changes in conventional interpretations, alterations in traditional rankings, and even the deletion of whole ranges of works that were previously well-regarded… If we want to tackle the extraordinary bias against women in the history of philosophy… it will require a reconfiguration of philosophical inquiry itself and a systematic reworking of its relations to its future and its past.[7]

In philosophy, feminist reclamation has primarily been about rethinking these issues of canonicity.

6 Sarah Tyson, *Where are the Women?: Why Expanding the Archive Makes Philosophy Better* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press. 2018) xxvii–xxix.

7 Jonathan Rée, "Women Philosophers and the Canon," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 10.4(2002)641–652. 651–2.

In a Buddhist context, this has meant reclaiming stories and *kōans* involving or featuring women and making space in accounts of canonical history for lay and ordained women, from Mahāpajāpatī and Yaśodharā to Wu Zhao (武曌, 624–705), Miaozong (妙總, 1095–1170), Ryōnen (了然, 1646–1711), Kim Iryŏp (1896–1971), and more. Authors such as Barbara Ruch, Miriam Levering, Beata Grant, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Jin Park, and many others have made major strides in this work.[8]

Buddhist philosophical canons, however, have had complicated relationships to issues of gender and women's embodiment. From early exercises designed to help (male) monastics exorcise desire for women's bodies by visualizing women's decay and death, to repeated claims of the need for possessing a man's body (a monk's body in particular) in order to achieve enlightenment and/or final nirvana and liberation, from the eight special rules to the general lack of textual preservation of women's voices, it is not hard to read canonical Buddhist literature as being *by* and *for* men. The very existence of the *Blood Bowl Sutra*—a sutra describing the inevitable fall of women after death into a hell of menstrual blood—would seem to support this. It is, however, more complicated than that. We have canonical stories that resist this trend, from *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa* to the *Lotus Sutra*, histories of women teachers like Moshan Liaoran (末山了然, 9th c.), Mugai Nyodai (無外如大, 1223–1298), and Kojima Kendo (小島賢道, 1898–1995), and figures such as Tara and Guanyin who, in at least some respects, push back against the "by and for men" narrative. And, moving from canon to contemporary world, we know that, worldwide, more women than men are Buddhists.[9]

Philosophically, the consideration of gender in a Buddhist context tends to evoke one of two responses. Either it evokes a discussion of the histories of patriarchy in Asian contexts (as if patriarchy were geographically isolated) and/or a discussion of non-duality and ultimate truth, suggesting that while gender may be relevant here in the "conventional" world, "ultimately" gender is

8 For more on this, see Chapter 3 in *Exploring the* Heart Sutra; see also my chapter "Three Common Misconceptions About East Asian Buddhisms: On Women and Gender, Violence and Non-Violence, and Philosophy and Religion" in *Introducing East Asian Buddhism in the Undergraduate Classroom*, ed. James McCrae and Robert Scott (New York: SUNY Press, 2023). Also, popular works have emerged on these subjects, including *The Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women* (2013) and *Zen Women: Beyond Tea Ladies, Iron Maidens, and Macho Masters* (2009).

9 "The Gender Gap in Religion Around the World: Women are generally more religious than men, particularly among Christians" PEW Research Center Report, March 22, 2016. https://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/22/the-gender-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/

a duality that we must transcend.[10] There are a number of troubles with these as our default philosophical options, not least of which is a lack of imagination and engagement with both Buddhist textual traditions and on-the-ground practitioners.[11]

In considering the implications of feminist reclamation for Buddhist philosophy, in addition to the work being done historically to bring more women's voices into the canon, as per Tyson and Ree's calls for transformative imagination, philosophers should perhaps consider ethnography as a relevant tool in the philosophical toolbox. Ethnography can be a valuable part of philosophizing. Ethnography—"qualitative research, especially research that permits people to use their own language and to express their own ideas"[12]—is described by Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland as having many functions:

> Ethnography… can be a generative location for the restructuring of scholarship on a changing social reality… [it] is a method uniquely suited to challenging the conventional wisdom, for subjecting large-scale theories to empirical examination, for generating data on new phenomena, **and** *for generating new theories or insights on the subjects we thought we already knew*… It allows for the expression of emergent understandings, partial accounts, and contradiction… Ethnography can also make us aware of the inadequacy of our most frequently used theoretical categories.[13]

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10 See for instance Buddhist feminist work by figures such as Rita Gross.

11 Paula Arai has done amazing in-depth ethnographic work with Soto Zen nuns in Japan (*Women Living Zen: Japanese Sōtō Buddhist Nuns*, 2012), showing clearly that the idea of women as passive subjects of the patriarchy is problematic. Her recent work, *Bringing Zen Home* (2022) focuses on lay Buddhist women's healing rituals. For responses that problematize non-duality as the best/only philosophical response, consider for instance the experience of Ray Buckner, described here: http://blog.shin-ibs.edu/whose-gender-belongs-in-buddhism/. See also Amy Paris Langenberg, "On Reading Buddhist Vinaya: Feminist History, Hermeneutics, and Translating Women's Bodies," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. xx, no. xx (2020)1–33 doi:10.1093/jaarel/lfaa049

12 Robert Wuthnow, "The Cultural Turn: Stores, Logic, and the Quest for Identity in American Religion" in *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader*, ed. Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland (California: AltaMira Press, 1997) 246. In the larger passage, Wuthnow acknowledges that this is only a partial definition for ethnography.

13 Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland, "Developing Interpretations: Ethnography and the Restructuring of Knowledge in a Changing Field" in *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader*, ed. Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland (California: AltaMira Press, 1997) 18–19. My emphasis.

While most feminist reclamation has focused on the past, we can also consider the ways in which feminist reclamation might inspire us to move forward into the future in ways that push, complicate, or potentially fracture current disciplinary boundaries. A method that can aid in generating new insights, revealing problematic assumptions or generalizations in our theorizing, and challenging conventions, could be particularly useful for the kind of transformation Tyson calls for. This is not as unfamiliar to philosophical disciplines as it might seem—from research that looks at letters as philosophy (e.g., Schiller) to contemporary X-phi (experimental philosophy), philosophers have taken qualitative research in the subjects' own words as philosophical material before. By placing this in the context of ethnography we can draw on a rich history of theoretically sophisticated thinking surrounding how to engage these materials and what we can expect to get from them. As Robert Wuthnow notes, "Especially when multiple methods are used … one is more likely to perceive complexity than if one only observes a phenomenon from afar."[14] Given the many and varied criticisms of philosophical work on gender in Buddhist contexts (the over-emphasis on texts, and certain texts over others, the tendency to privilege Zen over other traditions, the tendency to view "women" through a white, cis-gendered, Anglo-European lens, etc.) considering gender and bodies in Buddhist philosophy, may call for multiple methods, including listening to what actual practitioners, who may or may not have a position of authority, have to say.[15]

2 In their Own Words: on the Importance of Gender/Bodies to Practice, Gender Segregation and Discrimination, and the Woes and/or Wonders of a Woman's Body

Over the course of 2018 and 2019, I conducted field interviews with seventeen women, in three countries. For the sake of this chapter, in what follows I share quotations from nine women, ranging in age from mid 30's to 75, including white, Taiwanese-American, Japanese-American, and Chinese practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, Zen, Taiwanese Pure Land, and Shin (True Pure Land) Buddhism.

14 Wuthnow, 248.

15 To be clear, I am arguing specifically about the discipline of philosophy. Other disciplines have been responding to these criticisms for some time.

A few women to add to the discourse:[16]

- Julia: mid-thirties white American Tibetan practitioner
- Mei: mid-thirties Chinese Zen practitioner
- Katie: mid-seventies white American ordained Zen practitioner
- Shawna: mid-sixties white American ordained Zen practitioner
- Eleanor: mid-sixties Taiwanese-American Chinese Pure Land practitioner
- Danielle: mid-sixties Japanese-American Shin practitioner
- Lucy: mid-sixties Japanese-American Shin practitioner
- Lisa: mid-sixties Japanese-American Shin practitioner
- Diana: mid-seventies white American Zen and Tibetan practitioner

In the context of our conversations, which ranged over a variety of topics including but not restricted to gender and embodiment in Buddhist practice, a number of themes emerged. Participants had varied responses to the importance of gender and their body to their practice, their sense of gender segregation or discrimination in their practice context, and the woes and/or wonders of a woman's body. In what follows I share their words on these themes, with as little of my own intervention as possible.

2.1 *Is Your Gender/Body Important to Your Practice?*

When I asked participants this question, the most common initial response was … confusion. Participants wanted me to clarify what I meant, and I wanted to be vague so as to not bias their response. This meant that I got a lot of answers that differ dramatically from one another, both in their content and in what they understood the question to be asking. For instance, Katie, one of the ordained women I spoke with, said:

> I don't … I wouldn't say important or not important. What I feel is that … a lot of people are surprised that I'm a woman and a Zen Buddhist priest. Because when they hear the word priest they think of a man. You know, and then they're happy. They go, "Wow, really? That's something, maybe I could do something like that."[17]

Diana, the oldest participant, who has practiced in a variety of different Buddhist traditions over more than fifty years, had this to say: "Well I'll tell you something. As a child I remember thinking to myself: I'm neutered. I'm not male or female. I remember that. I prefer to identify with males and the way

16 Participants' names have been changed to protect their privacy.

17 Katie, interview with author, Florida, 5/10/2019.

they thought."[18] Unlike another participant (who preferred to remain anonymous) who noted similar feelings and indicated that, if they had been born in a different time they felt that they would have wanted to transition genders, Diana identified her frustration with gender in the context of growing up in a very male-dominated world. Neither Diana nor Katie felt strongly, though, that it impacted their practice(s).

Julia, an American practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism, answered that for her, both embodiment, in general, and gender, in particular, are very important to her practice:

> My experience is that it's really important because so much of what we're dealing with is … I know this sounds 'woo woo' but I don't know a better way of talking about it. The sort of energetic currents of being embodied is a huge part of our experience and I don't even know how a meditation practice would work if you weren't engaging with that part of what it means to be human. In that respect I think being embodied is a huge part of my practice and even just the way that our quality of mind is manifest in sort of how we hold ourselves is a really … tiny example of that.[19]

She continued, making a more direct connection to gender:

> At the very deepest heart level I think a lot of what I have had to work through as a practitioner has been … personal trauma in how gender functions in our society. And I wouldn't have named that at the beginning but as I look at my own sort of biography as a practitioner and the ways that I've grown, so much of it has coincided with really confronting some deeply painful habits that seem to, in my perception, to intersect with the inherited trauma of being a woman in a patriarchy.[20]

Here, Julia identifies not only her experience as a gendered person as relevant to her practice, but as a core component of the kinds of things her practice has addressed. She also makes the connection between her own life and the way that gender as she has experienced it is a function of our hierarchical society, and notes that that is relevant to her practice as well.

18 Diana, interview with author, Florida, 5/11/2019.
19 Julia, interview with author, Skype, 7/23/2019.
20 Julia, interview with author, Skype, 7/23/2019.

Shawna, an ordained monastic, initially said, "I've never thought about the gender thing. That's never come up."[21] But, after a little reflection, she wanted to talk about her body and practice:

> The body thing, actually never really paid attention until one day when I'm sitting in there I could not get up from the cushion. I could not stand up when the bell rang. I entered what they called *samādhi* and everything was just gone, it was just like I was there, just sitting. Everything was gone and the bell shattered that and brought me back to reality and I could not move … And I'm listening, and I could hear the frogs and I could hear all the crickets and I could hear the noises in the forest in the back, and all of a sudden it just felt like all of it was just here. … But [later that night] when I walked into the ladies' room one of the other ladies was still awake, Linda, when I walked in she looked at me and she goes "what's that smile on your face … you're glowing!" Didn't realize you glowed when you had *kenshō*, or close to it.[22]

In these comments, Shawna describes an experience of *kenshō*, awakening or insight (into one's own nature), as tied in not only with a meditative experience of consciousness but also deeply tied to her sensory experience, her hearing and her proprioception. Furthermore, her *kenshō* was visible to others because of a quality about her person—she glowed. Although perhaps it might be common in contemporary American discourse to associate the description of a woman "glowing" with a different sort of profoundly transformative experience—pregnancy—in a Buddhist context this language is commonly associated with the visible manifestation of enlightenment. In a variety of early texts, the historical Buddha is described as having a sort of "post-enlightenment" glow that makes his liberation literally visible to others.[23] This phenomenon—the glow of awakening—has a long history associated primarily with male practitioners.[24]

Because I spoke with women who practice in very different Buddhist traditions, when I asked about their "practice" I received a number of different answers. Several of the women I interviewed spoke extensively about

21 Shawna, interview with author, Florida, 5/12/2019.

22 Shawna, interview with author, Florida, 5/12/2019.

23 The historical Buddha is repeatedly described as luminous, radiant, glowing, and emitting colored light, in early texts. He is also often depicted with a halo of light or a halo of flames as a sign of his attainments. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this important connection.

24 Arhats are also often depicted with halos.

chanting as a key part of their practice, and about the embodied experience of chanting—feeling the vibrations in their body, getting a dry throat, and especially chanting having a calming effect, both physically—slower breathing, slower heartbeat—and a mental/emotional effect—fewer frantic thoughts, recovering faster from nightmares with chanting, and so on. A number of women also noted the fact that they often chant while they drive—one woman noted that when she is alone in the car she chants as loudly as she can. This serves to help focus her and calm her nerves when engaged in the act of driving. Participants mentioned chanting a variety of different things, from the *Heart Sutra*, the *Da Bei Zhou*, *Medicine Buddha Sutra*, or *Guanyin Jing*, to the Shin Nembutsu (*Namu Amida Butsu*), among others.

These women's reflections on the role of their gender and bodies in their practice were many and varied, but even for those like Shawna that initially stated that it was not important, they mostly came around to reflecting on aspects of their practice where gender and embodiment are relevant in some way. This data is useful in helping to remind us that women's experiences of their own embodiment are complex and sometimes contradictory, and that philosophical discussions of Buddhism and gender need to be carefully nuanced to account for different communities, times, places, and to avoid monolithic claims about how "Buddhist women" are or are not.

2.2 Gender Segregation or Discrimination

In composing my set of questions for the interviews, I deliberately did not ask a question aimed at eliciting accounts of discrimination. Because there has been a lot of attention on sexual misconduct and abuse in a number of high-profile American Buddhist organizations, I did not want my participants to think that I was after something particular.[25] However, a number of participants did bring up issues with respect to gendered segregation or

25 See for instance Buddhist Project Sunshine (https://www.shilohproject.blog/sexual-misconduct-and-buddhism-centering-survivors/), a healing initiative started by Andrea Michelle Winn in 2017 involving professional investigation of sexual misconduct allegations against top Shambala leaders, which was directly responsible for Shambala publicly acknowledging widespread sexualized violence in the community. See also Tom Porter, "Buddhist Group Admits 'Abhorrent Sexual Behavior' by Teachers," in *Newsweek*, March 5, 2018, https://www.newsweek.com/buddhist-group-admits-abhorrent-sexual-behavior-teachers-830333. For more on sexual violations in varied US Buddhist contexts, see the recent and forthcoming work of scholars Amy Langenberg and Ann Gleig, introduced in "Sexual Misconduct and Buddhist: Centering Survivors," on *The Shiloh Project*,

discrimination. Julia, for instance, started her comments by reflecting on the Shambala #MeToo crisis:

> It's been really valuable for me to be able to say this tradition can point us towards this enormous wisdom and has all of these tools for cracking open so much of the potential we have within us and they're contained within patriarchal cultures and there might actually be aspects of how the tradition shows up in brick and mortar and financial institutions and in real human beings and all of this and I don't just have to uncritically accept, but I can get to the pit of what it's about and try to separate that from the chaff of what I do think are some social norms that I think honestly many Western Tibetan Buddhists sort of overlook because they're like "Oh it's just tradition that's perfect and my teacher's a Buddha" and we're not going to talk about that they might have archaic ideas that harm people. I'm just not there, I just bracket. But maybe this is lazy of me, but I just have to bracket that and not throw away the whole tradition over that.[26]

She continued, reflecting on some of the gendered aspects of Tibetan Buddhism in particular:

> Tibetan Buddhism, as I'm sure you know, deals a lot with masculine and feminine principles and deities that have this … Well they're gendered and most of them are male and sometimes the ways that masculine and feminine in principle are described seem to essentialize aspects of gender that a lot people try really hard to de-essentialize. So, there's all these politically problematic 'un-PC' parts of Tibetan Buddhism, and I confess that those have not been obstacles in my practice, actually.[27]

In contrast to Julia's reflection, which centers in Shambala Tibetan Buddhism, often as practiced in mainly white communities, Eleanor's experiences were very different. She, along with several female family members, runs a Buddhist center in the Midwest that caters mostly to local Asian immigrant communities, and that has extensive contact with Buddhist teachers coming into the U.S. from Taiwan and China. She notes that some of her community

November 18, 2020, https://www.shilohproject.blog/sexual-misconduct-and-buddhism-centering-survivors/

26 Julia, interview with author, Skype, 7/23/2019.

27 Julia, interview with author, Skype, 7/23/2019.

> are probably the most traditional, kind of old-fashion[ed] way. They want men and women to sit separate. Men should sit here and women there. And Carrie [her niece] went to that school [a traditional Buddhist school in Taiwan], did she tell you that? The boys and girls [don't] even talk to each other, you don't look at each other. We [don't] discriminate, nothing here. But we're trying to follow that.[28]

She also explained that when visiting Buddhist teachers arrive, they work hard to make sure the traditions surrounding gender are respected. For instance, she said that "If we go to the airport to pick up masters, if it's a male we need to have another. I can't just go pick him up, we need to have another male to accompany."[29] This is sometimes difficult for a center run by women.

In my conversations with several older women who are highly involved in a Japanese Shin Buddhist temple in Hawai'i, the women reflected on the gendered difference in terms of power in the organization, both positively and negatively. Lisa, for instance, noted that "the Hongwanji tradition, is very male oriented, I think. You think of the head temples, the chief minister, it's a very male dominated situation, I think; that's what I see. With growing up as a kid that's all I saw, male ministers; once in a while, you see one woman priestess, and that was shocking, almost."[30] She continued, explaining that

> You know, to be quite honest, in terms of the women, my mom and the women were in the kitchen, cooking the foods for the congregation, you know, the "church lady" idea, it's like that in many religions, church ladies, I talk to my friends at work and say this is made by the old temple lady … I'm an old church/temple lady myself.[31]

Lisa's sense of a woman's community and women's role in her temple was echoed by Danielle and Lucy. Danielle said although the temple's leadership is mostly men, that "more chances than not there are women in church. There are men too, but, just you kind of look around there's more women … They're important."[32] Lucy spoke of the Buddhist Women's Group, a world-wide charitable organization in this tradition. She said, "I think in the Buddhist Women's Group, we're an organized group that supports the temple. And I think that

28 Eleanor, interview with author, Iowa, 2/16/2019.
29 Eleanor, interview with author, Iowa, 2/16/2019.
30 Lisa, interview with author, Hawai'i 6/10/2018.
31 Lisa, interview with author, Hawai'i, 6/10/2018.
32 Danielle, interview with author, Hawai'i, 6/10/2018.

we're organized helps us do things. And we work together, not that we don't work with the men, but because we're part of a group."[33] Danielle was quick to add, "We give out at least $4000 each year. The committee to make a recommendation, it's a non-profit organization."[34] They spoke proudly about a number of programs sponsored by the Women's Group, including local charitable causes connected to homelessness and the effort to sponsor a national speaker at a large conference. Although these women were conscious of the lack of women in certain kinds of leadership roles in the temple, they were also very aware of the way in which women play strong leadership roles outside of the priest and formal temple head, and that women are the primary group that can be counted on to attend services regularly.

In discussing her ordination, Shawna, who had been practicing quiet meditation since she was sixteen years old and was an organizing force behind the creation of her local Zen group, related that her teacher (a white American who had been trained in Japan),

> never believed in women becoming monks, never once. I was encouraged by two other women to ask him, they were monks. And [an American monk and friend], He went to [Sensei] and said, "you should make Shawna a monk" and [Sensei] said "no." After the ladies encouraged me to ask him I did. In a not so nice way got turned down. But it didn't stop me from practicing. Wearing the robes doesn't change the practice.[35]

Shawna did later become ordained, and in her tradition women are ordained as monks, not nuns. This means that they are not subject to the eight special rules,[36] and in most contexts they do not follow more traditional gender segregations. She related to me something that happened recently at a one-day retreat at a nearby (more traditional) Vietnamese Buddhist center:

> And he [the head Vietnamese monk] noticed that I cut my hair short for the ceremony and he did ask me about it and I told him I said in honor of your group, I said I would not shave my head because I work in the professional world and I would not put my boss in the position of everybody

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33 Lucy, interview with author, Hawai'i, 6/10/2018.

34 Danielle, interview with author, Hawai'i, 6/10/2018.

35 Shawna, interview with author, Florida, 5/12/2019.

36 The *garudhammas* are eight special or heavy rules for fully ordained nuns, in addition to the monastic code required of men. These additional rules subjugate them individually to even the most junior male monastics, and require dual ordination of nuns by both nuns and monks.

> going to her saying, "what's wrong with Shawna does she have cancer? Oh, poor Shawna." I said I wasn't going to put them in that position. This is just a one-day thing, so I cut it as short as I possibly could out of respect for your group. The next thing I knew he was talking about the 12th chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* and the head female was sitting next to me. So maybe what I said had an effect, I'm not sure. But whatever it was I was glad to see another female up on the podium that had never been there before in all the years that I've been going up there. And it was the first time the women were not looking around the corner. I think it helped. Because we need to become more diverse and yes, I don't think men are above women, I don't think women are above men, and Kanzeon actually helped me with that.[37]

One of her (male) monastic colleagues told me about the same event—but in his recounting of it, he was irritated on Shawna's behalf that she was forced to sit with the nuns. It is telling, I think, that in her case Shawna saw this as the nun being elevated to sit next to her (a monk), a positive sign on behalf of the nuns, while her colleague was more concerned with the general lack of equity between monks and nuns.

2.3 The Woes and/or Wonders of Being a Woman

In one of the very first interviews I conducted, I asked Mei, a Chinese woman who came to be a devout Zen practitioner while studying in the U.S., if there was anything particularly important to her practice about being a woman, or being embodied. Her immediate response was that "being a woman, [it is] important, during my period I can't sit as much."[38] Being a woman, in a woman's body, means certain things that are rarely talked openly about in the context of contemporary Buddhist practice—like the discomfort of menstruation, and the various more traditional taboos against women doing a variety of things while menstruating (including in some cases entering a temple, or doing certain ritual activities, or sitting in meditation). Mei's straightforward response brought to mind (for contemporary feminists) the troublesome *Blood Bowl Sutra*. This short sutra was brought to Japan from China sometime during the late fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries. In it, we learn that women are destined at death to fall into a special hell—a hell composed of pools or bowls of menstrual blood—because of having polluted this earth with their blood. Initially used as a text to emphasize disgust for women's bodies to male monastics, the

37 Shawna, interview with author, Florida, 5/12/2019.
38 Mei, interview with author, Hawai'i, 6/17/2018.

text in Japan became a kind of cult best-seller, sold to lay men and women as a means of saving women from this hell through Guanyin worship.[39]

In contemporary times, some teachers have attempted to re-read this sutra. Claire Gesshin Greenwood, for example, reads the "the Blood Bowl Hell [as] a metaphor for those FUCKING FIVE DAYS A MONTH WHEN EVERYTHING IS TERRIBLE."[40] She describes a kind of Zen mindfulness perspective on this, what we might connect with philosophical concepts like *zhenru* 真如 (thusness, suchness; Sk. *tathātā*) noting that like all experiences, menstruation (or hormonal fluctional in general) is an experience that can be a site for awakening, or at least attending to the myriad ways in which our embodied experiences and our consciousness can benefit from a little *zazen*. In thinking about menstruation and practice, then, we might note that there are some kinds of *duḥkha* (suffering, discontent, unsatisfactoriness) where gender does seem to matter—perhaps including menstruation, miscarriage, and menopause for those gendered as women, in addition to the kinds of gendered suffering that result from social/cultural expectations, institutions, and injustices. To be clear, this is not to say that all and only those with ovaries, uteruses, and vaginas experience gendered suffering. Noting the gendered nature of some suffering is not just about women, or men, or those that reject this binary categorization, but about the way in which living in a world that seems to take gender as a fundamental category of existence is implicated in and intertwined with the particularities of both suffering and liberation.

My conversation with Mei moved on from menstruation to talk of her mother. Mei described having a sensitivity for meditative practice that she connected with being a woman, in part because of her experience teaching her mother to meditate:

> I think women, for example, my mother is very good at *qigong*, so meditation for her is just easy and natural, I told her to do it then she just started … just doing it every day, so it's easy for her. I don't know if it's easy and natural especially for women. But I think because it is good for

39 For more on this see Lori Meeks, "Women and Buddhism in East Asian History: The Case of the Blood Bowl Sutra: Part I: China" in *Religion Compass*. 2020;14:e12336. https://doi.org/10/1111/rec3.12336 and "Women and Buddhism in East Asian History: The Case of the Blood Bowl Sutra: Part II: Japan" in *Religion Compass*. 2020;14:e12335. https://doi.org/10/1111/rec3.12335.

40 Claire Gesshin Greenwood, "That's So Zen: Zazen and Menstrual Blood Hell" (unpublished manuscript, April 26, 2021) word document. My thanks to Gesshin Greenwood for permission to cite this piece.

> everyone … I am able to see the *qi* in my body, and that feels very good, maybe you will identify … that sensitivity with women, maybe.[41]

Mei was not alone in noting something distinctive about Buddhist practice for women and placing that in a maternal context. Lisa, Lucy, and Danielle all also talked about their mothers or grandmothers as important influences or connections in their commitment to practice. Shawna also mentioned, in the context of discussing how difficult it was to find time to sit *zazen* twice a day as a mother with small children,

> Sometimes, and this is for the ladies. When ladies take long baths, that's a meditation process. They don't realize it. And I keep telling them … if you take a long bath and you think nothing and you've got your candles lit and you got your little sometimes a little glass of wine, or flowers on the water, you'd be surprised you actually go into a meditative state, and they don't think about it.

And, through the course of our conversation, Eleanor described a number of difficult life circumstances that led to and supported her Buddhist practice, including especially family circumstances. She said,

> I think it's an advantage to be a woman. I think. Because … most of our group is women. And the guys, I don't know, it's hard for them to focus … I may be speaking too much for others but I'm just saying I'm glad I'm a female and I can more focus on my chanting [and] study.[42]

She continued,

> Yeah, I don't think much about it … But … I'm a mother, I'm a grandmother, I'm a wife, businesswoman … I feel like women in general … I wouldn't use the word but it's kind of like suffer more, work a lot harder than men. I know men have a job but people forget, women they have children or they have grandkids [and] it's pretty much on the woman's shoulder. So, when you suffer alone … usually you [are] kind [of] looking to get some help, mentally or [whatever]. So, I think being a woman, probably, still I think is a benefit to get enlightened.[43]

41 Mei, interview with author, Hawai'i, 6/17/2018.
42 Eleanor, interview with author, Iowa, 2/16/2019.
43 Eleanor, interview with author, Iowa, 2/16/2019.

Contrary to the more traditional account, here we have a contemporary practitioner stating that being a woman—precisely because of the many challenges women face—may be a benefit for achieving enlightenment. While we should not generalize too quickly from this statement, we can find philosophical common ground here with movements like standpoint epistemology, which holds that attending to the relationship between our intersectional identities and the power structures within which we live can reveal some sites to potentially be especially epistemically valuable.

I would like to conclude this section by relating one of the most powerful stories shared in the course of these interviews. Shawna shared with me that while she was still studying with her teacher, before she was ordained, her teacher gave her the *kōan* "What was your face before you were born?" She went home later that day and was paging through a magazine when she came upon an image of a pregnant woman on a bright blue background, with a triumphant tiny fist pushing visibly up on her belly. Immediately struck by this image, she took it in to her teacher as her response to the *kōan*. In describing this to me, she explained that although she had been pregnant eleven times, she had only two children. The pregnant belly, she said to me, "is the most powerful place on the body." It is the source of all our lives.[44]

She was careful to note that this was not really a traditional response to this *kōan*, according to the commentaries, but one that arose from her lived experience of having both miscarried and born children.[45] She said that teachings need to be real, and to speak to real life. Just two weeks after giving her teacher this response, she was invited to sew her ordination robes—something she had been asking to do for years.

And, although she denied it, in many ways her response is in line with traditional commentaries—just not the ones she (and most practitioners) are familiar with. Her response—the power of the pregnant belly, the triumph of life in the face of trauma and tragedy—echoes some of Zen's maternal ancestors like Miaozong, Eshun, and Yoshihime, each living with a profound depth of wisdom embodied in their gendered bodies. Consider the fourteenth-century case of Yoshihime, the strong-willed Tokeiji nun who, when asked by the gatekeeper at Engakuji "What is it, the gate through which the buddhas come into the world?" responded by grabbing his head and forcing it between her legs, saying "Look, look!"[46] Commenting on this, the contemporary Zen

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44 Shawna, post-interview conversation with author, Florida, 5/12/2019.

45 Philosophers tend to respond to this *kōan* by reflecting on the non-duality of subject and object, or advising us to turn our light inward and take refuge in practice (*zazen*).

46 "Yoshihime's 'Look, look!" in *Hidden Lamp*, 131.

teacher Judith Simmer-Brown notes, "This classic case asks about the gate through which buddhas come into the world. Immediately women understand the most obvious answer—through the cervix and vagina. Not only buddhas, but all beings enter the world through their mothers' vaginas."[47] As Florence Caplow and Susan Moon, editors of the volume *Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women* note, in discussing women's Zen stories, "Another striking aspect of these stories about women is how many explore the body, desire, and sexuality—topics that are generally absent from *kōans* about men … Many of these stories turn the stereotypes of women upside down."[48]

3 Conclusion

I opened this essay with an epigram from Shawna, who said in a conversation about Guanyin Bodhisattva, "Buddha's great, but sometimes you want a woman to talk to."[49] Feminist reclamation in Buddhist philosophy ought, among other things, to put us more in touch with how actual Buddhists are using, not using, responding to, rejecting, and creatively modifying Buddhist philosophical ideas, concerns, and practices. Using ethnography as a method—as a complement to, not a replacement for, other philosophical methods—can help us take the idea of embodiment in a Buddhist context seriously by paying attention to the lived experiences of diverse practitioners, in their own words.

That being said, what I have shared here is only a small selection of a much longer and wider ranging set of interviews, but this is certainly a limited resource. My study involved only seventeen participants and my interviews were, at their longest, only two hours. And, while my study did attempt to dislodge certain assumptions by including a more diverse set of women and traditions than may commonly be represented, it did not involve any African-American participants and could have benefitted from increased representation by other gender or racial/ethnic minority participants. For example, while these interviews did reveal variation among participants with respect to views about gender and bodies, no participants brought up a connection between bodies or gender and race, and only one participant connected bodies to sexuality and issues in LBGTQ+ communities.[50]

47 Judith Simmer-Brown, "Refleciton on Yoshihime's 'Look, Look!', in *Hidden Lamp*, 132.

48 Caplow and Moon, "Introduction," *Hidden Lamp*, 7.

49 Shawna, interview with author, 5/12/2019.

50 There are an increasing number of practitioners engaged in publishing work connected to the complex suffering produced by injustices, including Lama Rod Owen, Rev. angel

This work, and the words of these women, point to a number of questions for further philosophical consideration, including:

- What does nonduality mean in an inescapably embodied context?
- How do/can we understand *duḥkha* that arises from a gendered/embodied context as a site of liberation, without demeaning or covering over the reality of existentially gendered experience, or replicating existing patriarchal structures?
- How can we better understand and generate and sustain compassion to/from/in different bodies, genders, and situations? What forms can or should this take?
- In reflecting on the mutual interconnectedness of conditions, what role do we play in creating gendered and embodied suffering in ourselves and in the world around us? How can we remedy this?
- What would it look like to take seriously phenomenological investigations of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, parenting, and sexuality, from within Buddhist contexts? How might this differ from these phenomenological investigations in other contexts?
- How might a philosophy grounded in the transformative compassion of a figure such as Guanyin Bodhisattva provide a valuable counterbalance to the current use of the historical Buddha as a figure for the alt-Buddhist movement[51]?

As mentioned earlier, ethnography as a method can be helpful for "the restructuring of scholarship on a changing social reality," among other things. One thing that we have learned from other efforts in feminist reclamation is that transforming our understanding of canons means questioning the way traditions have tended to boundary police issues of texts and genres. We may need to think beyond our norms when it comes to what kind of "texts" philosophers are interested in. Jin Park, for example, in her groundbreaking work on twentieth century Korean nun Kim Iryŏp, has argued for appreciating some kinds of biography as philosophy.[52] Being more open and explicit about who we listen to, how we listen, and why, is a key part of transforming our canons and our practice.

Kyodo Williams, Larry Yang, and Ruth King; and increasing scholarship on these issues, as seen for instance in the volume *Buddhism and Whiteness: Critical Reflections*, ed. Georgy Yancy and Emily McRae (2019).

51 For more on Alt-Buddhist movements, see for instance Ann Gleig and Brenna Grace Artinger's "The #BuddhistCultureWars: BuddhaBros, Alt-Right Dharma, and Snowflake Sanghas," in the *Journal of Global Buddhism* 22.1(2021): 19–48, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4727561. For more on Guanyin, see Chapter 3 of my monograph, *Exploring the* Heart Sutra (2021).

52 Jin Park, *Women and Buddhist Philosophy: Engaging Zen Master Kim Iryŏp* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017).

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CHAPTER 8

Faith, Reason and Art

Integrating Buddhist Concepts into an Arts Curriculum

Anne-Marie Ninacs

This essay aims to investigate two dimensions of the creative process as it is taught within academic contexts: the scientific and the spiritual. A scientific approach is currently demanded among universities for a credible contribution to an artistic medium. It involves mastery of that medium's skills, materials, tools, and methods, as well as the general art history and specific theories behind an art project. In Canada, university-based artistic processes are now conceived by all major institutions and funders as *research-creation*:

> An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms). Research-creation cannot be limited to the interpretation or analysis of a creator's work, conventional works of technological development, or work that focuses on the creation of curricula. … Fields that may involve research-creation may include, but are not limited to: architecture, design, creative writing, visual arts (e.g., painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, textiles), performing arts (e.g., dance, music, theatre), film, video, performance art, interdisciplinary arts, media and electronic arts, and new artistic practices.[1]

In the course of artistic research-creation, the spiritual is largely understood, unknowingly following Hadot, as the entirety of the human mind or spirit at work, including thoughts, the whole psyche of the individual, as well as its interaction with the body and the phenomenal world. Spiritual thus becomes a

1 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Government of Canada, https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22 (consulted August 1, 2022). The basis of this definition was first developed at UQAM by Gosselin and Le Coguiec (2006).

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useful all-encompassing word, "because none of the other adjectives we could use – 'psychic,' 'moral,' 'ethical,' 'intellectual,' 'of thought,' 'of the soul' – covers all the aspects of the reality we want to describe".[2]

As intertwined as these dimensions are in the daily conduct of the creator-researcher, and as common as it is nowadays to convey lived experiences to document aspects of an art practice – through autoethnographic methods, explicitation interviews or somaesthetic guidelines, for instance[3] – it seems that one's own experience with religious concepts needs to be reframed, altered, toned down or even muted in front of the scientific demands. There is not much interest amongst university scholars and art experts for in depth and – moreover – sincere conversations about confessional matters. There are contextual reasons for that lack of interest in academia, and it is important to state them in order to fully circumscribe the discomfort they trigger, which could be summarized by this simple yet complex question: How to make use of Buddhist teachings as a university arts researcher and professor? A few artists case studies will help readers understand why it might be beneficial to do so, before considering some of the ideological challenges that await whoever wants to engage in such an enterprise.

1 Collective Distrust of the Religion

If many Western contexts could trigger a similar interrogation about the inclusion of beliefs to scientific studies, mine arises more specifically from francophone Québec. The French-speaking inhabitants of the province of Québec were culturally defined by their common language and by the Roman Catholic religion, whose clergy had hegemonic control over the population,

2 Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 81.

3 Regarding the creator-researcher issue, see Gosselin and Le Coguiec; Adams explores autoethnography; the issue of interviews is explored by Vermersch; somaesthetic guidelines are found in Shusterman; Elkins discusses the problem of incorporating religion in contemporary art. Pierre Gosselin and Éric Le Coguiec, *La recherche création : pour une compréhension de la recherche en pratique artistique* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2006); Tony E. Adams, S. Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Pierre Vermersch, "Le dessin de vécu dans la recherche en première personne : pratique de l'auto-explicitation," in Nathalie Depraz (ed.), *Première, deuxième, troisième personne* (2014): 195–233; Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (Cambridge University Press, 2008); James Elkins, *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art* (Routledge, 2004).

from the first settlers until the 1960s. Jose Santiago explains well why "without Catholicism the nation was nothing":

> Nationalism in Quebec in its origins was conformed in a strongly religious context in which Catholicism was an important ethnic marker that contributed to defining the boundaries of the national French-speaking community. Even if *Canadian nationalism* proclaimed a secular ideology after the British 'conquest' (1760), there is no doubt that the Catholic religion was an essential element in defining the nation due to its deep roots among the population. After the defeat of the Patriots (1837–1838), the Act of Union (1840–1841) and the creation of a federal state (1867), religion became an even more important element for the new *French-Canadian nationalism*. This nationalism considered that the political and economic development of the nation had been interrupted, and believed the only path to follow was that of survival; in other words, to safeguard what they had and dedicate themselves to the cult of the French tradition. Thanks to its control over social life, the Catholic Church was the only institution strong enough to take on this task and stand as the guarantor of the nation's destiny.[4]

An important social schism happened during the *Révolution tranquille* (Quiet Revolution) of the 1960s, which was marked by the emergence of a radical opposition to religious controls by the people, now eager "to take control of its own national destiny":[5] French language thus became "the primary trait of the new national definition".[6] Although this new secular nationalism is said to have been "fuelled in its origin by a transfer of sacrality from religion [to nation]",[7] it did lead in the public sphere to a clear separation of State and Church powers. This enabled the foundation of many "lay, progressive, socialist and revolutionary"[8] national institutions, including the ministry of Cultural Affairs, the Musée du Québec, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, and the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) – all administrative apparatus devoted to the francophones' education, development, autonomy and social

4 Jose Santiago, "Religion, secularisation and nationalism in Quebec and the Basque Country: A comparative approach," *Nations and Nationalism* 21, No. 1 (2015): 122.
5 Santiago, "Religion, secularisation and nationalism in Quebec and the Basque Country," 130.
6 Santiago, "Religion, secularisation and nationalism in Quebec and the Basque Country," 122.
7 Santiago, "Religion, secularisation and nationalism in Quebec and the Basque Country," 121.
8 Santiago, "Religion, secularisation and nationalism in Quebec and the Basque Country," 125.

mobility.[9] The inhabitants of Québec, no matter what language they speak, have become *Québécois* (Quebeckers) in the process.

For the last fifty years French-speaking Quebeckers have massively stopped practicing religion, avoided talking about religion, and been against any promotion of religion. It is not simply that religion, like sex, is a private matter: religion is a *danger*. It is a threat to free will, clear thinking and open-mindedness, it is therefore approached with suspicion, and with a more or less subtle assumption that faith is a conservative and even retrograde behavior – only unemancipated people need it as a lifebuoy. For comparison, this topic is approached very differently in the rest of Canada, where it is still customary to name the religious affiliation of persons when evoking them.

The very deep imprint of religious control over Québec's collective psyche is such that the province has been, for the past fifteen years,[10] engulfed in an unsolvable social dilemma concerning the public expression of religious beliefs. Provincial commissions were held in order to better understand these yearnings. Elections were lost trying to pull the population in one direction.[11] In fact, Québec government unilaterally voted on June 16, 2019, to enact the *Loi sur la laïcité de l'État* (Law on the secular nature of the State), commonly known as "law 21."[12]

This new law is based on four principles: the separation of the State and all religions, the religious neutrality of the State, the equality of all citizens, and the freedom of consciousness and religious practice. Its first article says that "The State of Québec is secular,"[13] and the core of it prohibits the wearing of religious signs by any State employee occupying a coercive function (police, law officers, etc.), as well as to anyone teaching in a public primary or high school. All parliamentary, governmental and judiciary institutions have to conform to these principles "in fact and in appearances" as the law specifically

9 Santiago, "Religion, secularisation and nationalism in Quebec and the Basque Country," 128–29.

10 Following social disagreement about the accommodation of religious practices in public organizations, the *Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles*, headed by sociologist Gérard Bouchard and philosopher Charles Taylor, was initiated on February 8, 2007. Their report was published on May 22, 2008. Assemblée Nationale du Québec, "Projet de Loi nº 21 (2019, Chapitre 12) Loi sur la laïcité de l'État, adopté et sanctionné le 16 juin 2019," 2019, 126.

11 Under Prime Minister Pauline Marois, on November 7, 2013, the Parti Québécois proposed to the population a *Charte des valeurs québécoises* that would restrict the wearing of "conspicuous religious symbols." It lost the following election to it.

12 Yes 73, Nay 35, Abstention 0 – the leading Coalition Avenir Québec party counting 74 members.

13 My translation, as for the following quotations of the law.

aims to protect for all Québec citizens the right to "secular institutions" and to "lay public services." A religious sign, in this context, is defined at Article 6 as:

> … any object, including a garment, symbol, jewellery, ornament, accessory or headdress, that is 1° either worn in relation to a belief (*conviction*) or a religious belief (*croyance religieuse*), 2° either reasonably considered to refer to a religious affiliation.

The debates surrounding this question of institutional secularity were very heated, and the new law 21 never gained unanimity.[14]

2 The Spiritual in Art

Be they for or against the retrieving of religious signs in State offices and public service, most French-speaking intellectuals in that context count as "progressive." They defend social diversity, debate over the pros and cons of secularization, and tacitly promote a sternly lay approach of institutional research. One has to remember that fiercely lay and scientific France is Québec's motherland; that French-Canadian scholars who wanted to expand their realm traditionally went to French universities to pursue their doctoral studies; and that French theoreticians had until the end of the 20th century a very strong influence on the development of ideas. This shared world view can be measured, for instance, by how late American and Anglo-Canadian cultural studies and gender studies were to enter French-Quebeckers' bibliographies in favor of French semiologies.[15]

This French cultural background is crucial when we discuss Buddhism in regard to art studies. It explains why there is no less than twenty-two years separating the first major American museum investigation on the faiths, beliefs and wisdoms that have guided modern artists – namely Maurice Tuchman's *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985* exhibition and catalogue at

14 On April 20, 2021, Marc-André Blanchard, judge at the Cour supérieure du Québec, maintained the law, while critiquing it and invalidating some of its articles. The government appealed of this decision. See Robert Dutrisac, "Deux régimes de droits au Québec," *Le Devoir* (21 April, 2021) and Stéphanie Marin, "La 'Loi 21' débattue en Cour d'appel," *Le Devoir* (7 November 2022).

15 Lynn Gamwell, *Exploring the Invisible: Art, Science, and the Spiritual–Revised and Expanded Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); George Steiner, *Maîtres et disciples* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003).

the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1986 – and the first major French museum investigation on the same topic – Alfred Pacquement's *Traces du sacré* exhibition and catalogue at the Musée national d'art moderne in Paris in 2008. Between these two Western landmark exhibitions, more than sixty exhibitions and books devoted in different ways to the interrelations of art and spirituality had been produced in North America and in "non-France" Europe,[16] amongst which quite a few substantial anglo-Canadian contributions: the exhibition and catalogue *The Mystic North* by Roald Nasgaard at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Mark A. Cheetham's theoretical essay *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting* by, Ann Davis' published thesis *The Logic of Ecstasy: Canadian Mystical Painting 1920–1940*, and the catalogue of the exhibition *Sublime Embrace: Experiencing Consciousness in Contemporary Art* curated by Shirley Madill at the Art Gallery of Hamilton.[17]

During the same twenty-two-year period, we find in francophone Québec only three graduate papers researching the question, all still unpublished: Hélène Aubry's master's thesis in art history on the influence of Zen philosophy and esthetics on Western contemporary painting (1985); Louise Fournel's doctoral study in theology on the experience of the sacred in the painting of Paul-Émile Borduas, the Automatist artist through whose defiance of religion Québec entered modernity (1997); and Guy Laramée's master's in anthropology on the influence of Albert Low's Zen teachings on some contemporary artists. One has to wait as late as 2010 to see the topic of "Art + Religion" addressed directly by a major Québec art institution, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal has so far only had a three-day conference (15–17 April 2010) that would never be followed by any exhibition or publication. Acting as a curator during that period, I prepared the 2011 edition of Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal under the theme *Lucidity. Inward Views.* The event and publication were more an invitation to investigate one's own mind than an overtly "spiritual" proposal,

16 See the compilation of the literature in French and English from 1960 to 2010 in my doctoral thesis, Anne-Marie Ninacs, "L'art comme pratique transformatrice au XXe siècle : la soma-esthétique de David B. Milne (1882–1953)" (Université de Montréal, 2017), 18–69.

17 Roald Nasgaard and Art Gallery of Ontario, *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890–1940* [*exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, January–March 11, 1984, and the Cincinnati Art Museum, March 31–May 13, 1984*], (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario and University of Toronto Press, 1984); Shirley Madill, *Sublime Embrace: Experiencing Consciousness in Contemporary Art* (Hamilton, Ont.: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2006); Ann Davis, *The Logic of Ecstasy: Canadian Mystical Painting, 1920–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Mark A. Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting*, Cambridge New Art History and Criticism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

but in the catalogue Ninacs[18] did include the reprint of a chapter from Roger Lipsey's *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art,* first published in 1988. These last two public events were clear signs that the question of the spiritual in art had become a legitimate one in the Québec art world.

In France, the situation was similar: the article "The Sublime and the Avant-garde" by Jean-François Lyotard (published in the American magazine *Artforum*, 1984) and a city gallery exhibition and catalogue on sacred art in France in the 20th century (1993) are the only two French contributions that can be found previous to 2000. We have to wait until 2003 to see the start of a conversation about art and spirituality – mostly Christianism. In 2003, Catherine Grenier, Chief-curator at the Musée national d'art moderne in Paris, writes *L'art contemporain est-il chrétien?*, while Chantal Leroy organizes the conference *Du spirituel dans l'art contemporain?* at Palais du Luxembourg. In 2007, a theologian, Jérôme Cottin, raises similar questions in *Mystique de l'art: art et christianisme de 1900 à nos jours,* followed by a small book by Leroy again, *Épreuves du mystère*.

All of these manifestations opened the path to the 2008 mega-exhibition *Traces du sacré* held at the Musée national d'art moderne in Paris and guided by this question: "Does art creation still foster some sacred dimension?"[19]). The exhibition and catalogue were openly presented by the team of curators (Alfred Pacquement, Jean de Loisy and Angela Lampe) as an effort to catch up and join at last a discussion that French thinkers had systematically dismissed and suppressed. Lampe explicitly compares the traditional French posture regarding the relation between art and spirituality to a psychoanalytical "*refoulé*".[20] Their ambitious and enthusiastic project met many objections: the specialized press went abruptly down on *Traces du sacré*,[21] while theoretician Thierry de Duve promoted, in France as well as in America, the radical exclusion of religious considerations from art critical discourse (in Elkins and

18 Anne-Marie Ninacs, *Lucidity. Inward Views: Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal 2011* (Montréal: Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, 2011).

19 Mark Alizart, *Traces du sacré* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2008), 13 (my translation).

20 Alizart, *Traces du sacré*, 34.

21 The postmodern bastion at *artpress* magazine, which had already contested Tuchman's *The Spiritual in Art* (see Annie Jourdan, "Le spirituel dans l'art," *artpress* 120 [December 1987]: 65), devoted a special edition to the antagonist theme "Le sacré, voilà l'ennemi" (*artpress 2* 9 [May–July 2008]). Christophe Domino was also very critical of the exhibition in his article "Le Sacré à la trace: *Traces du sacré* pose en préambule une contestable 'nécessité irrépressible d'élévation'" (*Le Journal des arts* 282 [May 23–June 5, 2008]: 11).

Morgan 2009:87–106).[22] These reactions had previously been prepared, since the early 1990s, by the erudite counter-responses to the "sacred origin of art" offered respectively by art historian Georges Didi-Huberman (1992) and philosopher Jean-Marie Schaeffer (1992), and more generally by two centuries of a reason-oriented French culture relying on science and lay principles to solve all matters.[23]

The Canadian art world has been rather quiet on the topic since 2010. The interest for the spiritual has passed and art thinkers have moved on to the more pressing social and political issues that are now filling museums, books and magazines. If it is still present, it is rather through research on First Nations' cultures and essays in ecofeminism. The "spiritual in art" may not have offered the definitive answers people were looking for – to this day faith remains personal and questionable when it comes to analysis and data – but it did help a milieu well-attached to the tenacious chains of (pre- to post-) modernisms and structuralisms to lean in new ways into the subjective dimension of creativity. The past twenty-five-years have had the positive effect that the topic of "the spiritual in art" is no longer a field taboo. It can now, pretty much everywhere in the world, be raised and contextualized as a serious object of research. But this is by no mean an easy task.

3 Somaesthetics: Laicizing the Ground

In 2002–2003, I started looking for a term to name the lived experience of the creative process that I believed had been left out of art history by modernism, French Theory, semiotics and all other object- or text-centered approaches. I wanted to reveal and study this reticence to subjectivity, while finding a rigorous method to do so: I was adamant not to reject the scientific culture I had received. As a curator, regular visits to artists in the intimacy of their studio had shown me that there was a whole dimension to art practice which was not considered critically valuable, that artists themselves often kept secret while displaying an official rational justification of their art suited for the public eye. As far as I could see, that dimension was made of felt but intangible connections between images and materials coming from indiscriminate sources, of genuine freedom to play in making many decisions, of allowing one's own

22 James Elkins and David Morgan, *Re-Enchantment* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 78–106.

23 Lynn Gamwell, *Exploring the Invisible: Art, Science, and the Spiritual* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); George Steiner, *Maîtres et disciples* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003).

unnamed secret desires, of personal efforts to overcome unconscious inner limitations, of different forms of meditation practice, and of aspirations that aimed further than the issues discussed in the contemporary art world. Wanting to embrace all of these invisible workings, I first used the word *spiritual* in a broad sense, as opposed to the *material* dimension of art cherished by modernist formalism. For all the aforementioned reasons, my choice raised a lot of suspicion.

I thus chose to keep my thoughts to myself, leaning into a sequence of exhibitions on *existential* themes: *The World in the Works* (2002), *Timepieces* (2003), *The Colors of the Day* (2003), *Proceeding in the Fog* (2004) – which I can now see retrospectively were contemplations of impermanence, precious human life, radical presence, and fundamental uncertainty. Simmering through these exhibitions, my understanding of the spiritual was substantiated by a new interest for Buddhist meditation practice and ethics, as well as accumulating examples of accomplished contemporary artists whom, I was discovering, were either meditating, claiming to be inspired by Zen, or conceiving that the spiritual was "not a religious thing" but "the interior human experience"[24] of their creative practice. This question became pressing enough to engage in long-term research during 2007, but I don't know that I was myself perfectly comfortable with the term *spiritual*. Although I meant it as "all the workings of one's inner self or spirit," it fast brought me into a *transcendental* realm that had nothing to do with the *experiential* dimension that I wanted to study. I had no intellectual interest in the sacred, religious or numinous vocabulary precisely because it was employed to escape the demanding description of the multi-facetted creative experiences that I was witnessing. It became clear that my understanding of spirituality had to do with things down to earth, practical, transformative, and lived daily.

On that specific question, literature was scarce. In the art theory field, French critic Nicolas Bourriaud was then the only one to open such a trail in *Formes de vie: l'art moderne et l'invention de soi*,[25] which owed a lot to Pierre Hadot's[26] rejuvenation of the "spiritual exercises" of the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, as well as to Michel Foucault's "technologies of the self,"[27] stemming from a study of the same historical period. Bourriaud's central thesis is that,

24 James D. Campbell and Yves Gaucher, *Aspects of Yves Gaucher's Art: 1978–1992, Abstract Practices II* (Toronto: The Power Plant, 1992).

25 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Formes de vie : l'art moderne et l'invention de soi* (Paris: Denoël, 1999).

26 Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995).

27 Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité II : l'usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

since Baudelaire and the rise of the character of the dandy (the art of living), the writer (will-powered self-transformations), and the alchemist (dazzling mutations) around 1850, art has become inseparable from the human attitude that motivates it. In his interpretation, 20th Century art becomes nothing less than a creative "philosophy in action".[28] It is a transformative practice for the individual artist who is creating herself while creating art: "*Praxis* equals *poiesis*. To create is to create oneself," Bourriaud writes.[29] While appealing, his thesis remained to me mostly inspirational because it embraced only a narrow type of obviously embodied practices: performance art, happening, situationism, relational art, etc. It did not consider the subtler experiential realm evoked by the human spirit, and lacked a framework for larger art analysis.

In *Styles: critique de nos formes de vie*,[30] Marielle Macé has recently drawn out of her literary background a broader and more substantial "'stylistic of existence' which presupposes an interest without prejudice in *all* that formal variations of life involve".[31] Showing that values are active and even battling in forms of life – from bacterial to human – she does touch on the "religiosity of style" which she attaches to an internal measure of integrity: the spiritual, she maintains through the words of Pier Paolo Pasolini, would be recognizable in the traces of these actions and decisions "where I cannot cheat".[32] Macé is therefore calling for an open and vigilant methodology in order

> to really consider the forms of life, to want to see them, not to classify them too quickly, to accept being surprised, to undo chains of equivalences, to acquiesce to the patient task of interpretation in order to discern different human commitments … That is to say, to summon forms, to describe them, and even to judge them.[33]

It is in Richard Shusterman's "somaesthetics" that I found such a methodology. The philosopher defines it as "the critical study and meliorative cultivation of the experience and use of the body as a site of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning".[34] The theoretical framework he developed over

28 Bourriaud, *Formes de vie*, 112.
29 Bourriaud, *Formes de vie*, 13 (my translation).
30 Marielle Macé, *Styles : critique de nos formes de vie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2016).
31 Macé, *Styles*, 12–13 (my translation).
32 Macé, *Styles*, 19.
33 Macé, *Styles*, 48, 52.
34 Ninacs, *Lucidity. Inward Views*, 280.

many publications[35] indeed provides a strongly pragmatist approach through which the art analyst can tie together many aspects of the daily practice of an artist – lay or religious, painter or performer, contemporary or historical, Canadian or foreigner – without presuming an all-encompassing goal or prematurely ranking available data. Used in a systematic way, somaesthetics becomes a solid scientific instrument that organizes facts concerning embodied action according to three levels – theories, methods and practices –, then lets them guide the interpretation towards new findings and more accurate evaluation. Moreover, thanks to Shusterman's conception of a holistic body-mind "in which the dimensions of aesthetic, moral, and spiritual improvement are so intimately intertwined that they cannot effectively be separated" (2008: 44), it is also possible to observe the breadth of artistic practice from the most rudimentary studio considerations to the very subtle somatic experiences that are commonly called "highly creative," "spiritual," or "transcendental" – what John Dewey described in 1934 as esthetic experience or *an* experience.[36] With all these characteristics, somaesthetics makes it at last possible to move the research of the creative process from the spiritual realm to philosophical pragmatism – and that possibility, for many years now, has been intellectually satisfying to me.

4 A Little Painting and Much Consecrations

To verify my hypothesis, I researched aspects of the creative life of Canadian painter David B. Milne (1882–1953) [Figure 8.1]. My aim was to depict as accurately as possible the interrelations between his paintings and his ethics, trying to understand the specificity of his meliorist drive amongst the modern idiom. Milne had been considered an "ultra-modernist," a fierce "formalist" and an "experimental painter" from around the international Armory Show in New York in 1913 until after his death, but he was suddenly being reframed as a "spiritual artist" at the turn of the millennium, in the wake of art history's renewed interest in the matter.

35 Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell: 1992); Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997); Shusterman, *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Arts* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000a); Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

36 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee, 2005), 38–59.

Were these two labels contradictory artistic positions, excluding each other ideologically, or were they agents intimately working together within the artist's practice? In order to find out, I distributed the research material I gathered according to the three levels of somaesthetics, allowing me to consider both Milne's specific modernist theories and his spiritual practices through the perspective of causes and effects. I was thus able to show that if, in accordance with the modernists of his time, *esthetic unity* in a painting was the external result he was aiming for, it required on all levels of the artist's process a pragmatic of *singleness of purpose*. Turning that method of focalization into a practical discipline of life, Milne would once in a while be granted the special experience of *singleness of heart*, which was the genuine meliorist objective of his artistic endeavor.

Of Presbyterian inspiration, *singleness of heart* meant achieving a state of mind as "direct, sincere, untroubled, uncalculated"[37] as that of young children in whom "there is no confusing of purposes, no battle between what they want to do and what they have to do. There is complete freedom . . . there is nothing to check their invention, they are completely in control of what they put in or leave out and how they do it".[38] For Milne, art resided in the disinterested act of painting; the pictures themselves, even successful, were only by products of that powerful experience of being whole for a short while. In this way, art was an experience that *transcended* his usual daily life. "Painting has no purpose, it is intransitive, has no object. Coming from the world around us it does not return to it," he would write.[39]

In a 1948 essay called "Feeling in Painting"[40] that acts as his written will to future artists, he described at length the procedures he would go through hoping to achieve this special creative state – engaging in an hour long walk, freeing the mind from daily matters, becoming more attuned to the environment, focusing attention on a specific art problem, preparing the technical aspects of painting in order to facilitate full concentration – and how it felt when he reached it:

> You work easily, rapidly, without halt or hesitation. The pool and its banks and the bush are gone: everything is on that rectangle of paper. ... The brush wanders over it. ... On some rare days, the painter can do no wrong,

37 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Fonds LA.SC117 - David Brown Milne fonds: "David B. Milne 'interviewed' by Blair Laing" (transcript, January 16, 1938).

38 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Fonds LA.SC117 - David Brown Milne fonds: D. B. Milne, journal (May 29, 1940).

39 Milne Family Papers: D. B. Milne, "Six Mile Lake" (autobiographical notes, 1947c).

40 David B. Milne, "Feeling in Painting, 1948," in Alan H. Jarvis, *David Milne* (Toronto, Society for Art Publications and McClelland and Steward, 1962).

> things click into place without conscious effort, difficulties melt away, the picture seems to move under its own power. You are carried along by aesthetic feeling. … Anything that distracts the painter's attention, that slows or divides his progress, that robs him of his singlemindedness, means a weakening of his feeling and his power. … When it comes to putting on paint, the artist seems to need a minor miracle: he must be brought to life, quickened, to such an extent that he can work beyond his normal possibilities. That was the purpose of the walk and all the preparations up to the hour or so of actual painting.[41]

While the quest for such an experience of creative immediacy is typical of modern art – especially in the decades following Milne[42] – the link between his course of actions and the practice of Zen or *sumi-e* Japanese painting struck me. In art history, it is my personal meditation practices that led me

FIGURE 8.1 David B. Milne, *Hill Reflected, Bishop's Pond,* 1920, watercolor on paper. Collection Art Windsor-Essex, Winsor, Ontario (1970.063)
PHOTO: ART WINDSOR-ESSEX

41 Milne, "Feeling in Painting, 1948," 12–13.

42 Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1960).

to see Milne's meditation in action after more than a hundred years of critical reviews and scholarship of his work. Many writers did perceive an "orientaleness" in his aesthetic approach of painting, but no one ever questioned in depth the mind-body process itself, even though we find it described very similarly in 1934 by his contemporary D.T. Suzuki:

> The artist must follow his inspiration as spontaneously and absolutely and instantly as it moves; he just lets his arm, his fingers, his brush be guided by it as if they were all mere instruments, together with his whole being, in the hands of somebody else who has temporarily taken possession of him. Or we may say that the brush by itself executes the work quite outside the artist, who just lets it move on without his conscious efforts. If any logic or reflection comes between brush and paper, the whole effect is spoiled. In this way Sumiye is produced.[43]

Milne having had no documented contact with Zen nor Suzuki, and being vigilant against the projection of my Buddhist knowledge on his art, I simply listed and described all the conditions that made it possible for Milne to attain the somatic state of singleness of mind: place of work, schedule, home economics, political views, life ethics, human relationships, solitude, painting discipline, physical exercise, mindfulness training, introspective activity and spiritual practice. This shows how, through somaesthetics, the spiritual re-entered the realm of the artist as only one of his many practices, without being the sole overseeing explanation for his art.

Nevertheless, instead of "Feeling in Painting," the title decided by the magazine editors for his 1948 essay, Milne interestingly suggested this one: "A little painting and much consecrations".[44] The main reason why I bring Milne's case to light again is that the tenacious question of the effective somatic power of his many acts of consecration remains underdeveloped in my analysis: their creative agency is not yet fully explored. Considering the selfless experience of radical presence that the painter wanted to achieve through mental and physical preparations, I therefore wonder if a comparative somaesthetic study of Buddhism's objectives, meditations and preliminary practices might help us further our understanding of this discreet yet essential dimension of his art practice. Let's lay the ground for these "consecrations" to appear clearly.

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43 Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (*third series*) (London: Rider and Company, 1953), 324.

44 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Fonds LA.SC117 - David Brown Milne fonds: D. B. Milne to Douglas M. Duncan (January 23, 1948).

Milne's whole highly disciplined lifestyle was based on the reduction of personal needs and material possessions to benefit the time dedicated to his painting. While constantly aware of the demands of survival coming with his contingent human life – humans were first and foremost mammals in his eye –, he was adamant to personally exceed this need *to simply exist* through the creative effort that, according to him, made human beings able *to live*. There is not much other than canvas and oil that he did not sacrifice to the pursuit of what he considered the *fuller* or *higher life*: financial security, physical comfort, social status, distractions, relationships, etc. – so much so that the six years he spent in a small cabin on Six Mile Lake, Ontario, make his role-model Henry David Thoreau look like a dilettante. He was therefore literally *consecrating* his entire time and resources to his art activity – the word being used in its strictest sense. One could see here resonances between Milne's frugal way of life and the renunciation of a Hinayanist practitioner. The level of his spiritual engagement is set through his own words: "I am the antithesis of a missionary. I wouldn't save the world if I could do it by another puff of this pipe."[45]

Milne's disciplined painting practice was a creative process of self-alteration close to that of a Buddhist practitioner. He kept his body-mind alert by constantly transforming the task to tackle. As soon as he mastered a problem, he would leave it and move on to a new challenge that he would address anew with a beginner's mind, tracing a life-long continuous process of learning and unlearning, trusting and letting go – no complacency allowed. While doing this, he chased the division of his attention in the remotest corners of his body and mind. He conceived of his art as an activity motivated by an omnidirectional love akin to *bodhicitta*. The opening lines of "Feeling in Painting" communicate this:

> Feeling is the power that drives art. There doesn't seem to be a more understandable word for it, though there are others that give something of the idea: aesthetic emotion, quickening, bringing to life. Or call it love; not love of a man or woman or home or country or any material thing, but love without an object – intransitive love.[46]

As an adult, Milne did not go to church nor pursue any formal Presbyterian rituals, yet his St. James Bible is the only book he never parted from. Rarely mentioned, God was nevertheless for him the name of Creation or the

45 Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, David Milne Fonds, MG 30 D 43, Vol. 3: D. B. Milne to James A. Clarke (December 24–25, 1931).

46 Milne, "Feeling in Painting, 1948," 11.

FIGURE 8.2 David B. Milne, *Tempter with Cosmetics*, 1952, watercolor on paper. Collection Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Gift from the Douglas M. Duncan Collection, 1970 (13–079)
PHOTO: PAUL LITHERLAND

Creator: "*creative – see God*".[47] The concrete path leading to the experience of singleness of heart with this almighty vital creative force was, to him, nowhere best explained than in the chapters of the Bible where Jesus' lived ethics is narrated. He made no secret of the fact that he drew spiritual guidance and inspiration from that embodiment of faith – and this is also the first step in the Buddhist path of liberation:

> I would say that there could be no better introduction to the study of art than a reading of the four gospels where singleness of heart is taught and lived. Singleness of heart, sincerity beyond anything possible in daily life is essential in painting.[48]

47 Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, David Milne Fonds, MG 30 D 43, Vol. 3: D. B. Milne to James A. Clarke ([August 14] and October 3, 1932).

48 Milne Family Papers: D. B. Milne, "Six Mile Lake," 37.

The painter also invested the last decade of his life in the production of puzzling biblical scenes that are at once metaphors for the invisible dimensions of the creative process, functional guides for artistic action, and clear traces of the workings of his spirit. Made with watercolor on wet paper as an ultimate *sumi-e* venture, these "subject pictures," as he called them, show the artist as Jonas defying sacred law and facing great perils; the artist as saint Francis, known for the unity of "his feelings for moral and aesthetic beauty";[49] or the artist as a *Tempter with Cosmetics* (1952) [Figure 8.2] surrounded by the angels of ethics, the angels of aesthetics, and a very necessary earthly partner. We also find in these series a depiction of Milne's life ethics through the parable of fully-living-Mary and only-surviving-Martha, as well as a visual summary of his painting life presented, in *Fruit from the Tree* (1952), as the final offering of his very best human effort.

Even though he was a fierce modernist and an unsentimental man, Milne[50] insisted that art was done in order "*to glorify God*" and without expectation of any return – "*we labour to the glory of God*" he would write. This sheer and complete generosity of action was for him absolutely constitutive of the creative act, in the strongest sense of the term. It was this giving-it-all gesture – embodied in a series of life practices very close to the Buddhist *pāramitās* of giving of oneself (*Dāna*), morality (*Śīla*), endurance (*Kṣānti*), effort (*Vīrya*) and concentration (*Dhyāna*) – that made it possible for him to occasionally achieve the intense experience of singleness of heart akin to the buddhist nature of wisdom (*Prajñā*).

5 Buddhist Frequentations

Some contemporary artists are more explicit on that topic and may help us better understand how the Buddhist pragmatic might inform the informal spirituality that accompanies art. "Although I am not a Buddhist," writes American postmodern choreographer Deborah Hay,[51] "I have intuitively preferred the politics of nonviolence. Nonresistance, seen in the bodies of many Buddhists, has always drawn my attention. And action through nonaction, at least as I perceived it on the surface, secretly appealed to [me]." If Hay read Ram Dass and Chögyam Trungpa "who advocated a spiritual path that was analogous to my experiences dancing",[52] she considered her body as her only true spiritual guide, contemplating the disintegration, reconfiguration and alignment of its fifty-three trillion cells as a daily reference to practice:

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49 Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (New York: Pelican Books, 1937), 112–114.
50 Milne Family Papers: D. B. Milne, "Aesthetic Agents" (February 27 and March 1, 1947).
51 Deborah Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), xxiii.
52 Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist*, xxiii.

> I study riddles, some of which are *what ifs* that arise when I am dancing. For example, what if where I am is what I need? As a dancer, I will notice what occurs when I *imagine* every cell in my body at once is getting what it needs moment by moment. The manner in which these *what ifs* can thrill and annihilate the body's reasoning process, overwhelming it with self-reflection, is similar to the experience of beginner's mind in Zen Buddhism. Dance is the field trip I conduct in order to interface with this experience. … *My Body, the Buddhist* describes innate skills and basic wisdom that bodies possess but that remain untranslated because as a culture we tend to hide in our clothes.[53]

Her book, *My Body, the Buddhist*, is a compilation of eighteen "most valued lessons learned from my teacher, my body," she writes.[54] Through these, the artist demonstrates that her experimental performance practice, although influenced by Merce Cunningham and foundational to the definition of postmodern dance, is also based on a series of embodied spiritual dispositions. One can witness these subtle dispositions in action in a choreography like *Figure a Sea* (2015).[55] Hay[56] lists them as:

> benefiting from solitude
> practicing "non-attachment to each moment"
> engaging in the "corpse pose" to befriend the reality of dying
> accessing a roar that "feels like thousands of fluttering wings radiating form the center of my body"
> realizing "how much I hold on to life"
> standing at one's "precipice"
> imagining that "every cell in my body has the potential to perceive"
> engaging each cell of the body in work
> feeling that "gravity is a wonder"
> creating a metaphor – *tower and babble* – for the inseparability of consciousness and movement
> admitting the persona and sufferings of the artist
> extending the limitation of the body through writing and voicing
> injecting oneself with the mantra "my body equates patience with renewal"

53 Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist*, xxv.
54 Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist*, 1.
55 An excerpt of the work created by the Cullberg dance company, Stockholm, is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBJizA1Q9KA.
56 Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist*, 1–3, 9–10, 16–18, 23, 25–29, 52–54, 78, 80.

exploring "the more subtle boundaries of performance consciousness"
conceiving that "sacred dancing is redundant," while avoiding the esthetics of sacred dance
needing "to just be, and be grateful, to not speak, or think"
lighting incense and setting up an altar
considering dying as "a vital component in my performance practice"
and praying – even if "it is generally understood that we veer away from this subject matter altogether".

Hay was indeed aware of the modernist art taboos she was violating around herself while she was exploring the last statements:

> As far as I know, very few of my peers have been smitten with similar holy journeys within the context of experimental dance. ... Finding myself with the task of exploring spiritual values in the avant-garde dance world has not made my teaching or performing profession easier.
>
> Is praying, like dying, relevant to my human as well as dance vocabulary? How was I going to ask students to join me in this movement exploration? The thought made me shudder. Many students dropped my dance workshops when they heard the word prayer. I would have, too, in their shoes.
>
> The practice of praying is difficult to approach directly. The word *prayer* seems to suck the energy right out of many people, including myself. I tried replacing it with some other term, to distance it from its historic, cultural, social, and personal associations. Freed from those encumbrances, my cellular body presented an alternative approach.
>
> *Praying became a dialogue with all there is.* [...]
>
> I pray – not to anyone, not about anything, and not for answers. [...]
>
> Praying is thus liberated from content and replaced by a peaceful alertness. [...]
>
> When I pray under these conditions my body's boundaries dissolve. I am replaced by my breathing. My lungs are paper lanterns. My bones feel alive and my mind porous. Peripheral and depth perception bristle with input. My body senses integration with its immediate vicinity. I experience generous and fundamental well-being. This is how I can participate, understand, benefit from, and value praying.[57]

57 Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist*, 54–58.

Praying – like Milne's loving – is therefore an intransitive mind-body action. Hay's posture here is typical of most contemporary artists[58] who, when pressed to describe the transcendent experiences that emerge from their practice, like artist Ann Hamilton,[59] insist that "it's practical definitely," and nowhere else to be found than in the body, in the actions, in "how … you cultivate just being in the time you have at that moment," as well as in the studio processes where "you let things take the time they actually need." In brief: in a very intimate relation with phenomenology.

Canadian artist Sylvie Cotton is a senior figure of performance art who often repeats "practice teaches me".[60] She describes her multidimensional action art as "a choreography which integrates ordinary micro-events emerging from the social or the personal sphere. … My practice is a dance with the unknown and with unknown persons. All phenomena and materials are welcomed to it."[61] Concretely, she performs, draws, collects and installs objects, engages in relationships, plays with words, plans open conditions, and walks, talks or writes, according to the given circumstances. But her main medium is her own embodied self, and her true studio is her own mind – she speaks of her "inner studio" (*atelier intérieur*) and "mind-workshop" (*atelier-esprit*).[62] "By practicing action art and performance, I myself became the medium of my work, I *am* the object-mind-matter to shape. It is in this spirit that I can affirm not being *a plastician*, but rather *plasticine*. … I let myself be shaped by who and what I meet."[63]

Cotton is also a seasoned Buddhist practitioner. She started studying Buddhism shortly after her beginnings as a professional artist with a Vietnamese Zen monk based in Montreal who was simply named *Thầy* (teacher). She went on a retreat with Thích Nhất Hạnh, joined the New Kadampa Tradition sangha for two years, and finally established herself in 2006 as an active member of the lay Shambhala lineage, where she is now a *tantrika* student and sometimes

58 Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob (eds.), *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

59 Ann Hamilton, interviewed by Krista Tippett, "Making, and the Spaces We Share." Audio recording. *On Being* [podcast], recorded at Minneapolis Institute of Arts, February 13, 2014.

60 Sylvie Cotton, "Esprit de corps : la présence à l'œuvre dans un projet d'art action : onze constats phénoménologiques," Doctoral thesis (Université du Québec à Montréal, 2020), 104. All following quotes by Cotton are the author's translation, validated by the artist.

61 Sylvie Cotton, Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 14 and 20, 2020).

62 Sylvie Cotton, "Le grand atelier de l'esprit." Video recording. Communication for the conference *Ateliers d'artistes à Montréal : caractéristiques et défis* (Université du Québec à Montréal, November 29, 2019).

63 Sylvie Cotton, Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 14 and 20, 2020).

herself a teacher. “This is the level of advancement that can be identified conceptually,” she specifies. “But the level at which my heart has arrived is unfathomable. I can’t name it or measure it. All I know to name is that dharma uses many words and concepts to unfold teachings about phenomena that are unnamable, that are beyond words.”[64]

Cotton’s spiritual practice involves meditation (*shamatha*, *shamatha/vipashyana*, *mahamudra*, *tonglen*, walking meditation, social meditation), preliminary prostrations, offerings to protectors, purifications, dedications, *sadhanas*, chants, mantras, ikebana, cleaning of the shrine and gompa, as well as the offering of her work as an artist.[65] She also considers the cleaning of her studio space as “a means to clarify, to pacify, to enrich”, and practices an invention of her own that she calls “*l’écart tracé*” (drawing difference) in order to awaken her presence. “There is a very descriptive and factual side to actions. Describing them could make them look like nothing,” she cautiously adds, shedding some precious light on the possible undervaluation of Milne’s consecrations.[66]

The artist identifies the merging of her creative and meditative practices “in full consciousness, in the somatic experience”[67] to her work on a series of *Dessins respirés* (breathed drawings) in 2008 [Figure 8.3], in which the slight impulsions of her filling and collapsing lungs on her body, arms and hands were recorded on paper as a micro-seismograph. Since then, Cotton has conceived of art and Buddhism as “the two faces of the same practice … the 1000 facets of the same diamond-practice,”[68] so much so that she devoted a long essay to the exploration of the similarities and differences of art and meditation. Her conclusion: “Why make art? To learn to live. Why meditate? To learn to die.”[69]

Cotton names the fusion of art and meditation “the practice *in spiritu*.” It “consists of a back-and-forth between our inner and outer studios, between form and formlessness, between the spiritual and the secular, in short between life and sight.”[70] There is no hierarchy in her thinking. Buddhism never appears as an all-encompassing explanation for her art, which remains in vigorous dialogue with her contemporary art lineage. In its external forms, her performance work partakes no more of Buddhist art than Hay’s post modern

64 Sylvie Cotton, Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 14 and 20, 2020).
65 Sylvie Cotton, Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 28, 2020).
66 Sylvie Cotton, Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 28, 2020).
67 Sylvie Cotton, Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 14 and 20, 2020).
68 Sylvie Cotton, Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 14 and 20, 2020).
69 Sylvie Cotton, “Le feu sacré: la pratique *in spiritu*. Éclairages en fondus sur l’art et la spiritualité,” *ETC* 96 (2012): 43.
70 Cotton, “Le Feu sacré,” 41.

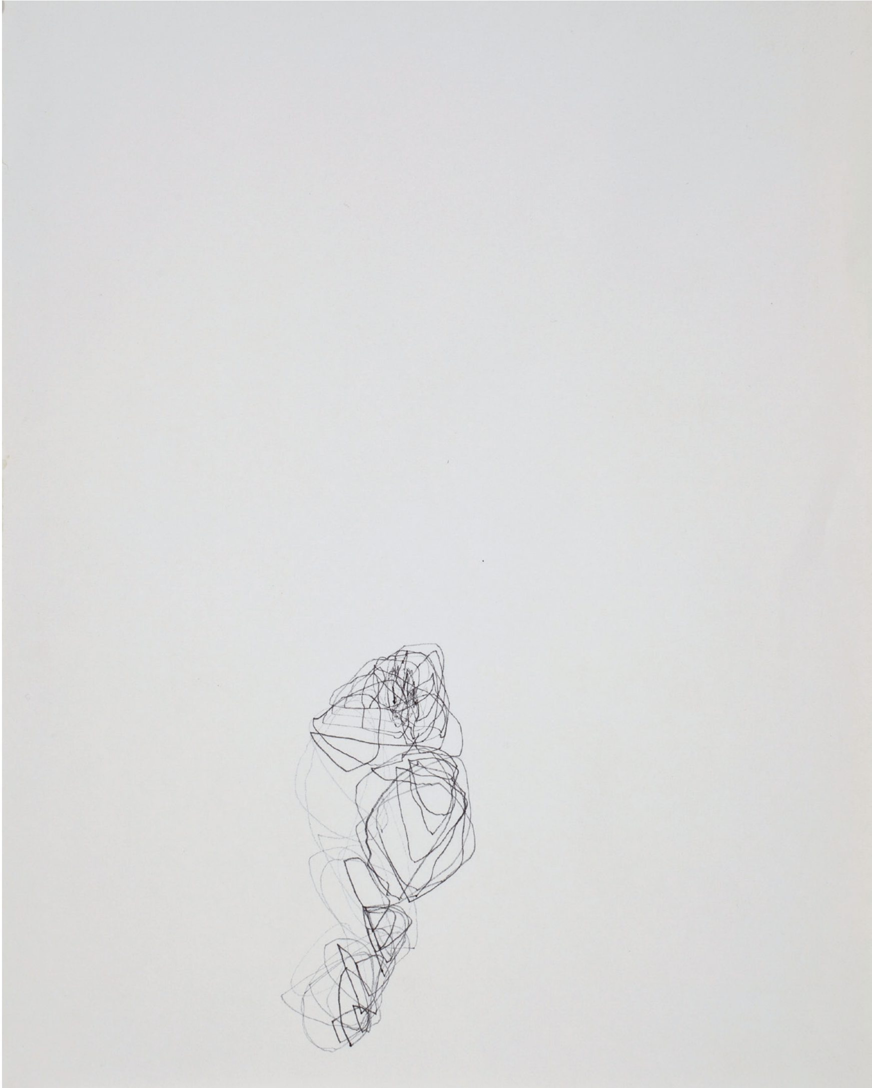

FIGURE 8.3 Sylvie Cotton, *Untitled* (*breathed drawing*), 2004, marker on paper
PRIVATE COLLECTION. PHOTO: GUY L'HEUREUX

dance partakes of sacred dance. Like Hay, Cotton remains adamant that, "led in full consciousness, the artistic path generates wisdom, stimulates a presence in the present moment. Revelations appear one by one, slowly."[71]

71 Cotton, "Le Feu sacré," 41.

The practice of Buddhist teachings, meditations, visualisations and actions rather have a somatic effect on the artist. Understanding body and mind to be one, she explains:

> Even though I regularly feel the subtle or obvious flashes of [tantric practices], it seems impossible to say exactly how they affect my artistic practice. The effects of dharma are like a coloring that occurs subtly, patiently, and so very gradually that it can go unnoticed. I think the best barometer I rely on to detect the impact of dharma on my practice – artistic or otherwise – is witnessing the quality of my presence. This presence goes beyond mere attention: it is a super power, a super union with space – a union with emptiness, to use Buddhist vocabulary.[72]

The cultivation of that quality of presence and its use in the context of art is the very subject of Cotton's recent doctoral thesis, "*Esprit de corps*: presence at work in an action art project: eleven phenomenological findings".[73] To my knowledge, it is, with David Lynch's *Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity* (2006), a rare explicit examination by a Western artist of the impacts that a sustained meditation practice *as a methodology* has on an artistic project [Figure 8.4]. Cotton writes:

> Meditation is an attentional practice. As a training in alertness to the incessant modulation of the mental continuum and the sensory mind-body perceptions, it fuses naturally with any type of human activity. … Meditative practice allows one to develop a quality of attentional absorption on a given object, which creative absorption also provides. That explains why the two practices dialogue well, especially in the context of contextual art and relational action: they both seize opportunities to focus on a specific attentional object, with which the subject's relation fluctuates. Penetrating understandings arise, which inform the artist on the very nature of the mind, and of reality. … In fact, any human activity conducted with attention has the potential to provide penetrating intuitions, and this is why the practice of meditation is so informative about our human condition, and so very powerful. It is no more and no less than an experiential science of the mind.[74]

72 Sylvie Cotton, Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 28, 2020).

73 Cotton, "Esprit de corps."

74 Cotton, "Esprit de corps," 9–10.

FIGURE 8.4 Sylvie Cotton, *Life Is Now*, 2011, action art at Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Visitors are welcomed to a circle of chairs. I sit among them. The action starts when I rise and stand in front of the person to my left. I look carefully at the person, feel the moment, offer an item that I am wearing – a scarf – and then seek an object in their pockets – keys. The action continues one person at a time: I look, offer a sweater, then find a book in a purse, I look, offer a pair of black rubbers and take designer shoes, I look, offer the pocketed keys, then take an earring, I look, then trade the designer shoes for a long jacket, I look, offer a watch and take a belt, until the circle of strangers is intimately linked through their personal belongings. Once I am done, I simply sit back at my place. The performance continues with the participants mingling to recover their objects.
PHOTO: GUY L'HEUREUX

In her thesis, Cotton does not only refer to meditation at large as a help to her art. She also boldly integrates all the main aspects of the Buddhist pragmatic. For example: a lineage acknowledgment, a foreword dedication of her work to collective benefits, an evocation of the law of karma, a definition of the self according to Buddhist ontology and the five *skandhas*, a description of dharma art and many evocations of the tantric worldview – all things that I am often able to detect, as in Milne's case, because of my own practice of Buddhism.[75] She

75 Cotton, "Esprit de corps," iii–iv, vii, 153, 112–117, 36–37, 38, 73, 150–151, 162, 166, 178–179, 191, 194, 196.

openly does so, she writes, "in order to dust off the popular tendencies to reduce the practice of meditation to a relaxation exercise."[76]

The originality of Cotton's contribution, and its interest to the present discussion, is that she does so while conducting as thorough an examination of the different aspects of her individual performance practice and overall artistic field (Cage, Kaprow, Bourriaud, Vermersch, Tafel, Rabin, etc.). Both realms work hand-in-hand *in spiritu* from the very first page of her "research on the aesthetic quality of attention",[77] through two decisive theoretical figures: Chögyam Trungpa and John Dewey.

Dewey opens up the field of aesthetic activity to the whole of life, Cotton explains,[78] so the cultivation of an acute interactive presence is susceptible to make of any given moment *an* experience. Trungpa on his part defines four states of presence that she retains: "attentive presence (related to sensation), authentic presence (related to one's non-self), enriching presence (related to non-self of phenomena) and spontaneous presence (related to immediacy or 'the fourth moment')."[79] Exercising these attentional possibilities in her "critical body"[80] within the context of *Incursions,* a three-year relational art project, the artist finally draws out of her practice "eleven phenomenological findings"[81] from her encounters with the participants – findings in which Hay's eighteen lessons resonate:

> Any presence is a meeting
> The unconscious is a presence
> To stay is to choose to be present
> The body is the home of presence
> Absence evokes presence
> The body exposes presence
> Solitary presence can become solidarity
> Presence is concretely appearing and disappearing
> Presence travels at the speed of light
> Presence first unfolds through a mother

76 Cotton, "Esprit de corps," 91.
77 Cotton, "Esprit de corps," 1.
78 Cotton, "Esprit de corps," 125.
79 Cotton, "Esprit de corps," 149.
80 Cotton, "Esprit de corps," 196.
81 Cotton, "Esprit de corps," 163–190.

Often called on to teach art or conduct performance workshops, Cotton says that she does talk to students about meditation and spirituality, only mentioning on occasions 'Buddhist philosophy.' "I always manage to talk about the life of the mind (this is what I really want) … I'm trying to figure out who are the people in front of me, and how to talk to them about spirituality. I see myself becoming strategic. … I almost always start with the couple doubt/trust, they know what I'm talking about"[82] (Cotton 2020c). She practices Buddhism's *upāya* – skillful means – without her saying.

6 Troublesome Acts of Faith

To the creative arts students and community, transmitting the contexts and contents of works of art doesn't suffice; a teacher or writer is also called to pass on the approaches, methodologies, techniques, ways of thinking and modes of living through which these works appear for the creators to forge their own path. How then should we go about introducing the production of artists like Milne, Hay and Cotton without failing to examine the potency of their specific spiritual actions? Could Buddhism as a non-theist and experiential philosophy that aims at the liberation of mind faculties and the awakening of consciousness offer a comparative model for the inner cultivation of creative powers? Isn't it fundamentally what Hay and Cotton are proposing, much more than a confessional adhesion? Yet, if we were to succeed in presenting an art-Buddhism model in a secular setting, would it be possible to convey the importance of these attitudes without engaging in the "conversion" of students and colleagues? These questions form a new ground of research for me, and I want to expose some of the circumstances and challenges that call for consideration as I move into them.

Generally speaking, it should not be a problem to evoke Buddhism in art milieus. In the past thirty years, thanks to the research done by Roger Lipsey,[83] Helen Westgeest,[84] Mary-Jane Jacob and Jacquelynn Baas,[85] art history has revealed that many canonic visual artists have shown openness to Buddhism

82 Sylvie Cotton, Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 28, 2020).

83 Roger Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art* (Boston and Shaftesbury: Shambhala, 1988).

84 Helen Westgeest, *Zen in the Fifties: interactions in Art between East and West* (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1996).

85 Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob (eds.), *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Jacquelynn Baas, *Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art from Monet to Today* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

since the turn of the 20th century. This knowledge is so accepted that an arts professional can now casually claim practicing Buddhist meditation without causing a stir in this still strictly secular field of activity. This new acceptance is also supported by the fact that a number of scientific researchers have recently tested and validated the beneficial effects of mindfulness meditation on the workings of the mind and the general well-being of humans. *The Dalaï-Lama at MIT*,[86] an operation that brought together long-time meditators and cognitive scientists, and the research done by Ellen Langer,[87] Benjamin Shapero and Gaëlle Desbordes[88] at Harvard's psychology and medical schools, are good examples. They highlight the fact that the pragmatics of mindfulness, meditation practice, and the labelling of somatic experience are now being seriously studied, and that this leads to a greater understanding of Buddhism as a practice improving concentration and productivity, which increases creativity.

The pragmatist dimension of Buddhist psychological training is indeed easily adaptable to a studio practice, as well as to the teaching and studying of it. I present in my creative process classes different examples of attention practices, from automatic writing, to lay practices of *noticing*,[89] sports as a mind-body preparation,[90] to David Lynch's transcendental meditation,[91] amongst which I introduce artists who openly claim to practice the Buddhist path (John Cage, Massimo Guerrera). Of course, I focus here on meditation as a means of connection to one's truth, without explaining the details of contemplation practices aiming at the destruction of the ego. And when I refer to Buddhism as a philosophy at graduate levels, I use shambhalian essays for their lay expression.

As long as Buddhism equates "meditation for relaxation" in the general understanding, there are no major issues about approaching it within a university context as a pragmatic way to quiet and focus the student's mind. But once *prajñā, karma* and renunciation to *samsāra* are part of the equation, the

86 Anne Harrington and Arthur Zajonc (eds.), *The Dalai Lama at MIT* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006).

87 Ellen Langer, *Mindfulness* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1989); *The Power of Mindful Learning* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1997); *On Becoming an Artist* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005).

88 Benjamin Shapero, Jonathan Greenberg, Paola Pedrelli, Marasha de Jong and Gaëlle Desbordes, "Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Psychiatry," *Focus* (American Psychiatric Association) 16.1 (2018): 32–39.

89 Ellen Langer, *Mindfulness* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1989).

90 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Susan A. Jackson, *Flow in Sports: The Keys to Optimal Experiences and Performances* (Champaing: Human Kinetics, 1999).

91 David Lynch, *Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity* (New York: Tarcher-Penguin, 2006).

scholar finds herself in a tighter spot because of the faith aspect that these convictions entail. If I am getting serious about integrating the Buddhist spiritual path into my academic practice, what am I to make of the faith that is central to it? Should I adopt the rationality and flexibility of "modern Buddhism"[92] for its adaptability to my institution, or should I remain strict in my presentation of mindfulness as a practice indissociably connected to Buddhadharma,[93] even if being scientific here appears to be a "traditionalist" posture?[94] It is in front of such questions that I feel that my research milieu might not be so ready for Buddhism, because they raise issues of liberation by wisdom, body-mind dualism, karmic responsibility and devotional practices such as recollection of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, all of which are difficult to reconcile with the reason-based academia.

Yet a number of major 20th Century artists not only sought peace of mind, but clearly considered that the shrinking of their ego was key to true creativity. Canadian Presbyterian Milne, a modernist whose singleness of heart we have already discussed, summarized his selfless approach of painting by this eloquent line: "Anything sincere and disinterested in connection with art is dynamite."[95] Years later, African American contemporary poet and political activist James Baldwin stated: "the discipline is that one has to become disinterested … this effort at being disinterested is the bone of the artistic discipline".[96] American conceptual artist John Cage, who studied Zen with D. T. Suzuki, is famous for having replaced self-expression as the aim of art by the goal of self-alteration. Three decades after, Korean-born artist Kimsooja says something very similar: "If I have an ambition as an artist, it is to consume myself to the limit where I will be extinguished. From that moment, I won't need to be an artist anymore, but … just a self-sufficient human being, or a nothingness that is free from desire."[97] It is also the avowed aim of American conceptualist Roni Horn, "to get to the point of no expectations"[98] and to research

92 Martin Baumann, "Le bouddhisme theravâda en Europe : histoire, typologie et rencontre entre un bouddhisme moderniste et traditionaliste," *Recherches Sociologiques* 3 (2000): 7–31.

93 Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, "The Transformation of Mindfulness," in R. E. Purser, D. Forbes et A. Burke (eds.), *Handbook of Mindfulness: Culture, Context, and Social Engagement* (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016).

94 Martin Baumann, "Le bouddhisme theravâda en Europe": 7–31

95 National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa, NGC Fonds, correspondence with/re. artists, 7.1M Milne: D. B. Milne to Donald W. Buchanan (January 19, 1937).

96 James Baldwin, "The Moral Responsibility of the Artist." Video recording (University of Chicago, 1963).

97 Olivia María Rubio, "An Interview with Kimsooja" (*Art and Context,* 2006).

98 Louise Neri, *Roni Horn* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 107.

"the experience of just being here".[99] Exposed to the teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, David Lynch affirms: "There is a field of unity within everyone … It's unbounded, infinite, and eternal."[100] Similarly, Hay observes "I am the impermanence I see,"[101] while Cotton writes: "Today I see presence as the zero degree of action. The micro-movement of its internal ecology."[102]

These quotes are powerful and ring true to my understanding and experience of the creative process. But except for Hay, Lynch and Cotton, the other artists don't say much on how they manifest this disinterestedness within a cultural environment that values them as individual signatures, if not celebrities. What does it mean experientially? How do we concretely proceed towards it? Except for anecdotal excerpts from artists, I don't recall encountering any art theory defending egolessness as a powerful creative agent. If it is key for so many creators, shouldn't we pay more attention to it? And since there doesn't seem to exist a more efficiently organized method for the disintegration of the egotistic self than the Buddhist doctrine, shouldn't we try to learn something from it?

The strict inspection of the body-mind through sitting and active meditations which is the basis of the Buddhist practice, the *Maha Satipatthana Sutta* (Dīgha Nikāya 22), is obviously the first thing a somaesthetician would want to rely on for such a study, for it offers detailed attention to all aspects of body, sensations, mind activity and phenomena, thus gradually dismantling the ownership of the five *skandhas* (form, sensation, perception and mental formations). But the three artistic ventures we examined earlier prompt me to also look into the "acts of faith" connected to traditional Buddhist meditation – a series of embodied rituals of offering, prayer, prostration and dedication that are specifically devised to cripple the ego by countering its avidity, narrow view, arrogance and self-cherishing.[103] We might think of these ritualized preliminaries that traditionally open and close the practice of Buddhist meditation as mere preparation to the real action – a cultural atavism that we Westerners can do without. If it is true that the body can prepare for meditation in other, non-religious ways, I am interested to better understand how such symbolic gestures might affect the creative capacity, even when performed outside of any confession. What happens to the work when it is offered to the

99 James Lingwood, *Roni Horn: Vatnasafn/Library of Water: Stykkishólmur, Iceland* (London: Artangel, 2009), 172.

100 Lynch, *Catching the big fish*, 176.

101 Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist*, 103.

102 Cotton, Sylvie. Written interview with Anne-Marie Ninacs (September 28, 2020).

103 Mindrolling Jetsün Khandro Rinpoche, "Lojong: Training the Mind." Video recording. (Drikung Dharma Surya, Fairfax County, North Virginia, August 4, 2018).

expansive mind instead of the career-driven ego? What course takes the process when one is imagining receiving extra energy instead of relying upon one's known limited capacity? How bold can become a practice based on humility? Is there artistic efficiency to the visualisation of a personal deity?

In an essay on liberation through somatic contact with specific sacred objects (seen, heard, tasted, worn, etc.), Holly Gayley hints to the felt and verifiable body-mind effects of such symbolic actions and is hoping for further investigation, as she ends with this statement: "there is much to be learned about the function of charisma in Tibet and the role of the senses in Buddhist soteriology more generally".[104] The Buddhist quotes that she collects all insist on the intention that accompanies the gestures – on "the receptivity of the individual based on their degree of faith, moral character and spiritual capacity".[105] Therefore, my last question is this one: when using a subdued *à la carte* approach to Buddhism limited to mindful meditation in her academic communication with emerging artists who could benefit greatly from exercises in self-transformation, what is the scholar achieving exactly? What would be a skilled way to at least hint at the potential effect of ritualized gestures, considering that religious symbolism is almost impossible to approach in the academic environment without being blamed for missionary work?[106]

Recent literature in psychology and psychiatry on the healing of trauma through subtle somatic activity and mind orientation might be helpful to further research on this matter. It specifically evaluates the actual effects on mental health, social engagement, trust and intimacy of mind-body attunement practices,[107] self-regulation of the autonomic nervous system,[108] sensory

104 Holly Gayley, "Soteriology of the Senses in Tibetan Buddhism," *Numen* 54.4 (2007): 495.

105 Gayley, "Soteriology of the Senses in Tibetan Buddhism," 489.

106 The dangers of triggering cultural susceptibilities are indeed increasingly more real and costly. While I was working on this essay, a French high school teacher, Samuel Paty, died – beheaded on October 16, 2020 – for cautiously showing critical images of the Prophet Muhammad in a history lesson (https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/professeur-decapite-le-point-sur-l-enquete-et-le-profil-du-terroriste-20201017, consulted August 1, 2022).

107 Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014).

108 Stephen W. Porges, *The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-regulation* (London and New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2011); Deb Dana, *Polyvagal Exercises for Safety and Connection: 50 Client-Centered Practices* (London and New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2020).

and relational inner actions,[109] as well as visualizations,[110] to name but a few experiments. Most interestingly, for creativity which is at its best a process of deep *adjustment*, this new research has at its core the general cultivation of compassion and empowerment through a more harmonious experience of the self and its interactions with others and the world.

7 Artistic Visualizations

The last aspect of my academic practice that prompts me to ask questions concerning the integration of the Buddhist pragmatic to an art curriculum comes directly from my students' behaviour. When left to their own introspective devices, enticed to courageously take artistic risks, and open up their creative blockages, many of them will offer, through their respective artistic means, a form of action, ritual or visualisation that is not foreign to those proposed by the Buddhist path. Producing what I call "visual essays" in order to help them engage in an exploration free from expected results, they come up through their own "practice wisdom" with nothing else than self-alterating and empowering propositions.

A performance artist who suffers from social anxiety and makes it the topic of her work, uses the performance setting to expose her fear of judgement to the gaze of her classmates. She first reads a clinical description of her condition taken from the *DSM IV*, then reads aloud the written perceptions that others have of her, which she previously gathered through an anonymous survey. For twenty minutes, her paranoid projections slowly turn into a befriending of her self before our very eyes. She is courageously defying her obstacles, like the legendary arrows of the *maras* turning into flowers before they can reach the Buddha.

An architect who has trouble leaning into more experimental work, builds a representation of her inner self in the shape of a multileveled labyrinth [Figure 8.5]. The place full of rooms, familiar to depth psychology, becomes a means by which the artist engages a circulation through staircases and corridors that forces her to literally envision and envisage her fears (the grotto,

109 Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (New York: Bantam, 2010); *Mind: A Journey to the Heart of Being Human* (London and New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2016); Daniel J. Siegel and Marion Solomon (eds.), *Mind, Consciousness, and Well-Being* (London and New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2020).

110 Richard C. Schwartz and Martha Sweezy, *Internal Family Systems Therapy* 2nd Edition (New York: The Guilford Press, 2020).

FIGURE 8.5 Geneviève Roy, *The Labyrinth* (*the Grotto*), 2019, mixed media

the tunnel), her griefs (the white chamber, the artifacts room), her attachments (the Men's machines' room) and her creative powers (the dark chamber, the studio) – exactly as one does during Buddhist meditation practice. All the while, she is virtually climbing to the top of a very high tower which is "the nerve centre of my experience and affects," she writes:

> From the outside, it is robust, spiky, brutal even – it is quite a carapace. From the inside, it is soft, luminous, serene. I dare enter it … I slowly climb the landings one after the other, and I see all sorts of connections between my experiences, the memories I kept of them, and the personal sensitivity that emerges from that. As if, all of a sudden, the pieces of an immense puzzle were falling into place.
>
> I finally reach the top… It's so beautiful up there! A ladder is awaiting me; I feel like touching the sky … Through this journey in time and space, my consciousness has drawn from darkness in order to rise to an unexpected level of awakening … I find myself attuned to the reality of my environment. I am no more resisting (or at least, not always). I am feeling accepting and full.[111]

111 Geneviève Roy, "Le labyrinthe : correspondance," seminar paper, MFA program, UQAM, fall 2019.

Another performer meticulously reviews all of her past public presentations, then draws out of the different characters she impersonates a specific figure of power (*une puissance*). Each figure indeed represents the crucial learnings that occurred for the artist in the execution of a precise performance: The power to mourn, The power to mediate, The power to ritualize, The power of patience, The power to remember, The power to think about death, The power of self-agency, The power of embodiment, The power to wait [figure 8.6], and The power of empathy. In the paper doll game that she creates [figure 8.7], the basic figure – her own potential as avatar Roxy – comes from a childhood favorite: it is superhero She-Ra, princess of power. She dresses her with the attributes of each power – a dress, footwear and an item to hold in the hand. From then onward, the artist has thus an easy access to her own inner powers when needed, as if in a toolbox, because she took the time to re-embody her own lived experience into a powerful symbol. There is here an interesting similarity between her intimate practice and the female tantric deities that are displayed on Buddhist shrines with the specific purpose of enhancing human agency [figure 8.8].

Just as I readily expose my art students to the lived methods and ethics of the Western philosophers – from stoicism to Spinoza, Dewey and Catherine Malabou – it seems to me that these emerging artists would benefit from knowing of the existence of 2,500 years of Buddhist mind training. At UQAM, the Groupe de recherche et d'intervention sur la presence attentive (GRIPA), a research group on mindfulness lead by psychologists and affiliated with the Faculty of Education, offers an institutional precedent to open up such a discussion. However, GRIPA aims specifically at developing clinical, organizational and pedagogical intervention;[112] it shows no interest for the creative process.

A more promising avenue to verify the academic benefits of Buddhist philosophy for the creative arts was being prepared while I was writing this essay. At UQAM again, Isabelle Miron (2021), from the Department of Literature, and Mathieu Boisvert (1997), from the Department of Religious Studies, issued a special one-year graduate program titled "Theravāda meditation and the creative process: academic, critical and experiential approaches".[113] The program's

112 See articles, chapters and books 2006–2018 on the GRIPA (Groupe de recherche et d'intervention sur la présence attentive) website: https://gripa.uqam.ca/articles-scientifiques/ (consulted August 1, 2022). The collective does count, as a collaborator, Danielle Lamoureux, a Shambhala teacher who was for many years an ordained nun.

113 "Theravāda meditation and the creative process: academic, critical and experiential approaches," CERIAS–Centre d'études et de recherche sur l'Inde, l'Asie du Sud-Est et sa diaspora, Department of Religious Studies, UQAM, October 2020: Programme court de

FIGURE 8.6 Roxane Chamberland, *Grand Chelem*, 2018, performance
PHOTO: JOSÉE LECOMPTE

main objective is "to allow participants to deepen their theoretical and experiential knowledge of Theravāda meditation"; students are therefore given "clear indications for the implementation of contemplative prescriptions." To insure the full integration of theory and practice through "a gradual process of 'attention-setting'," the course provides a transmission of the primary

deuxième cycle - méditation theravada et processus de création - dép. sc. des religions.pdf (consulted August 1, 2022). All following quotes come from that source and are translated by the author.

FIGURE 8.7 Roxane Chamberland, *Roxy and Her Powers* (*The Power to Ritualize*), 2019, papercuts of graphite on paper
PHOTO: ROXANE CHAMBERLAND

Buddhist suttas, the lay principles of self-explicitation more familiar to artists,[114] as well as a 10-day Theravada Buddhist meditation retreat guided by U Jāgara, a Québec-born Buddhist monk in the Mahasi Sayadaw lineage practicing in Sri Lanka and Myanmar since 1981.

114 Vermersch, "Le dessin de vécu dans la recherche en première personne : pratique de l'auto-explicitation"; Nathalie Depraz, *Attention et vigilance : à la croisée de la phénoménologie et des sciences cognitives* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2014).

FIGURE 8.8 Eastern Tibet, Vajrayogini (Naropa Tradition), 19th Century, ground mineral pigment on cotton. Collection Rubin Museum of Art, New York [F1997.19.2]
PHOTO: RUBIN ART MUSEUM

The Department of Religious Studies hosted this short graduate program in 2021–2022. To propose such a pedagogical experiment "would have been absolutely unthinkable at the Department of Literature,"[115] writes Miron, confirming the reluctances of the art domain exposed earlier. That being said, the inclusion of an ordained person in the teaching team and the experiential

115 Miron, e-mail to the author (October 9, 2020, my translation).

aspect of the project remain surprising even in the Department of Religious Studies,[116] which has had "no denominational ties" since its inception.[117] It was even "the only non-denominational department in Quebec at the time",[118] Boisvert explains, and its member took an active part in defining a scientific approach to religion. Therefore, the professor was not taking the support of his colleagues for granted.

In order to deepen and clarify the set of questions that I have attempted to circumscribe, I am taking part in this pedagogical process, that is: experimenting in my mind-and-body from a student's point of view, as any convinced pragmatist would do. As I conclude this essay, I count as one of thirty-six[119] students from all ages, walks of life and disciplinary backgrounds (visual arts, theater, literature, music, art history, religious studies, psychology, neurobiology, etc.), with very diverse experiences of meditation and creation. So far the interdisciplinary team of professors appears to be a very constructive group for addressing rigorously the scientific, the somatic, the creative and the spiritual together. While I will have to hold my conclusions concerning the benefits of the program for the development of an artistic practice until I can experience it myself and witness its results on others in 2022, I already find the Buddhist aspect of the class extremely enlightening for my pedagogical interrogation. Instead of extracting Buddhist concepts from their religious background to make them more convenient to the liberal and non-confessional Western academia – a reflex for most lay scholars –, the teachers are inviting us to study the Buddhist canon alongside recent scientific assessments of it; they are thus explaining the geo-historical context of the emergence of Buddhism and fitting us with the scientific tools to properly investigate the recording, transmission, interpretation and institutionalization of its philosophy. Practicing meditation and creation is therefore done within a critical comprehension of Buddhism items of faith, rather than from a fragmentary reading of its "acceptable" dimensions. From there, each individual student is free to choose their adhesion or distance, integration or rejection of the Buddhist propositions according to their degree of faith, moral character, spiritual curiosity and intellectual posture. This, to me, seems to be the most reliable and reasonable use of Buddhist teachings in a university arts curriculum.

116 Boisvert, interview with the author (October 11, 2020).

117 See the description and historic of the Département de sciences des religions, UQAM: https://religions.uqam.ca/departement/historique/ (consulted August 1, 2022).

118 Boisvert, e-mail to the author (October 17, 2020, my translation).

119 The registration of such a high number of students is unprecedented for a new niche program; it is proof that there is a demand for an academic discussion of the multifaceted topic I have examined here.

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CHAPTER 9

Reconsidering the Life of Power

Buddhist Perspectives

James Garrison

> [The Buddha] is not pure, not defiled …[1]

1 Introduction

In my book *Reconsidering the Life of Power* the claim is advanced that giving artful attention to ritual subject life can enable the body to serve as the context for a different type of self-recognition less marked by deterministic, micro-level encounters with the "Other" and occurring more in terms of free play of the imagination and the aesthetics of observing the world and human condition. This earlier work built on the problematic advanced by Judith Butler concerning ritual life as (A) relational (B) bodily (C) discursive and (D) ritually impelled by making use of classical and contemporary sources in the Confucian tradition to supplement Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power* with a consideration, on similar terms, of power's aesthetic life.

And so in my prior work, *Reconsidering Life of Power*, I develop a reading of ritual propriety in a Confucian context, particularly in light of the works of Li Zehou 李澤厚 and that also Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics so that I might add to Butler's account, particularly *The Psychic Life of Power*. Butler shows how on the "micro-level" normative subjects are formed through a constitutive set of losses (foreclosure) as they adopt certain ritual scripts in order to be recognized by society at large, and in turn are recognized as legitimate, and thus survive.[2] My thinking is that a similar constitutive foreclosure also occurs on the "macro-level" of society. Following Li Zehou's platform of subjectality (*zhutixing* 主體性), the idea here is that a decidedly Confucian notion of ritual practice in a very broad sense occupies a pivot point between self and society. As Li Zehou explains, ritual practice so understood is materially

1 *The Vimalakirti Sutra,* trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 131.
2 Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 57, 125–130.

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effective in the economy of human survival.[3] He goes onto describe how with the passage of time ritual tradition covers itself over, just like layers of sediment become opaque as material accumulates. However, here it is society's body of ritual that becomes opaque to itself with the passage of time, such that the ritual basis for our activity acts as a kind of collective unconsciousness.[4]

My finding is that taking up the kind of ritual practices pursued within somaesthetics helps to unearth the unconscious, and often invidious social forces behind the normative subject's basic walk-and-talk, which is to say the subject's everyday being in the world. Li Zehou's subjectality theory and Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics each help to expose the ultimate contingency of power relations that do their damnedest to appear as necessary as the broken and/or breaking masses slouch and slip through what seems to be a fated bodily existence. And so, I sum up my *Reconsidering the Life of Power* by writing:

> To take what might be a more familiar and pleasantly accessible example, consider the Wizard of Oz. Seeing past the imposing simulacrum of the Wizard of Oz to the doddering figure at the machine does not change the circumstances for Dorothy and the rest, but knowing that his "power" is similarly contingent allows the heroes to realize that they have been able to face those circumstances with this less-grandiose type of power all along.[5] Now, nothing so dramatic as an all-revealing pull of a curtain is possible in the case of the subject, for subjectivation takes place through a multitude of encounters where countless different rituals are enacted with a variety of other subjects. But just as subjectivation occurs from a thousand different points, so too can a thousand tiny curtains be pulled back in a thousand ""particular contexts, all aggregating into burgeoning recognition of the ultimate contingency of subjectivation's rites and rituals. The material, bodily, and somaesthetic work of realizing this contingency takes place across a manifold of settings and it does not erase the subject's basic needs, meaning that there is no easy answer like that of Dorothy tapping her heels together three times and chanting "There's no

3 Li Zehou 李澤厚, *Huaxia Mei Xue* 華夏美學 (Guilin: Guangxi shi fan da xue chu ban she, 2001), 10–15.

4 Li Zehou 李澤厚, *Huaxia Mei Xue* 華夏美學, 69; Li Zehou 李澤厚, Mei Xue Si Jian 美学四讲 (Beijing: San Lian Shu Dian, 1989); Li Zehou, "Subjectivity and 'Subjectality': A Response," *Philosophy East and West* 49, no. 2. (1999): 174–175; cf. C.G. Jung, "*Die Archetypen und das Kollektive Unbewusstsein*," in *Gesammelte Werke Vol. 9/1*, eds. Lilly Jung-Merker & Elisabeth Rüf. (Zürich: Rascher, 1976), 13–17.

5 Frank L. Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 128; *The Wizard of Oz*, directed by Victor Fleming: (1939; Beverly Hills, CA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1997), DVD.

> place like home." Home does not even make sense for this kind of relational subject, this kind of soul in the making, if only because the fragmented discipline of subject life proves so far from home, so uncanny, so *unheimlich,* that it precludes any simple A-to-B-and-back-again narrative … Nonetheless, even if nothing like Zarathustra's redemption of the will or a ruby-slipper return trip to Kansas is in the offing, exposing the contingency of subjectivation through conscious ritual work on the body and bodily norms can bring genuine improvement to the plight of subjects generally.

The normative, everyday subject, being somewhat like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* feels a sense of melancholic dread in front of the all-Powerful wizard, but with the pull of a curtain learns to realize that her power is no different from capital-P Power, and that such Power (in the Foucauldian sense) cannot guarantee her continued existence. The idea here is that ritual practice does this curtain-pulling work, giving the subject some small measure of freedom through exposing the ultimate contingency of what is taken to be the necessary social form of bodies, including gait, bearing, walk-and-talk—i.e., how Butler's so-called *Bodies That Matter* actually matter.

This effort, while a good first effort, stands as just that—a first effort. While there are faults within my book, some of this is by design in limiting the scope—*Reconsidering the Life of Power* was always meant to be a partial tale. Indeed, while it does well in responding to Butler on a theoretical level, there are issues that remain, particularly as concerns the limits of ritual practice in improving subject life, and this is where Buddhist perspectives come into play.

Since Florida Atlantic University's February 2020 *Bodies of Belief* conference from which this volume sprang, the question of how bodies should exist in the world has become frightfully urgent, with even the most basic assumptions about the human being as the social animal[6] called into question with the strictures of pandemic life and the sweeping reappraisal of what it means to be with and around others that all of us, philosophers and non-philosophers, have been compelled to undertake. Moreover, this has occurred amid and indeed intensified already tumultuous (and complexly intertwined) dynamics regarding race, gender, class, and the environment. With decisive progress on these fronts and the pandemic seeming unlikely, there is the question of how to respond as a society? Before even talking about either taking up personal cultivation through ritual practice or participation in social movements

6 Aristotle, "Politics," trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *Aristotle's Politics: Writings from the Complete Works: Politics, Economics, Constitution of Athens*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 1.1253a.

that might change things for the better, there is a more basic problem faced by many people, who, in the course of seeking "pure," "perfect" solutions, become frustrated and worse when this inevitably does not come to pass.

Whether talking about self-improvement or social progress, there is always the threat of couch-bound inertia anchored in some version of the perfectionist fallacy—i.e., "there are still going to be problems, so why bother?"—leading to the most nihilistic of self-fulfilling prophecies. This way of thinking, which is really a form of defeatist utopianism, does not reckon with the irony of the impossibility of utopia, i.e., literally a non-place in Greek, and lets the perfect be the enemy of cultivating any good in the material lives of individual people, in bodies politic with others, or speaking less anthropocentrically, in the world at large. Hence, reckoning with the logic of purity and the trappings of perfectionist thinking is of utmost importance if personal and social improvement ever is to occur, and it is on this point that old and new voices in Buddhist traditions have quite a lot to say.

And so, using a self-assessment of my prior work as frame, I intend to turn to Buddhist approaches to the body to show the benefit of cultivation practices that specifically avoid this utopianism, that shun the obvious path of seeking to recover the supposed purity of *this* body localizable as separate from *that* everyday social-political world. I will then make the case for cultivation practices not focused on the purity of a body localizable to one individual form, but rather on the formless purity of the broadest possible species-level, body politic beyond discrete form.

2 Self-assessment of My Prior Work

When it comes to the Confucian side of things, there is a weakness in my account, especially as I treat the tradition as though it were in a vacuum with respect to the affairs of China and East Asia, thus leaving some of the more intriguing and pertinent insights of the region out of this conversation concerning ritual practice. As a result, it is not just the tradition connecting the Confucian school and its modern exponents explored in the initial work of *Reconsidering the Life of Power* that can speak to Judith Butler's more recent account of ritual in subject life in works like her *Psychic Life of Power*. Building on my first book as a foundation, here in this article the claim is that it is the conversation between East Asian schools of thought ends up speaking to Butler's work, with Daoism, Buddhism, and more recent philosophical developments in East Asia offering novel insights into the ritual co-formation of self and society with an emphasis on the priority what is formless.

More to the point, my prior work attempts to extend the language of Confucianism, old *and* new, in addressing ritual practice, and in so doing imports some of its tendencies toward perfectionism, which is to say the maximizing of a certain attribute or attributes. While moral perfectionism might be associated with Virtue Ethics and a generally Aristotelian bent, it does seem to apply to Confucianism. Now, much has been written about benefits and/or drawbacks of approaching Confucianism through such a lens, particularly whether using the language of virtue ethics helps "Western" audiences in understanding Confucianism or whether such an approach is unhelpful in anticipating Confucius on terms other than the tradition's own.

Indeed, Roger T. Ames, in collaboration with his partners David L. Hall and Henry Rosemont, Jr. in books like *Anticipating China*, *Anticipating Confucius*, and *Confucian Role Ethics*, argues against Alasdair MacIntyre, Bryan Van Norden, and others employing the axial-age counterpart of Aristotle and the subsequent tradition of Virtue Ethics to understand Confucian thinking, since core Aristotelian notions such as essence, teleology, and individual soul underlie a thing-based ontology that does not properly align with the relational, process-based sensibilities that are prevalent in East Asian philosophies.[7] Nonetheless, even if the particular tradition might not be about teleological flourishing of some permanent, individuated essential quality of the soul, the label of perfectionism is apt insofar as Ames and Rosemont "insist that Confucian normativity is defined in terms of living one's family roles to maximum effect" and speak of "maximizing the creative possibilities in the pattern of relationships that constitute any particular situation."[8] This is to say, that independent of one's theoretical allegiances in the unfolding conversation about Confucianism's place within English-language academic discourse and the fittingness of certain classifications, it seems fair to claim that Confucianism presents some type of perfectionist account of human existence.

Such perfectionist accounts lead to natural questions concerning the limits of such quests to maximize attributes, which, in the case of Confucianism and my own work, means asking how far ritual attention to body and ritual

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7 David L. Hall & Roger T. Ames, *Anticipating China: Thinking through The Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 16–19 & 50–54; David L. Hall & Roger T. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), xii–xiv & 105–106; Henry Rosemont, Jr. & Roger T. Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Moral Vision for the 21st Century?* (Göttingen: V&R unipress GmbH & National Taiwan University Press, 2016), 109–130.

8 Rosemont & Ames. *Confucian Role Ethics*, 111; Roger T. Ames & David L. Hall, "Glossary of Key Terms," in *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the* Zhongyong (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 86.

can go in cultivating and improving the relational self. Now, it is beyond the scope of this investigation to account for the complex historical interactions between Buddhism and Confucianism, but I contend here in this paper that key Buddhist discourses in China and Japan on the complex nature of purity collectively offer a response to perfectionist accounts of self-cultivation, including that of Confucianism. The hope is that, as regards my own future efforts, the preliminary work of this article will offer resources for resituating and reappraising my more recent Confucian-inspired work on the ritual dimensions of subject life.

And so, this paper goes beyond addressing the oft-cited worry that fixing ritual practice in name, practice, and formalism undercuts it and introduces a type of insincerity—an idea advanced in key anti-Confucian passages from *The Daodejing* (though the possible problem of a person inauthentically going through the motions is an issue that faces *any* philosophy of ritual cultivation).[9] The primary issue at play in this account instead has to do with those strands of moral/aesthetic perfectionism within Confucianism, parts of the somaesthetic paradigm, and my own work building upon both—namely, the issue of whether or not the self is in fact the kind of thing that *can* in fact be perfected or purified through ritual.

By first examining remarks from Chan/Zen Buddhism on the folly of pursuing purity as such, particularly from the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* and its pre-Chan antecedent—the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, before then extending this with the work of Nishida Kitarō 西田 幾多郎 in *Logic and Life*, which combines Buddhist precepts as expressed in Nishida's notion of *basho* 場所—non-dualistic place—with an investigation of cultural development, it thus becomes clear that any possible attempt at self-cultivation and aesthetic life can only occur under the shadow of a prior impurity of self. Being mindful of this, approaches from these strands of Buddhism can help correct my project's "self" involvement by thinking through somaesthetic cultivation as formless and not confinable to a single discrete place.

3 Complex Purity in Chan and Pre-Chan Buddhist Texts

Perhaps the primary Chan insight into the perils of pursuing purity of form and the merits of formless purity comes from the *Platform Sutra*. Narrating events in the generations after the introduction of the earlier *Diamond Sutra*

9 *Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Translation*, trans. Roger T. Ames & David L. Hall (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), §18–19.

into China around 400 BCE and explicitly extending its notion that "true form is not a form at all" such that "[a]ll forms are not in fact forms,"[10] the *Platform Sutra* develops its rather nuanced and idiosyncratic rejection of what might be called a naïve view of purity. This naïve view can be summed up in the words of the person who at the outset appeared most likely to take up the mantle from the Fifth Patriarch Hongren 弘忍, his disciple Shen Xiu 神秀:

> The body is a Bodhi tree,
> The mind is like a clear mirror.
> At all times we must strive to polish it,
> And must not let the dust collect.[11]

The narrative shows Shen Xiu initially receiving praise for his verse, though it is later found by the Fifth Patriarch to be lacking in understanding of his own Bodhi nature [菩提之自性].[12] Now it might be all too easy at this juncture to think that delving into one's own self and discriminating this own-most pure essence from everything contrary would be the way to go. There is a certain intuitive appeal here, after all. However, this would be to mistake the Bodhi nature, which cannot be squared with any notion of what might be one's "own."

What Huineng presents in this distinctly Chan text is not just an idiosyncratic, one-off view, but rather a way of thinking about purity that is very much in keeping with the earliest expressions of Buddhism in China. To wit, the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, which translator Burton Watson asserts was composed around 100 CE,[13] makes clear in a series of exchanges that would go on to have great influence over the proliferation of Buddhism in East Asia, very much including that of the Chan/Zen tradition, that defining purity in terms of impurity/defilement will not do when it comes to Buddhist insight. In addition to its recurring insistence that concerns about purity in the naïve sense be set aside for the purpose of speaking to "people who are difficult to convert [and who] have minds like monkeys,"[14] such that "[t]hough aware that all things in the end are pure in nature, [the bodhisattva] responds to circumstances by showing [themselves] in bodily form,"[15] the text also develops purity as a complex

10 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Text of the Tun-Huang Manuscript*, trans. Philip B. Yampolski (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 63–70, 130; "The Diamond Sutra," trans. Burton Watson, *The Eastern Buddhist* 41, no. 1 (2010): 72, 84, 87.

11 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 130.

12 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 131.

13 *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, 1.

14 *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, 118.

15 *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, 74.

concept very much in line with the later *Platform Sutra*, where the opening chapter makes clear that pure Buddha lands are very much coextensive with the impure world.[16] In this chapter, the disciple Shariputra wonders "Why … is this Buddha land so filled with impurities?", where Buddha responds "What do you think? Are the sun and moon impure? Is that why the blind man fails to see them? ... [I]t is the failings of living beings that prevent them from seeing the marvelous purity of the land of the Buddha, the Thus Come one … Shariputra, this land of mine is pure, but you fail to see it."[17] Buddha then shows this to be the case to his disciple, as, with miraculous flourish, he "pressed his toe against the earth, and immediately the thousand-millionfold world … resembled Jeweled Adornment Buddha's Jeweled Adornment Land of Immeasurable Blessings."[18]

Then later on in the sutra, when speaking on his own "illness" and how this connects him to people such that he might teach Buddha's insights, Vimalakīrti casts impurity in bodily life in similarly complex terms, commenting, "But though his body may be ailing, he should constantly abide in the realm of birth and death, bringing benefit to all living beings and never giving in to weariness or revulsion. This is called expedient means,"[19] before then declaring that "[t]he practice that is neither sullied nor pure—such is the practice of the bodhisattva."[20] Expanding this point, the text depicts the bodhisattva Virtue Peak as declaring that "Defilement and purity form a dualism. But if one sees into the true nature of defilement, it is without the marks of purity but leads into the extinction of all marks. In this way one enters the gate of nondualism."[21]

To simplify and summarize, the problems arising from this naïve view of purity can be understood simply as a matter of logic. To wit, defining something as purely one's own, like the self, is to define it in opposition to everything else, such that one's own pure self would always be defined and thus fettered by what it is not. Thus pure light would be defined in terms of darkness, and be haunted by a shadow. As the bodhisattva Flower Garland puts it in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* "From the concept of 'self' rises the concept of two things, [self and other,] which creates a dualism. But one who sees into the true form of the self will not give rise to the thought of two things. And if one does not dwell in the thought of two things, then one will be without consciousness and without

16 *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, 115, 132–133.
17 *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, 29.
18 *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, 30.
19 *The Vimalakirti Sutra,* 71.
20 *The Vimalakirti Sutra,* 72.
21 *The Vimalakirti Sutra,* 104.

anything one is conscious of, and in this way may enter the gate of nondualism."[22] This is to say that any putatively "pure" self would always be defined by a second shadow self. Purity, indeed!

4 Purity beyond Place, beyond Form

Hence, purity must be rethought in such a way that it would not be localizable to a "this" as opposed to some "that" (in line with the famous Confucian-critiquing passage from the "Discussion on Making All Things Equal" 齊物論 from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子).[23] The unlikely key figure of the *Platform Sutra*, the illiterate discipline Huineng, offers such an insight, where later versions of the text (as translated by John McRae) depict him advancing a more considered view of purity, declaring:

> The Bodhi tree originally is no tree,
> The mirror is also not a platform,
> At root there is not a single thing,
> Where would dust collect?[24]

This split between the views of Shen Xiu and Huineng comes to form the schism between gradual and sudden approaches to enlightenment, where the latter, more considered view strongly rejects that enlightenment occurs through constantly purifying one's self as such, when this would be little more than committing to an illusory self. Huineng forcefully denounces naïve views of purity, maintaining that:

> The deluded man clings to the characteristics of things, adheres to the samādhi of oneness, [thinks] that straightforward mind is sitting without moving and casting aside delusions without lettings things arise in the mind. This he considers to be the samādhi of oneness. This kind of practice is the same as insentiency and the cause of an obstruction to the Tao. Tao must be something that circulates freely; why should he impede it?

22 *The Vimalakirti Sutra,* 109.

23 *The Complete Works of Zhuanzgi,* trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 10.

24 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch,* trans. John McRae. (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2006), 65.

> If the mind does not abide in things the Tao circulates freely; if the mind abides in things, it becomes entangled.[25]

And so it is that, in this discourse at the heart of Chan Buddhism, a novel perspective on what we here and now call somaesthetics emerges with the provocative view that purity is not something to be sought through actions of the mind, which can only serve to reify purity as something local to a certain form and distinct from impurity (thereby implicating impurity as part of purity). Speaking of seated mediation, Huineng offers:

> [F]rom the outset sitting in meditation does not concern the mind nor does it concern purity; we do not talk of steadfastness. If someone speaks of 'viewing the mind,' [then I would say] that the 'mind' is of itself delusion, and as delusions are just like fantasies, there is nothing to be see. If someone speaks of 'viewing purity,' [then I would say] that man's nature is of itself pure, but because of false thoughts True Reality is obscured. If you exclude delusions then the original nature reveals its purity. If you activate your mind to view purity without realizing that your own nature is originally pure, delusions of purity will be produced ... Purity has not form, but nonetheless some people try to postulate the purity and consider this to be Ch'an practice. People who hold this view obstruct their own original natures and end up being bound by purity ... Therefore, both 'viewing the mind' and 'viewing purity' will cause an obstruction to Tao.[26]

What then is the alternative for what purity might mean for the kind of seated meditation at the heart of both Chan practice and a great deal of work on somaesthetics? Well, for Huineng it cannot be about a fixation on emptiness per se, for this will lead a person to "fall into a neutral kind of emptiness."[27] Rather the answer lies not in a purity that is not localizable to any single place, to the kind of emptiness which allows all phenomena, however illusory and transient they may be, to take form. Huineng admonishes that emptiness ought to include "sun, moon, stars, and planets, the great earth, mountains and rivers, all trees and grasses, bad men and good men, bad things and good

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25 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 136.
26 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 139–140.
27 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 146.

things, heaven and hell; [as] they are all in the midst of emptiness" and where "[t]he emptiness of human nature is also like this."[28]

Hence, purity so understood is not about cutting oneself off from all things to establish some putatively neutral vantage point, but rather purity is about being in the midst of everything, which is to say emptiness, and to a certain extent losing oneself therein. So rethought, purity is instead about becoming neutral to the idea of staining a self that does not really exist. This is what Huineng expresses where he says, "Although you see all men and non-men, evil and good, evil things and good things, you must not throw them aside, nor must you cling to them, nor must you be stained by them, but you must regard them as being just like the empty sky. This is what is meant by 'great.' This is the practice of *mo-ho* [maya]."[29] In Huineng's view, realizing that there is not an inside or an outside of oneself—precisely because it is all the same indiscriminate emptiness everywhere—offers freedom. The person who is enlightened and thereby free in this way thus readily "casts aside the mind that clings [to things]" as happens in the naïve view of represented by Shen Xiu, such that "there is no obstruction to his passage."[30]

And so, returning to the motifs of Huineng's original verse from the *Platform Sutra* on the non-tree Bodhi and the bright mirror, the conclusion is thus—there is no question of purifying dust from things when those things do not even really exist. Huineng thus concludes his account with the advice, "Even though you are in the midst of the six dusts, you do not stand apart from them, yet are not stained by them, and are free to come and go ... If you do not think of the myriad things, but always cause your thoughts to be cut off, you will be bound in the Dharma. This is known as a biased view."[31]

5 My Own (Previously) Biased View

Suffice it to say that in my prior work in *Reconsidering the Life of Power* I had been pursuing something of a "biased view." I had been advancing a perfectionist schema where the individual subject's psyche would be "purified" by engaging in the somaesthetic work needed to unearth the history of ritual in society's collective unconsciousness, i.e. shedding light on the social forces unconsciously operant in my everyday walk and talk. What this particular

28 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 146.
29 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 150.
30 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 150.
31 *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 153.

Buddhist-inspired critique shows is that a mistaken logic may be at work in my prior Confucian influenced thinking that could lead this approach to self-cultivation into being something between a matter of diminishing returns and simply a sick joke.

Indeed, in my own work I tacitly acknowledge, but never quite come to grips with, the folly of recovering the pure "self" through self-cultivation. Summarizing my reasons for working through Butler's paradigm and the lineage of Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, and Foucault as they collectively pose a philosophically useful worst-case scenario for, and a challenge to, thinking through the self, I write:

> There is no core, no eternal soul that comes prior to the social implication of the psyche. Peeling back the onion only yields more onion and sifting through the sediment of past social relationships only unearths more sediment. There is no redemption, in the sense of recovery of original essence or original soul, precisely because the soul qua psyche, so considered, is not a pre-given quantity, being instead always in the making.

This is meant to position the process described by Butler as society's ongoing production of normative subjects—subjectivation—as the micro-level complement to what Li Zehou calls subjectality—the macro-level process where rituals large and small (*li* 禮) operate at the pivot point between humanity and nature accrue, with the sediment covering itself over with time and forming society's collective unconsciousness.[32] My thinking had been that consciously taking up ritual *self*-cultivation in somaesthetic practice would make the unconscious forces of macro-level subjectality conscious and loosen the strictures of micro-level subjectivation. This would be, in effect, Shen Xiu's naïve advice—striving consciously in ritual practice to polish the dust, the sediment of unconscious social ritual from myself, so that it might not collect. As the bodhisattva Universal Guardian puts it in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra,* "'I' and 'not-I' form a dualism. But when one cannot grasp even 'I,'' how can one grasp 'not-I'? One who has seen into the true nature of 'I' will no longer give rise to these two concepts, and in this way enter the gate of nondualism."[33]

I myself do not sufficiently engage the problems with this perhaps overly *self*-centered approach, even though my earlier work occasionally entertains the idea that something might be amiss. As mentioned, I talk of self-cultivation

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32 Li Zehou 李澤厚, *Huaxia Mei Xue* 華夏美學 (Guilin: Guangxi shi fan da xue chu ban she, 2001), 10-15, 69; 李泽厚, 华夏美学, 69; Li Zehou 李澤厚, *Mei Xue Si Jian* 美学四讲, 109; Li, "Subjectivity and 'Subjectality': A Response": 174–179.

33 *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, 106.

as pulling back what might be an infinite number of curtains and exposing the ritual machinations of power like the Wizard of Oz, while indicating that this might be a never-ending task. Moreover, I highlight that self-cultivation likely cannot be confined to self as such, writing, "Indeed, the deeply public nature of appearance and the social character of ritual indicate that whatever limited improvement may be possible might not rest in an *atomically individual* subject per se, as indeed Butler herself raises the question, 'what difference does it make when bodies act in concert, together[?]'"[34]

6 Nishida Kitarō on *Basho* and Purity beyond Place

I think that an answer to this problematic is latent in my work and can be articulated by way of Nishida Kitarō. Nishida is particularly interesting here because of the way that he develops the argument that purity might not reside in any single locus per se, least of all the individual ego, but instead that it might reside in a broader, all-encompassing process without definite form or place. With his work on this topic, particularly in *Logic & Life*, Nishida extends Huineng's notion of indefinite purity and anticipates many of the themes surrounding Li Zehou's understanding of sedimentation in subjectality, doing so in ways that imply crucial correctives to my prior work.

Nishida's core concept, arguably, is *basho*, which is not about "place" per se, as common dictionary translations might have it, but is more idiosyncratically about the emptiness both prior and common to place. Very much echoing the closing of Huineng's initial remarks in *The Platform Sutra*, Nishida writes, "Even if we attempt to think in regard to acts, taking the I as a pure unity of acts, insofar as the I is conceived in opposition to the not-I, there must be that which envelops the opposition between I and non-I within itself and makes the establishment of the so-called phenomena of consciousness possible within itself. Following the words of Plato's *Timaeus*, I shall call the receptacle of the ideas in this sense, *basho* [place; χώρα, *chōra*]."[35]

With *basho* so understood as place prior to the emergence of self and not-self, Nishida continues in *Logic and Life* to develop an account of the material, technological development of self and society that avoids being overly occupied with these overt phenomena and hews to Huineng's position that a prior

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34 Eliza Kania, "Exercising Freedom - Interview with Judith Butler," *R/evolutions: Global Trends & Regional Issues* 1, no. 1 (2013): 39.

35 Nishida Kitarō, "Basho," in *Place and Dialectic: Two Essays by Nishida Kitarō*, trans. John W. M. Krummel & Shigenori Nagatomo (Oxford: Oxford Univesity Press, 2012), 50.

empty nature renders the question of purifying self over and above outside influence moot. Laying out the stakes for his inquiry in trying to balance the material realities of history with the Buddhist-influenced notion of *basho*, he writes,

> Moreover, even when speaking of a determination without a determiner [*genteisurumononaki gentei*], I am not simply saying that there is no object [*taishō*] in the establishment of the self. Even when I speak of the "universal of nothing" [*mu no ippansha*], I do not mean to say that there is nothing at all. The world of historical reality [*rekishiteki jitsuzaikai*] is not the appearance of what already exists. Instead it must be creative. That which is must be such that its essence [*honshitsu*] is [*soku*] generation [*seisei*] itself, and its generation is essence itself.[36]

And so, for Nishida "Life is established in virtue of *basho* [place] determining itself."[37] The emptiness prior to the self is not a vacuum; it is creative. And moreover, the emergence of self has to be resolved in terms of being born into a species interacting with an environment.[38] Paraphrasing Nishida, what establishes the self is not some mere nothing; *creatio ex nihilo* does not apply.[39]

Nishida thus contends:

> Life that is temporal and the world of matter that is spatial stand thoroughly opposed to each other. We can thus think therein of an infinite dialectical process. The dialectical process thus would have to be something essential to one aspect of life. But to conceive life only from this particular standpoint cannot escape being an abstract view. The true environment would have to be a basho from which we are born and into which we go dying, that is, it must be the world.[40]

He goes on to offer:

> It goes without saying both that life does not exist merely on the basis of its confronting the environment and that without the environment

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36 Nishida Kitarō, "Logic and Life," in *Place and Dialectic: Two Essays by Nishida Kitarō*, trans. John W. M. Krummel & Shigenori Nagatomo (Oxford: Oxford Univesity Press, 2012), 105.

37 Kitarō, "Logic and Life," 110.

38 Kitarō, "Logic and Life," 109.

39 Kitarō, "Logic and Life," 109.

40 Kitarō, "Logic and Life," 111.

> there would be no such thing as life. This is why life must thoroughly belong to a species. We are born of a species, our life is biological. The world of the self-determination of the dialectical universal, the creative world's self-determination, would have to involve the establishment of an infinite number of species. Forms appear as the self-determination of the world wherein the [epistemological] subject is object and the object is subject.[41]

In response, I would argue that what here Nishida calls an abstract view is equivalent to what Huineng calls a biased view and that a similar resolution is needed in both cases—an appreciation of the common, indiscriminate emptiness prior to any discrimination of things into this and that, into life and environment.

And so, where Nishida urges thinking of life on the species level as unfolding in a dialectic with the world there seems to be a deep connection with Li Zehou's understanding sedimentation at the pivot between humanity and nature. What Nishida calls "the creative world's self-determination" strikes awfully close to what Li calls sedimentation, and what Nishida's view implies is that the focus needs to be less on the self, which makes sense, but also less on the species. Instead, Nishida's observations emphasize the *process* of the creative world's self-determination through place (*basho*).

Hence, when trying to think of the self as the self, trying to resolve the self as an isolated element, *purifying the self* is bound to run up against the limits of what Nishida establishes as a decidedly Buddhist logic of life. This logic traces back to the insights of Huineng in *The Platform Sutra* into formless purity and implies that somaesthetic practice aiming at "self"-cultivation may end up endlessly frustrated and should instead lose the self in the *process* of species-environment interrelationship sedimentation over time.

This finding does not mean rejecting Li Zehou, but rather it does suggest modifying my appropriation of his insights in response to the dilemmas posed by Butler's strong anti-essentialist understanding of the self. The basic motivations behind my project in wanting to respond to Butler kept a certain degree of essentialism at bay; however, the approach to sedimentation that I took up may have simply deferred the problem. The fault lay not in sedimentation theory as developed by Marx and extended by Li Zehou, but rather in my appropriation of it as a remedy to the problems of ritual subject life identified by Butler. In posing the subject who takes up ritual practice in response to these

41 Kitarō, "Logic and Life," 111.

problems as exposing the long buried sediment of society's rituals to the light of day, I inadvertently made the mistake of implying that this would enable the subject to sort through ritual and separate the good from the bad, the helpful from the harmful—in short that the ritual aspect of human life could be purified. There are definite problems with thinking of somaesthetic practice simply as clearing dust or making unconscious ritual-habitual sediment conscious. And so, I suspect that in the end it may be more fruitful to approach somaesthetic practice not as *self*-cultivation strictly speaking, but as a contribution to species-level sedimentation in the space [*basho*] prior to the creative co-determination of humanity and nature. For the time being this means that somaesthetics should not end with a focus on the particular soma. Instead, the concern ought to be somatic life in its most expansive, species-level sense as well as the condition of the possibility of that somatic life, which is to say space in the sense of Nishida's *basho*.

7 Shin'ichi Hisamatsu and FAS Zen

And it is at this point that Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松 真一 and his Nishida-inspired critique of Zen Buddhism emerge as a resource for extending this argument. Of particular interest, is Hisamatsu's promotion of FAS Zen, which holds that "traditional Zen lacks A…'stand[ing] on the standpoint of All humanity' … and S … 'creat[ing] Superhistorical history' … And the fact that A and S are lacking means that F … 'awake[ning] to the Formless self' … too, cannot be consummately attained."[42] Christopher Ives' description of this approach sees Hisamatsu argue for "the Zen path go beyond narrow monastic discipline—*zazen*, kōans, physical work (*samu*)—and include study of social, political, and economic dimensions of history."[43] Abe Masao 阿部 正雄 sees a "distinctive characteristic of the world of [Hisamatsu's] Awakening [being] the emphasis on humans and history. Hisamatsu advocated a new humanism as a standpoint of all man."[44] Key here is how the individual *and* the social are both explicit foci of FAS practice, as is made clear in the society's vow:

42 Imaizumi Motoji, "The Thought and Practice of Hisamatsu Shinichi," trans. Robert Chapeskie in *The Philosophy of the Kyoto School*, ed. Masakatsu Fujita (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2018), 158.

43 Christopher Ives, "True Person, Formless Self: Lay Zen Master Hisamatsu Shin'ichi," in *Zen Masters*, eds., Steven Heine and Dale Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 227.

44 Abe Masao, "Hisamatsu's Philosophy of Awakening," trans. Christopher A. Ives. *The Eastern Buddhist: New Series* 14, no. 1 (1981): 41.

> Keeping calm and composed, let us awaken to our True Self, become fully compassionate humans, make full use of our gifts according to our respective missions in life, discern the agony both individual and social and its source, recognize the right direction in which history should proceed, and join hands without distinctions of race, nation, or class. Let us, with compassion, vow to bring to realization humankind's deep desire for Self-emancipation and construct a world in which everyone can truly and fully live.[45]

Hisamatsu (notably going over and above Vimalakīrti and his sometimes instrumental justification of impurity in service of 2nd-century BCE conversion zeal) thus observes:

> If Zen stops at this sort of mere awakening of the self and awakening of others, then we would have to say that it is something that falls into the deep pit of deliverance from this world [*mok ṣa*; *gedatsu*] through mutual collaboration of self and others, but it is not the true attainment of complete awakening. It is not enough for the self and others to become enlightened; the important issue of [religious] practice [行] is what to do after enlightenment has been obtained. The great agency and great action [大機大用] of Zen, along with its emanation in the direction of helping each individual attain enlightenment, must also emanate towards the actual world, that is, towards the formation of the world as well as of history (III, 73).[46]

How precisely this theoretical finding, which builds upon the initial insights of the Sixth Patriarch, is to unfold in actual, real-world practice is somewhat unclear. We get at least something of a hint as to how the FAS approach links up to somaesthetics, where, in Abe Masao's description of Hisamatsu, "[c]alligraphy, painting, and poetry all became vehicles of awakened self-expression," but where he "was especially fond of the tea ceremony, which for him was also an expression of the same Awakening, transcending all tea schools and ceremonial forms."[47] Hisamatsu's thoughts on "Mind-tea" [*Shincha* 心茶], are thus provocative when it comes to the practical dimension, where "*Wabi*-tea is a synthetic system of cultural life that is characterized by *wabi* [侘: quiet elegance, refinement], whereby *wabi*—Zen that has infused the tea ceremony,

45 Ives, "True Person, Formless Self: Lay Zen Master Hisamatsu Shin'ichi," 218.
46 Motoji, "The Thought and Practice of Hisamatsu Shinichi," 157.
47 Masao, "Hisamatsu's Philosophy of Awakening," 26.

tea in which Zen becomes the subject—acts as the primordial subject and creates values and entities as their fundamental standard."[48] Rather than subjects meditating so that they might come into their own as enlightened subjects on background objects, this approach bids that non-localizable processes be properly recognized as the foreground issue that sets up a world of ultimately illusory objects (including us people) whose interconnection stymies any possible quest that would locate naïve purity in this or that body alone.

8 Conclusion

In closing though, the main takeaway on this occasion is that perfection qua purity cannot be defined dualistically over and against impurity in such a way that it might be localized within one single thing, certainly not an impermanent physical body. Certainly, for projects like mine that take somaesthetic philosophy as a basis, this has ramifications for reconsidering the *self* in self-consciousness and self-cultivation as what might be a project of purification. Richard Shusterman contends that "*any acutely attentive somatic self-consciousness will always be conscious of more than the body itself*."[49] The Buddhist insights presented here ultimately extend his paradigm of somaesthetics by shifting the emphasis away from self-consciousnesses and to its expansion beyond the individual body. This argument points to the possibility of and perhaps the need for mindfulness to reach beyond the individual level of "the body itself" to a greater, formless body with a greater, formless purity. Whether this is possible in the post-pandemic world remains to be seen, as indeed, narrow preoccupation with personal bodily autonomy and purity in political parties/movements seems to have intensified, imperiling our ability to appreciate the non-localizable non-place of the relational processes that bind us all.

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48 Imaizumi Motoji, "The Thought and Practice of Hisamatsu Shinichi," 158.

49 Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8 [emphasis preserved from the text].

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Mahayana, Theravada, ancient, modern? Even at the most basic level, the diversity of Buddhism makes a comprehensive approach daunting. This book is a first step in solving the problem. In foregrounding the bodies of practitioners, a solid platform for analysing the philosophy of Buddhism begins to become apparent.
Building upon somaesthetics Buddhism is seen for its ameliorative effect, which spans the range of how the mind integrates with the body. This exploration of positive effect spans from dreams to medicine. Beyond the historical side of these questions, a contemporary analysis includes its intersection with art, philosophy, and ethnography.

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