

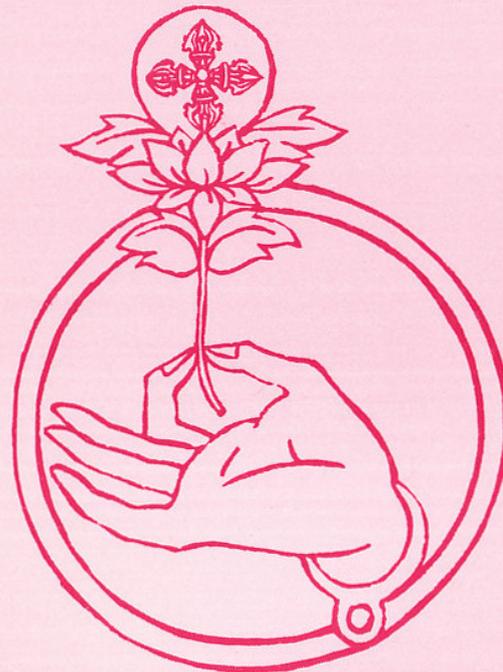
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THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

2

On the Threshold
of Enlightenment



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Cover Symbol:

The symbols on the covers of the issues in this series are from original lino-cuts by Dharmachari Alokā based upon the *mudrās* of the eight principal Bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna tradition. This issue features the *mudrā* of the Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha, or 'Sky-Womb'. Ākāśagarbha is the celestial counterpart of Kṣitigarbha, or 'Earth-Womb'. He belongs to the spiritual family of the Buddha Amoghasiddhi and so in his right hand he holds a lotus on which rest two crossed *vajras*.

THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

6. On the Threshold of Enlightenment

Part 2

Contents

Editorial	3
Seminar Extracts.....	4
1 An Empty Stone	4
2 A Case of Reality	4
3 Do We Really Have to Think?	5
4 Mind Stretching	8
5 Avoiding the Void	10
6 A Matter of Perception.....	11
7 An Altered World.....	12
8 Not Minding 'No Thought'	14
9 Pleasure, Pain, It's All the Same	15
10 When the Rope is Cut.....	17
12 Getting Up Steam	21
13 The Right Response	22
14 Rooted in Reality	23
Glossary	27
Notes	29

*Indicates refer to Glossary

Editorial

The nearer we get to the end of our journey the less apparently there is to say about it. But here we are on the threshold of Enlightenment still going strong. Are we in danger of saying too much? Has the Venerable Sangharakshita over-stepped the mark this time? Can he continue to help us clarify our minds or will he just add to our confusion? Have we gone to an extreme or are we still on the Middle Way?

In a recent talk celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the FWBO the Venerable Sangharakshita spoke of the Movement as being 'on the middle Way'. All FWBO activities and attitudes should reflect the Middle Way, and *Mitrata* must be no exception. Our exploration of the Bodhisattva Ideal should tread a middle way between saying too little and saying too much.

So we must consider whether we have taken up a one-sided approach, appealing to the more studious rather than to the more faithful. The follower with an appetite for study tends to question. He wants to know how to work towards the attainment of Insight. What sort of basis of meditation does he need? Must one experience pain? What is a state of no-thought? How substantial are objects? His enquiries lead him on to Emptiness. He is brought up against the limitations of his own mind, discovering that *prajñā* is not merely intellectual knowledge and that there is no real understanding without faith. But the faith follower too must question and clarify his mind. Not necessarily for his own sake but, as an aspiring Bodhisattva, for the sake of others.

With a copy of *Mitrata* in your hands you can question, you can listen and you can work out the Middle Way.

SRIMALA

Seminar Extracts

1 An Empty Stone

Dhammapada Chs. 14 and 20

Men's Order Mitra Event, Vinehall, April 1981

Sangharakshita: The Mahayana maintains that both the conditioned and the Unconditioned are *śūnyatā*;¹ [there is one] Ultimate Reality which is *śūnyatā*, [therefore] everything is *śūnyatā*. [However] it might not be a very helpful thing at the beginning of your spiritual life to be told that everything is *śūnyatā*, because then it isn't really necessary to give up anything – it is all *śūnyatā*. But in the case of the Theravada, it is quite impossible to make that mistake, because *here* is the conditioned, and *there* is the Unconditioned, and the spiritual life consists in making the transition from the one to the other.

That is a good practical basis [for your spiritual life and] maybe when you are well on your way to making the transition, you can start reflecting that conditioned and Unconditioned are ultimately *śūnyatā*. If you start that too early on in your spiritual career, however, you may not make any progress at all. [To say everything is *śūnyatā*] is just a matter of words. Are the conditioned and the Unconditioned for you non-dual? Of course they are not. Milarepa deals with this sort of thing: his disciples would say, "even this stone is *śūnyatā*". [Milarepa would reply], "Yes, to me", plunging his fist right into the stone, "but can you do this?" No, they cannot, of course. For them a stone is a stone, not *śūnyatā*.

For them the conditioned is not the Unconditioned, and they shouldn't pretend that it is. They should proceed on the basis that the conditioned is conditioned and the Unconditioned is unconditioned and that the conditioned is *here* and the Unconditioned is *there*: very, very remote in the distance, to be achieved [only] after a long time and after a lot of struggle. [It's] not that "it's all *śūnyatā* and here we are now with nothing to realize, just wake up to the fact that you are a Buddha". [Statements like this are] so superficial – though of course, as statements, they are true, but not in everybody's mouth. We don't deny the truth of [such] statements, we only deny the right of certain people to make those statements. That is why I sometimes say that in the FWBO, in principle, we follow the Mahayana, but in practice we are down-to-earth Theravadins, so much so that the Theravadins probably wouldn't recognize us as Theravadins! (*Laughter*)



2 A Case of Reality

Questions and answers on the Bodhisattva Ideal

Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Abhaya: I think you said earlier that language not only reflects the way you see things, [but also] conditions the way you see things, so that [language] is ultimately [poetic].

Sangharakshita: Well, yes and no. What I was thinking of was this: because we're not really aware of the words that we use, of their meaning and origin, we often don't realize how intensely metaphorical our language is. I

think one could say there is no language which is not metaphorical; language is essentially metaphorical. Even our so-called abstract terms are basically metaphorical, which is something that scientists are only just beginning to come up against. You could, of course, take the view that if language is essentially metaphorical, how can language handle Reality? But that assumes a certain kind of conception of Reality: that Reality is not metaphorical! You're assuming that Reality is abstract, as science thinks it is, or as science *thinks* it thinks of it. But if language is metaphorical, this suggests to me that Reality is metaphorical. Perhaps one can get closer to Reality by realizing that one's language *is* in fact metaphorical. For instance, take a word like 'understand'. That's a good intellectual word, but look more closely: under-stand, stand under. That's an intensely metaphorical expression. You're [translating an intellectual experience into language which is] essentially metaphorical, and that fact has all sorts of interesting implications.

Abhaya: Does the Buddha's teaching correlate with saying that Reality is ultimately metaphorical? Absolute Reality? Is there any relative Reality?

S.: Well, even 'relative' is a metaphorical expression. Put it this way: you cannot say anything about Reality that is not metaphorical. Of course Buddhism does say that Reality is beyond words. But that [itself] is a metaphorical expression: 'beyond'. That's blatantly spatial. (*Laughter.*) how can Reality be *beyond* anything?. This suggests that Reality is way out there in space. That's no more sophisticated, and no closer to the truth, than saying "God is heaven up there". The concept of God being in heaven 'up there', in fact, probably has a certain advantage over saying that Reality is beyond the world, because at least it's quite obviously mythological language. Whereas when you say "Reality is beyond the conditioned", you *think* you're speaking a very abstract spiritual language which is much closer to Reality. But you're still speaking quite metaphorically. You can't in fact speak non-metaphorically about Reality at all. If there is any sort of congruence between your statements about Reality and Reality itself, it can only be because Reality is, *as it were*, metaphorical, or of such a nature as to be susceptible to metaphorical statements. What this really boils down to is that you can't get away from the Correspondence theory of truth.

Padmavajra: What's the Correspondence theory of truth?

S.: The Correspondence theory of truth is that there's an object 'out there', and an adequate description of it 'fits' the object; the description corresponds to the reality. [This] suggests [there are] two different things, one of which corresponds to the other. We usually think of a full correspondence [between] the description and the object described as constituting truth. But one need not think of truth in those sorts of terms. In the case of metaphor you haven't really got that sort of relation [between the description and the object described]. In a metaphorical statement the so-called object is implicated in the so-called subject. In the metaphor you've already begun to transcend that duality, so you don't really need a Correspondence theory of truth. In other words the Correspondence theory of truth is probably off the track anyway.

3 Do We Really Have to Think?

Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva ideal
Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Phil Shann; Would you say it's a serious block to your spiritual life if you can't think?

Sangharakshita: Yes, I think to some extent it is when you come to develop Insight, because a conceptual expression of the Dharma is the basis for the development of Insight, traditionally speaking. For instance, you have the concept of impermanence. It's on the basis of your clear thinking about impermanence that you develop Insight into the truth of impermanence, actual Insight. But it would seem that the clarity of the intellectual understanding comes first, it's a sort of base, a sort of springboard. Otherwise when you come to something like *anātmā*² and *sūnyatā*, how are you going to get some inkling of it, the beginnings of intuition, if

you haven't got some refined, precise, intellectual formulation to begin with? That intellectual formulation itself in its proper, in its correct form, having been originally the Buddha's own communication of what was for him a Transcendental experience. In other words, how can you get back to the Transcendental experience on the part of the Buddha, of which the intellectual, the conceptual formulation is an expression, unless you can be sure of thoroughly understanding that conceptual expression on its own level first? Otherwise it would seem that the necessary connection is not going to be established.

Abhaya: Isn't the Insight completely independent of conceptual thought? Isn't it meant to be...?

S.: Ah! It is independent of conceptual thought, but then how do you develop it? It doesn't just come into existence [of its own accord, so to speak]. The traditional method is that you take up these conceptual formulations, as I call them, which are traditionally expressions of the Buddha's Transcendental Insight or the Transcendental Insight of his disciples, and by reflecting on them – which means you first of all must understand them – with your concentrated mind, you get an inkling of their Transcendental import.

Abhaya: So couldn't one build up Insight through simply building up more and more merit and skilful action, and by cutting out the unskilful action?

S.: No, not according to Buddhist tradition. No amount of merit without understanding, without Insight, is going to lead you to the Transcendental. It will just lead you to one good rebirth after another. In addition to the *puṇya-sambhāra* you need the *jñāna-sambhāra*.³

Phil Shann: Couldn't you develop Insight through the visualization practice? Because the image is a Transcendental...

S.: Yes but you have to recognize that. When you say that the image is an image of the Transcendental, what do you mean? Because the usual procedure is not that you regard the image as an image of the Transcendental. The usual procedure is that you reflect that the image, the visualized image, has arisen in dependence on causes and conditions; and inasmuch as it has arisen in dependence on causes and conditions it is not completely real. But nonetheless it has arisen; therefore it is not completely *unreal*. And you see that neither the concept of real nor the concept of unreal is sufficient to exhaust the situation. You see that 'Reality' transcends real and unreal, existence and non-existence. But you see this with the help of certain conceptual formulations which, on the conceptual or intellectual level, reflect – this is of course an image – the Transcendental Reality which they express. This is the traditional procedure. Therefore a clear, conceptual understanding is quite important if one follows this particular approach.

Abhaya: You said, 'this particular approach'. That implies there is another approach.

S.: Well, yes and no. Take for instance this question of impermanence. You could say that you can attain Enlightenment just by, say, watching a leaf fall, by watching another leaf fall. But what happens? (*Silence.*) ... (*Laughter.*) When you see a leaf fall you might simply say, "The leaf falls": that is all that you see. So how do you get from that to the universal truth of impermanence? Because it's the *universal* truth of impermanence that you have to understand, or into which you have to have Insight. It's not enough just to see one leaf fall. (*Pause.*) Is it? (*Pause.*) ... (*Laughter.*) So one must see another leaf fall and another leaf. Or you might even see just one leaf fall. But you can, as it were, conclude something from that. That enables you to see something which is that *all leaves fall*. That is an idea, a general idea. You don't just see the leaf fall. Your mind starts working as well. You say to yourself, "It's not just this leaf. All leaves fall. Everything that arises comes to an end." Your mind is going through certain processes, you are making certain conceptual formulations. It is not simply that you see the leaf fall. There is a sort of intermediate stage.

Abhaya: Would this insight necessarily have to arise in dependence on how one consciously worked to clarify one's thinking and to develop intellectually? In the Zen stories there seem to be quite ordinary men who have no cultural background....

S.: Ah! But what have they been doing? They've been meditating. And by meditating they have got rid of all mental one-sidedness or bias or preconception or psychological or even cultural conditioning. It's as though their minds can function very, very freely and in an unhampered sort of way, in a spontaneous sort of way.

Abhaya: Couldn't we conclude, therefore, that another approach would be through meditation rather than through one's intellectual clear thinking?

S.: The two aren't really separate because under meditation one includes not only the *śamathā bhāvāna* but the *vipaśyanā bhāvāna* too.⁴ By means of the *śamathā bhāvāna*, by means of the experience of the *dhyānas*, you as it were purge the instrument, which is your reason, if you like, or your intelligence; and that is able either to recognize conceptual formulations which are presented by tradition, or to make its own conceptual formulations which then act as a sort of springboard for the development of actual Insight. It's as though you don't go directly from perception, without concept, to Insight. It's as though there is the intermediate stage or level of concepts.

Abhaya: So one could conclude that Enlightenment depends to some level on an innate level of intelligence.

S.: Oh yes! Which of course does not necessarily have anything to do with literacy or book-learning or anything of that sort. The ability to think clearly, yes. And that ability to think clearly is enhanced by the purificatory nature of the meditation – that is the *śamathā bhāvāna* – process. One might quote Hui Neng: he had meditated, he had worked in the monastery. When he heard the words of the *Diamond Sutra*⁵ he knew what they were all about. He could recognize the import of the *Diamond Sutra* because there was nothing in his mind – which was purified by meditation and his whole way of life – to obstruct his immediate apprehension of, first of all, what the words of the Sutra meant, conceptually speaking, and then what these words meant in terms of Insight and Transcendental Wisdom.

Abhaya: So could we conclude that people living say at Vajraloka,⁶ given that they've got a certain modicum of intelligence, wouldn't need to study or to clarify their thought at all, but just pursue their meditation. And given that they have this modicum of intelligence, when the moment comes that they've built up enough *śamathā*, then they would be able to develop Insight.

S.: This is the standard or classical way. Not that insight cannot develop in other situations. But for most people it would seem, at least historically speaking, it is most likely to arise or develop in that sort of situation.

Abhaya: What I'm really asking is whether you would agree that not all of us have to develop and clarify thought, only perhaps some people who are more interested and inclined towards that area?

S.: Oh no! Everybody who is interested in developing Insight, and therefore in achieving Stream Entry,⁷ needs to clarify their thinking, just as much as they need to make their emotional life more positive. One could say that the two things really go along hand in hand. You need, in one way or another, perhaps with the help of culture, to render your emotional life more and more refined and more and more positive. At the same time, with the help of intellectual disciplines, as well as meditation, you need to make your intellectual life more clear, more free from obfuscation, more free from vagueness and imprecision and emotional contamination and so on. And, of course, to bring these two together. I think that one can say that in meditation, using the term for a combination of *śamathā* and *vipaśyanā*, what you've got is a sort of union on a higher level of your purified emotion and your clarified intelligence. The word 'intellect' has quite a respectable history but it's been very debased in modern times. We don't have the proper word for that faculty anymore. In the Middle Ages there was a very clear distinction made between intellect and reason. We've lost that. Intellect and

reason have become more or less synonymous. That is perhaps quite significant. Even intelligence is not really the right word.

Padmavajra: What would be the nearest one in the original language?

S.: One could speak of *prajñā* but there are different levels of *prajñā*. It is *cintāmaya-prajñā*,⁸ perhaps. It is *cintāmaya-prajñā* as combined with the sort of emotional positivity which is represented by the *dhyānas* and the 'Four *Brahma-vihāras*'.⁹ These two coming together, intensified and raised to a higher level and a higher power in the mathematical sense, are what constitute, or at least what bring about the arising of Insight. Insight is *not*, despite the nomenclature, more of the nature of intelligence than of emotion.

One sees, therefore, that the clarification of one's thinking, in whatsoever way, is an integral part of the whole process of spiritual life and development; just as much as the increasing refinement and positivization of one's whole emotional life. So one can say that Buddhism stands for these two things: emotional positivity and intellectual clarity. At their highest level these are Compassion and Wisdom. And of course at that highest level these two things, though distinguishable, are not really separable.

One might say that in the world at large, I'm afraid, within the FWBO to a great extent, perhaps, clarity of thinking is probably as rare as real emotional positivity. Well, one has to work on both and try to develop them both, to do one's best to develop both. I think probably people do take quite lot of interest in the development of emotional positivity, they're quite concerned about that, they understand that and the need for that. I think they *don't* perhaps understand quite so well, in all cases, the need for the development of intellectual clarity and precision and objectivity and so on.

Abhaya: Would you say that this is holding Order Members back from approaching Stream-Entry?

S.: I think it must do: to the extent that it is an integral part of one's spiritual development [a lack of] it must hold you back. But again – we must be very clear – it does not mean becoming a scholar. It does not mean becoming better educated in the ordinary sense. It does not mean, necessarily, reading more books. It does not mean becoming an intellectual in the modern sense, nor an academic in the modern sense. It just means using your intelligence. It's as simple as that.



4 Mind Stretching

Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism
Mixed Order Retreat, Abhirati, August 1974

Sudatta: Can you say that *śūnyatā* 'is' or 'is not'?

Sangharakshita: No. No.

Sudatta: Can you say [that] it is non-substance?

S.: No. *Śūnyatā* is [usually] defined as neither existent nor non-existent.

Sudatta: But is *śūnyatā* the infinite?

S.: Well, yes and no. [*Śūnyatā*] is neither finite nor infinite.

Sudatta: If it is the infinite, you can't define it.

S.: So you can't even define it as substance.

Sudatta: You're completely at the end of language.

S.: Right. But I think the Buddhist language is much subtler. It, therefore, continues longer and your silence comes a bit later than [it does] in the case of relatively naïve substantialism or pantheism.¹⁰

Devamitra: Perhaps it would be possible to say that *śūnyatā* has quite a substantial [aspect to it] – that it's not a totally passive, inactive thing, but has a creative function [or] a creative aspect.

S.: You can say that. But even there one has to be very cautious, because even though *śūnyatā* is not a substance and not a 'thing' – [it's] not even a spiritual or metaphysical or Transcendental thing – language almost compels us to speak about [*śūnyatā*] as though it was. In other words, in speaking about *śūnyatā* at all, we have to do continual violence to language. When we stop doing violence to language we start taking what we say about *śūnyatā* literally and then we're no longer speaking about *śūnyatā*. The basic point made by the Mādhyamīka [School]¹¹ (and the Mahayana tradition generally) is that *śūnyatā* is not to be thought of in terms of existence and non-existence. You are left with this sort of statement, and that's as far as you can go intellectually. You [then] have to transcend [language], as it were, intuitively with your Wisdom. You can just see what *śūnyatā* is – though you can't even say 'is', [because] it's just as much 'not' as it 'is'. So, don't think of *śūnyatā* as something that is, and don't fall into the opposite trap of thinking of it as something that is not. All forms of pantheism or substantialism assume that [*śūnyatā*] is, in fact, an existent something or other, but this is exactly what the Mahayana denies.

Nagabodhi: This is one of the places where it's so easy to bring our prejudices and preconditionings.

S.: Also, it's very easy to allow the intellect to become merrily active [thinking] *śūnyatā* is this, that and the other [when] it *isn't* this and it *isn't* that. [This is just] playing with [*śūnyatā*] in the way some pseudo-Zen people do and, basically, not being serious about it. Perhaps we can say that the *śūnyatā* teaching is just an attempt, in a rather sophisticated intellectual way, to bring us up against the absolute limitations of our intellect (to use the word in its modern debased sense) when it is confronted by what we can only call Reality. [For us] to feel and experience [this Reality] some other faculty has to come into operation within us to [enable] us to recognize and see above and beyond those limitations. The ordinary mind just cannot do it. So the doctrine of *śūnyatā* is, in a sense, not intended to make it clear, from an intellectual point of view, what *śūnyatā* is. [It's not having] it all neatly tied up [intellectually] and thinking we know it. [The *śūnyatā* doctrine] is meant to baffle the intellect – to cut it off. [It] cuts off every avenue of escape, as it were, so that the intellect is brought up against an absolute wall [where it] collapses and realizes "Well I just can't make any impression". That's why in the Zen tradition it's said that the Absolute is just like a great ball of steel and the intellect trying to penetrate and pierce it is like a gnat trying to sting this great ball of steel as big as house. Of course the gnat, with its little proboscis can't make any impression on the ball of steel at all. It's the [same] with us trying to understand the Absolute, or *śūnyatā*, or the *Dharmakāya*¹² with our [ordinary] mind. So we can say that the main purpose of these teachings about *śūnyatā* and so on, is to force us to realize the limitations of the rational mind.

Devamitra: Yes. In other words, the teaching of *śūnyatā* could be said to be a means rather than a metaphysical statement.

S.: There are no metaphysical statements in Buddhism according to Guenther. So if, with your ordinary rational mind, you think, "Ah yes. Now I understand what *śūnyatā* means. That's very clear, now I've understood.", [it means] you haven't [understood]. You've understood something. You've understood those words or that particular meaning, but they've got nothing to do with *śūnyatā*.

Nagabodhi: But in order to realize the value of the means we have to try.

S.: Oh yes, indeed. And not only to realize the value of the means, but to realize the value of the means in the sense of realizing the impotence of the [rational] mind. That means we've got to fully stretch the mind. In the case of Buddhist philosophy – for want of a better term – they stretched the mind rather more than it has been stretched in the West and [have thus] transcended the mind more effectively and cleanly as it were.



5 Avoiding the Void

Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism

Mixed Order Retreat, Abhirati, August 1974

Sangharakshita: Just a few words about the use of the word '*śūnya*'. [*Śūnya* means] 'empty' or 'void' and [it] can be used in all sorts of ways which can get mixed up [if we're not careful]. You can say, for instance, that something is *śūnya* (void or empty) in the sense of being non-existent. In other words, that which is illusory can be described as void in the sense that it isn't really there. It's completely illusory, [or completely] void. That's one usage. [Another is when] the relatively real is described as being void. Now what does this mean? [Here], the relatively real is described as being void or empty *not* in the sense that it is non-existent and not really there, but in the sense that it arises on dependence in causes and conditions. Here, void and empty means 'relative': empirical existence arising in dependence on causes and conditions, and ceasing when those causes and conditions disappear. So when it is said that conditioned existence is void and empty, it merely means that it is conditioned; that it is relative and *not* that it is completely non-existent.

Now when it is said that Nirvana is Void, it means that Nirvana is empty of the whole cause/effect process. It's beyond that. [This doesn't mean] that [Nirvana] is empty in itself or void in itself, but [that] it is empty of that cause/effect process. There is nothing in [Nirvana] of conditioned existence [since] it is all *unconditioned* existence. But again, [it's] not that [Nirvana] is completely non-existent. And then, in the highest sense, you can say that the *Dharmakāya*¹² is Void in the sense that it is empty of all discriminations. You can't say that it exists [and] you can't say that it doesn't [exist]. You can't say it is this [and] you can't say it is that: you can't say it is existent or non-existent, or even void or not void. [The *Dharmakāya*] is empty of all these terms; [it] transcends all these terms. It is completely void, completely empty and, again, not just non-existent. So these are some of the different ways in which the term '*śūnya*' can be used. When you say that an illusion is *śūnya*, it means one thing. When you say that relative existence is *śūnya* it means another. When you say that Nirvana is *śūnya* [this means] something else. And when you say that the Absolute or the *Dharmakāya* is Void, this

[also] means something else. So you have to be very careful how you use this word. If someone says “Oh in Buddhism everything is void.”, it can either mean [that] in Buddhism everything is a complete illusion *or* that in Buddhism everything doesn’t exist, or anything of that sort [where] endless misunderstandings [can] arise. Perhaps it best that we, in speaking about Buddhism, just don’t use the word ‘voidness’ or ‘emptiness’ at all, *unless* we very carefully relate it to its appropriate context.



6 A Matter of Perception

‘The Diamond Sutra’ (*Buddhist Wisdom Books*)
Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany1982

Subhuti: Is *samjñā* always perception in the sense of this, well, mistaken perception – ‘interpretation’, I think you called it somewhere?

Sangharakshita: Well, on the common-sense level which seems to be that of, say, the Pali Canon, *samjñā* means something more like recognition, as one of the *skadhas*.¹³ For instance, you perceive, let us say, something green of a certain size and shape in the distance and you recognize it as a tree: you know [that] as a result of your previous experience of trees, your knowledge of trees. That kind of perception is called *samjñā*. This is the common-sense usage of the word. So it’s not just perception in the simple sense, it’s also recognition, that is to say the identification of the perception as a perception of this or that: that the green patch of a certain size is in a fact a tree. Of course, in the actual process of recognition or perception it is probably not possible to distinguish, except with great care, between the purely perceptual element and the element of recognition. The whole process takes place so swiftly – though, in some cases, not so swiftly. You may be uncertain what it is that you’re seeing, whether it’s a tree, say, whose leaves are all brown, or a rock. You have to be very careful then; [you are] quite clear what your perception is, but you are not clear what it is that you actually perceive. Then after examining it more closely you recognize it as, in fact, a tree which is brown, rather than a rock or a boulder.

Subhuti: Is *samjñā* in the sense that it is used here, then, the attachment of ontological status to that recognized object?

S.: Yes. That question is not gone into in the Pali Canon, i.e. in the Sutta- and Vinaya-Pitakas. It remains on a sort of common-sense level. But from a Mahayana point of view it is more of a matter – much as it is for Bishop Berkeley in Western thought¹⁴ – that you don’t rest content with the perception; you don’t rest content with the perception-cum-identification or perception-cum-recognition. You posit behind what you actually perceive an entity, to which the particular colour, shape and so on pertain as attributes, something which has a sort of definite, fixed nature at the same time. It is for this reason that I tend to say, or have said, that Buddhism is nominalist rather than realist in its attitude. I don’t know whether that can be sustained in detail, but certainly it’s a sort of pointer to the nature of the Buddhist position.

Shantiprabha: Sorry, could you repeat that? Buddhism is something as opposed to..?

S.: Well, it's nominalist in the sense that it does not posit a real object behind what is actually perceived and named as a green patch of a certain size, shape and so on. Realism posits a sort of real tree behind all those percepts, it maintains that the tree is more than the total sum of all those percepts; you don't merely, as it were, experience percepts, you see a tree which exists independently of the percepts. Buddhism would reply that a tree which exists independently of your perceptions of it is sheer illusion. Not that the tree only exists in your own mind, so to speak, it's not quite that point of view; [but] even if there was a real tree behind your perception of the tree, so to speak, you could never know it because all you would know would be your perceptions. So you might as well drop the whole idea of the tree which exists independently of your perception of a tree or of anybody's possible perception of a tree. For common-sense purposes, it's useful to think of a tree which actually exists – apart from it's being green and of a certain shape and size and so on – but it does lead to confusion metaphysically, and perhaps spiritually.

Subhuti: Is what is being got at here that that attachment of a metaphysical...?

S.: Yes, the positing of an entity behind the actual experience to which the experience refers. In Buddhism the so-called object is more the objective pole of the experience itself. There is just perception, or just awareness, and within that perception or awareness there is a sort of differentiation into opposite poles, one of which we identify as the object, the other as the subject. But there are not in fact discrete, separate, independent objects and subjects which mutually perceive and are perceived. If the object was really different from the subject how would you perceive it, how would you even know it was there? So Buddhism tends to think not in terms of a world of objects perceived by subjects, but to think in terms of a world of perception, a world of experience, a world of awareness within which there are degrees of polarization into what we identify as subjects and objects.

To give a further comparison, which may or may not be helpful, it's as though we usually think in terms of a void, an empty space, an empty room, in which there are balls floating about which impinge on one another from time to time. These are the subjects and objects experiencing one another, with just empty space between them. They are solid, concrete. But Buddhism thinks more in terms of that empty space not being empty space but being filled with a very fine, subtle, almost luminous sort of medium, but here and there it sort of coagulates, it thickens a bit, and these thickenings are the subjects and objects. Or maybe that doesn't help an awful lot! Maybe I should say there are sort of pairs of thickenings, pairs of coagulations – a double coagulation here, a double coagulation there – each member [of the pairs relating] one to the other as subject and object. Whereas actually there are only sort of areas of relative density in the tenuous medium which is distributed throughout the room.

Subhuti: It's got slightly realist overtones!

S.: Yes, yes, [that's just] an illustration. Or you could say that this tenuous medium is sort of brilliant, it's luminous, it's radiant, but here and there are little sort of double spots of darkness. These are the subjects and objects.

7 An Altered World

Questions and Answers on the *Survey of Buddhism*

Ch. 1, Sections VIII to XVIII, Men's Study Group Leaders, Sukhavati, April 1982

Atula: Bhante, is the difference between *rūpa dhyāna* and *arūpa dhyāna* that in the *rūpa dhyānas* there is still quite a substantial feeling of self, and in the *arūpa dhyānas* that is dissolved much more?

Sangharakshita: To some extent it comes back to this word *rūpa*, of which the literal translation is ‘form’, even ‘shape’, ‘configuration’; and if you take it literally this suggests something out there, an object, something that you see. So where there is *rūpa* ‘out there’ which you see and there is you [‘here’] as the seer, clearly there is a division, a dichotomy, a subject/object discrimination, and there’s a sort of dualistic set-up, a dualistic framework. But supposing there is no *rūpa*, this suggests that there is no subject perceiving the *rūpa* and therefore that the subject/object relationship is in abeyance, though not quite broken down.

But there is of course in Buddhism a distinction between the *arūpa dhyāna* state, or the *arūpaloka*¹⁵ – those are virtually interchangeable terms – and Nirvana. Now, speaking as it were metaphysically, which is taking a different approach to the one I’ve just been taking, one says, according to tradition, that with regard to Nirvana there is no subject/object duality – it’s completely transcended. So if there is to be a distinction between the *arūpaloka* state and the state of the purely Transcendental, the state of Nirvana, one cannot say that in the *arūpaloka* state or *arūpa dhyana* state the subject/object distinction has been completely and permanently eradicated. One can only say, therefore, that it has become extremely subtle, so that there is no very obvious or crude, as it were, perception of something objective, something ‘out there’. The subject/object relationship is sort of toned down, it is not so strongly polarized.

I think one can say that one finds that even in , let’s say, ordinary meditation, meditation that doesn’t get very far up in the *rūpaloka*¹⁵ even; even there the *rūpa* is different, it is subtler and more refined. So perhaps one can think of the *arūpaloka* as a level where that process is continued even further. There’s a very subtle sort of diaphanous subject/object distinction which vanishes completely only when one reaches Nirvana.

Sagaramati: Would that subtlety continue when you come out of meditation, when you opened your eyes and saw a so-called concrete world? Would your relationship with that concrete world feel subtler, would the brick walls still feel like solid brick walls or would they be [for instance] more vivid to look at?

S.: Well, the brick wall would still be experienced as a brick wall. But at the same time, in the light of Wisdom so to speak, you’d see that brick wall quite differently. The fact that you saw it differently with your awakened Insight, or *prajñā*, wouldn’t mean that your senses didn’t experience it in a manner appropriate to senses. The five senses would be operating in the same way as before, the *mano-vijñāna*¹⁶ would be operating in the same way as before according to the Yogacara¹⁷ way of looking at things. The only thing that wouldn’t be there and operating would be the *klisto-mano-vijñāna*.¹⁸ So it would be as though you were still having the experience of the Void, and within that Void there would be floating the colourful forms which you saw, so to speak, out there, but which you didn’t in fact discriminate even from the Void.

It would be a different sort of experience, a different sort of state, something that we can only envisage as a lighter and freer way of experiencing the ordinary world. The world is there, but at the same time it’s miraculously different because your attitude towards it has so totally changed. In a way it’s the same old world, it hasn’t changed a bit, but in another way it is completely different. The Zen masters emphasized this aspect of things quite strongly, and I think people know even from their ordinary mundane experience that alteration of your mental state will cause an alteration in the way that you actually perceive the objective world. Some people say that when you fall in love you see the world in quite a different way. This may be true, but certainly if you get up in the morning after a really good meditation you look out at the world and even dull old Bethnal Green might look different. It looks actually physically, visually different. This suggests a very close inter-relationship between subject and object – as the subject so the object. Perhaps we shouldn’t introduce the red herring of what the object is *really* like as distinct from what it appears to be like. I think that would cause us to go round and round in circles.



8 Not Minding 'No Thought'

'The sutra of Hui-Neng' (*A Buddhist Bible*)
Mixed Retreat, Abhirati, March 1974

One of the messages most prominent in the Platform Sutra is the doctrine of 'no-thought'. Here again we have a concept drawn from earlier canonical writings: it is to be found in the Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun, among other works. In the Platform Sutra sec.17 it is referred to as the main doctrine of the teaching, and is associated with non-form as the substance, and non-abiding, as the basis. Non-abiding is defined as the "original nature of man." These terms all seem to be pointing to the same thing: the Absolute, which can never be defined in words. Thoughts are conceived of as advancing in progression from past to present to future, in an unending chain of successive thoughts. Attachment to one instant of thought leads to attachment to a succession of thought, and thus to bondage. But by cutting off attachment to one instant of thought, one may, by a process unexplained, cut off attachment to a succession of thoughts and thus attain to no-thought, which is the state of enlightenment.

Philip B. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, Columbia University Press, New York & London, 1967, Chapter IV, p.116

Sangharakshita: That's been the source of much misunderstanding and confusion, I'm sure: 'no-thought'. You can stop thoughts without being Enlightened, but what does it really mean do you think, by not having any thoughts?

Buddhadasa: [It means] not being identified with the thought that you think.

Gotami: It's not thinking about any thoughts when you are thinking. (*Laughter.*)

Chintamani: Being aware of the [mental] state that the thoughts are held in, rather than the thoughts themselves.

S.: I think maybe it's better to translate it as 'not thinking' rather than 'no-thought'. One could perhaps put it very approximately and say it's a sort of functioning, a being and functioning, where there are thoughts, but thoughts are just a free expression of your total function and not a sort of narrow channel into which you force yourself, or with which you identify yourself. 'Not thinking' doesn't mean that you stop thinking. As Hui-Neng says in another passage, you would be just like a block then, just like a block of wood. What does it mean, then, by 'not thinking' if it doesn't mean not thinking. It means thinking but being free from thinking.

Buddhadasa: [It means] a lack of emotional involvement with the train of thoughts.

S.: But it doesn't mean just stopping thoughts; Hui-Neng makes that quite clear later on. He criticizes those that think that meditation in this sense means just stopping their flow of thoughts. I don't think ['not thinking']

is anything very abstract or conceptual at all, in fact. I think we have to be very careful about this translation. In Sanskrit it's *amanasikāra*, which could really be translated as 'not minding'. It's not 'not having thoughts', it's more like 'not minding'. Does it become clearer? It's 'not minding', [as opposed to] 'minding'. You don't 'mind'; you don't 'mind' about anything. Not that you don't think about anything, you don't *mind* about anything. The Sanskrit word means the function of 'not minding'. You could [translate it] as 'not engaging in mental activities'. But that again gives a completely different slant, because you can be thinking but not 'minding'.

Sulocana: ['No-thought' means] not trying to restrain [your thoughts] or direct them.

S.: Right, but you don't mind [your thoughts]. You don't 'mind' thinking, you don't 'mind' not thinking. You don't 'mind' the thoughts; you don't 'mind' anything. It's more like that than just not having any thoughts. There is a meditation state in which you don't have thoughts, but the state of 'not minding' is a much higher state. 'Not minding' really means not having any particular conditioned mental attitude, not being identified with any particular conditioned mental activity; but not just stopping thinking – you'd be like a post [then]. That's not what Ch'an Buddhism is all about. Our connotations of 'not minding' are a little suggestive, but we could give it a slightly more Buddhist connotation and use 'not minding' in a fuller, more spiritual sense: 'being a non-minder'. It's 'not minding' in a positive sense: not that mental functioning stops but, [rather], there is a sort of taint that is no longer there. The 'minding' suggests that taint and the 'non minding' the removal of it. It's not that the Zen man doesn't think, it's more that he doesn't 'mind'.



9 Pleasure, Pain, It's All the Same

Question and Answer Session
Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1981

Sangharakshita: Suffering is one of three kinds of feeling. There is painful feeling, pleasant feeling and neutral feeling. Suffering is equivalent to painful feeling. At a certain point in the round or the Wheel [of Samsara] you experience painful feeling and as a result of that painful feeling you become dissatisfied with samsaric or conditioned existence. You [then] start looking for something else; something which is not conditioned [but] which transcends [conditionality]. Eventually you latch onto something of a higher nature and develop faith in it. In this way, in dependence upon suffering, faith arises. This the spiral process. (*Pause.*) But there's also an important point to be made here. Suffering is the point of departure, [but] one can also render suffering as *dissatisfaction*. It doesn't mean that you necessarily have a dramatically painful experience and then, as a result of that [experience], start looking for something better. You're just as much likely to start looking for something pleasurable within the samsaric flow to replace that painful experience. But you may be having a happy, very pleasurable and very enjoyable life from the worldly point of view but, none the less, there is a vague feeling of dissatisfaction and you start looking for something different, something better – something higher. In this way the faith in what you eventually discover arises not out of intense pain, but out of that feeling of vague dissatisfaction. Again you mustn't look at these sequences too literally. I have made the point in the past (in connection with the 'Four Noble Truths') that because you experience *duḥkha* you do not

necessarily have insight into the truth of *duḥkha*. You can have insight into the truth of *duḥkha* even while actually experiencing pleasure. [This is] because that pleasure (if it is conditioned) is *duḥkha*. [It's *duḥkha*] because it is not an unconditioned pleasure and [therefore] has its limitations. And even while experiencing those limited modes of pleasure and happiness, you can see their limitations. Therefore you see their unsatisfactoriness even though you may not experience them as positively painful in the samsaric sense. You can see [those pleasures] as unsatisfactory even when you experience them as pleasurable. (*Pause.*) So people can experience quite a lot of suffering, but it may not give rise to any insight into suffering whatever, what to speak of faith. For faith to arise, in a sense, you have to experience pleasure as *equally* unsatisfactory with pain. If you merely experience pain as unsatisfactory, you're just as likely to look to pleasure to compensate for that. You [have to] realize that pleasure, even though pleasurable, is equally unsatisfactory. So you don't fall back from pain onto pleasure [because] you know that isn't the path. [Instead] you look for something further, something higher [and] in that way you enter upon the Spiral.¹⁸ So you could say paradoxically – reversing the usual formulation – that Insight into the truth of *duḥkha* really means realizing that pleasure is unsatisfactory.

Subhuti: Does *vedanā* technically cover all three kinds of *duḥkha*?

S.: Yes, it covers all three.

Subhuti: [Is this] because you're in the paradoxical situation where you're experiencing pleasure and pain at the same time?

S.: No. You don't experience pleasure [and pain at the same time]. Pleasure is *feeling* [and] pain is feeling, [but] there is a [third] sensation which is neither one nor the other.

Subhuti: [So you can have a feeling which] you can experience as pleasurable and at the same time know that it's not satisfactory.

S.: Yes. You feel it as pleasurable, but you see it as unsatisfactory. The antithesis is between the feeling and the seeing. But the Vision, so to speak, of unsatisfactoriness applies, *equally* to pleasurable and painful experience. Perhaps it's the difference between disgruntlement and disillusionment. When you experience something painful and want to remove it, [this is disgruntlement], and you usually want to replace it with something pleasurable of the same order or on the same [mundane] level. This isn't disillusionment. Disillusionment, within this context, is when you see the painful as unsatisfactory, *but* you also see the pleasurable as unsatisfactory – you *know* that [pleasure] equally has its limitations and can even in the end be experienced as painful because it terminates. So you don't go from the painful to the pleasurable- you try to go beyond both. In other words, you try to go in the direction of the Unconditioned.

Alan Angel: So you can experience *duḥkha* or suffering while you're in a feeling state of experiencing positive....?

S.: No. I'm avoiding using the word 'experience' or 'feeling'. I'm speaking of *seeing*. Otherwise, that raises the contradiction that Subhuti mentioned. You're not feeling happiness and unhappiness at the same time. No. you experience pleasure, but you see the limitations of the pleasure experience. You see that ultimately the pleasurable experience itself is unsatisfactory, even though your actual experience – in terms of experience – is pleasurable.

Pete Shann: This 'seeing' then is emotional; it's not just an intellectual thing.

S.: Well, it's not just an intellectual understanding in the current usage of the term.

Pete Shann: So the state of your emotions is one of dissatisfaction. But in what sense then are you actually...?

S.: One can only say that one sees its limitations and therefore one is not inclined to become attached even to the present pleasurable sensation or experience. (*Pause.*) ...

Pete Shann: It seems that what you're saying about experiencing pleasure and unsatisfactoriness simultaneously, goes back to this thing of not being....

S.: But again you're using this word 'experiencing' a bit ambiguously. I've been using separate terms – that is, experiencing the pleasure, but *seeing* the unsatisfactoriness.

Pete Shann: I'm thinking of the total frame of mind. Could you say, in fact, that it's a whole experience [and] that you can't really take the things apart and still regard them as the same objects – that the pleasure experienced when you're seeing the unsatisfactoriness is not the same as the pleasure...?

S.: Yes. It doesn't have quite the same zest because that element of craving isn't there. You sit much more loosely to it [and] take it much more lightly. So, in a sense, it isn't the same pleasure – you could say it's a purer pleasure – because, since craving is no longer there, you just experience [pleasure] in a more natural way. Do you see what I mean? Just as you might experience pleasure, say, eating a fruit. If you're neurotically greedy, [and] are eating the fruit in a greedy way, you don't really enjoy it properly. But if there's no craving you just eat it and enjoy it. You realize the limitations [of that enjoyment] – it's not going to gain you Enlightenment – but at the same time there *is* a pleasurable experience, but it's not pleasurable in that neurotic and intense manner that you've experienced before. So it may seem to the external observer that your life is continuing as before – you're enjoying all the things that you used to enjoy – but it could be that for you the whole situation has subtly changed. [Life is] still pleasurable, but [that's] no longer enough; so you're looking for something further. [It's] not that you don't enjoy a good meal, a glass of wine or a walk in the country; but you can no longer dedicate your life exclusively to these things. You want something more – something you don't have yet. You could even use the word 'dissatisfied' with [regard to] your present life, even though it's quite a pleasant and comfortable life. So, dissatisfaction doesn't arise out of just the experience of intense pain, suffering and trauma. It arises almost equally out of dissatisfaction with the good things of life, [and] even with your pleasurable experiences [which], even though they continue to be pleasurable, are no longer enough.

So what I'm getting at is a certain interpretation of Buddhism which suggests that unless you actually feel everything as painful – that you don't actually have any pleasurable experiences at all – there's no possibility of developing faith; you've got to start off by experiencing everything as painful. *But*, Insight can arise without your *vedanā*, your feelings, being exclusively painful. In fact Insight arises in dependence upon the first *dhyāna* where experience is decidedly pleasant. [However], to have got to that more refined degree of pleasurable experience you must have become convinced of the relatively unsatisfactory nature of the less refined pleasurable experience.



10 When the Rope is Cut...

'Meghiya Sutta' (*Udāna*), New Zealand Men's Retreat,
Padmaloka, February 1983

Murray Wright: Well what about the Buddha, on the level of the empirical mind, in terms of his *dhyāna*? Does [the Buddha's experience of *dhyāna*] fluctuate depending on....?

Sangharakshita: In the case of the Buddha, or in the case of anyone from a Stream-Entrant upwards, *dhyāna* would seem to fluctuate but not Insight. Insight does not fluctuate. Insight remains constant. But, yes, the dhyanic state will certainly fluctuate. The Buddha himself, according to the general Buddhist tradition, is not represented as being always in a state of *dhyāna* after his Enlightenment. There was one school that believed he always was but they were quite the exception. But the Buddha's Vision, his Insight, his *Bodhi* remains constant.

Murray Wright: But you would think the extent of his Vision and Insight would conduce to dhyanic states. He certainly would have all the ingredients of calm and joyousness.

S.: Yes. In as much as the Buddha had attained Insight or Enlightenment, there would be no greed, hatred and delusion, so his mental state would be calm to the extent that it was free from those particular unskillful roots. But if the Buddha was having to occupy himself with external things, dealing with and talking to people, then he would not be enjoying the same kind of concentration that he would have enjoyed had he been, as it were, sitting and meditating. But his Insight would have remained constant.

Prasannasiddhi: As if it wouldn't fall below a certain level.

S.: Yes. His mental state, even apart from the Insight – if one can in fact separate them in that way – would not fall below a certain level of calm and positivity.

Murray Wright: So if he sat down in the mango-grove his natural momentum would [enable him] just to rise into *dhyāna*.

S.: Yes. There'd be no reason not to. He would be just like a balloon – once the rope holding it down is cut, it just automatically floats up; that's its nature. What ties the Buddha down, as it were, is the fact that he has to deal with people and give his attention to external situations. Once that factor is no longer there, once that rope is cut, so to speak, or at least lengthened, up goes the balloon: the Buddha rises into dhyanic states.

Murray Wright: So that even if you're not a Buddha, once you get to the level where that's your natural momentum, then presumably you wouldn't need to sit formally in meditation posture.

S.: No. This is why when you're on solitary retreat your thoughts go where your mind is really at. The thoughts that you have reflect your real level because there are no external influences – well, one can't rule out external influences altogether, but if you're on a solitary retreat the present influence of other people can be ruled out. There's still the influence of nature, which can be very positive.

Gunapala: Of course, you bring a lot in your own mind....

S (*interrupting*): Yes. What is actually in your own mind can come out, whether it is dhyanic states that you don't usually have the opportunity of experiencing or whether it's thoughts of greed, hatred and delusion. Some people find themselves writing poetry. Under normal conditions they don't get the opportunity but the urge to write is there, so on solitary retreats they find themselves writing poetry or writing long letters to people – doing things they really want to do but haven't had the opportunity of actually doing. On solitary retreat you're completely free from external pressures, as it were; [you are] not with other people. You find

out, among other things, not only where you actually are, but also what you really want to do, at least to the extent that you can do it on your own. You might realise that you have a real craving for company, that you actually really want to be with other people, whether for skilful or unskilful reasons. In this way the solitary retreat is quite useful; it's like a laboratory where you discover quite a few things about yourself. But this can happen even if you're just left alone for a few hours. One Order Member wrote to me recently that she found it almost impossible to have a solitary retreat or even just to stay alone for an hour or two because she became overwhelmed by panic feelings, feelings of anxiety, and so on, and just wanted to be with people. That certainly taught her quite a lot about herself. (*Pause.*)

Prasannasiddhi: You mention floating – that the Buddha would just float up. It implies he doesn't actually sit there and decide consciously to go into the *dhyānas* but if there's nothing happening he just automatically...

S.: Well, this raises the whole question of conscious decisions. [It's] not that he wouldn't realise what was happening [but] one couldn't speak in terms of him sitting down and thinking, "Ah, I'm all by myself now. I could do with a spot of meditation." It's as though in solitude the Buddha's deeper nature is revealed, at least in the dhyanic sense; that it's only having to attend to external things that is preventing him, as it were, from enjoying a more intensely concentrated mental state.

Murray Wright: So it's entirely natural for the Buddha.

S.: Yes. His mental state tends to become more and more concentrated unless he actually allows himself to be distracted by virtue of the fact that he has to deal with people. But all the time, of course, his Insight remains unaffected.

Murray Wright: It's quite a thought.

S.: Yes. And of course, at the same time, even in dealing with people he never falls below a certain level of calm and positivity.

Gunapala: I can understand it quite clearly, but just to get a feel of how it affects the Buddha I find quite difficult.

S.: Well, it's not only difficult, one might say it's impossible. It's difficult enough to get the feel of another unenlightened human being more or less on one's own level, what to speak of getting the feel, so to speak, of the Buddha.

Gunapala: He is Enlightened, he's got Insight – surely wouldn't mind whether he's in *dhyāna* or whether he's just out of it? (*Sounds of agreement.*)

S.: Yes. Because, after all, the experience of Insight itself, one could say, is very satisfying. That's why I said you can't distinguish too literally between the Buddha's Vision, the Buddha's Insight and the rest of him, so to speak. So, in a sense, the Buddha is in a diluted dhyanic state all the time, even when he's talking to people. But when he's *not* talking to people his natural tendency, it would seem, would be to become even more concentrated and even more dhyanic, as it were.

Gunapala: What sort of an effect would that have? Would that be a better effect...?

S.: Well, from the point of view of the Buddha, as Buddha, it wouldn't be better or worse. It wouldn't make him any less the Buddha; it wouldn't make him any more the Buddha; it would just happen.

Prasannasiddhi: The thought occurred to me of Amitābha, is in depicted sitting in Sukhāvati,¹⁹ on a lotus, continually meditating. It's as if he's brought so many people up to his level, or up to a high level, in a sense, that he can just sit there in meditation.

S.: Well in his case one might say there's also the fact that on that level, and in the case of people who reach that level, he can communicate, as it were, telepathically. He doesn't need even to speak – though some texts represent Amitābha as actually teaching in the Pure Land, in Sukhāvati.²⁰

Prasannasiddhi: Is it that he has spent so long helping sentient beings that he's built up this big ... well, he's raised the level of so many people's consciousness that he's built up...?

S.: Well, yes. Many Mahayana sutra represent the Buddha – whether Amitābha or some other Buddha – as speaking from or after experiencing a *samādhi* state. This is not just a dhyanic state in the more limited sense, but a state of experience of Insight. But I think when Amitābha is represented as in *dhyāna mudrā*,²¹ one mustn't take it too literally – that he's just meditating in the ordinary sense. He's immersed in a higher state of consciousness; he's immersed, in fact, in an Enlightened state of consciousness. Thus in his case the *dhyāna mudrā* doesn't just indicate *dhyāna* but indicates Enlightenment itself and if he does speak, he speaks out of that sort of experience, that sort of state.

Murray Wright: You see him holding the flower in the same way: he's just communicating.

S.: Yes, he's just communicating. You could say, even, if the Buddha sits cross-legged in *dhyāna mudrā*, he is saying, as it were, "You ought to meditate."



11 A Healthy Appetite

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Men's Seminar, Padmaloka, September 1979

Sagaramati: I imagine with Insight you're not necessarily in a dhyanic state. Could you [still] desire dhyanic states?

Sangharakshita: Well, what would be the purpose of desiring a dhyanic state if you had Insight? You could desire dhyanic states in a healthy way in as much as the being has a natural tendency to desire optimum wellbeing. That is, as it were, a hunger of the organism. There's nothing incompatible with Insight in that. So, yes, there would be a healthy hunger on the part of the being for dhyanic states but it would not be, of course, a neurotic desire or greed for those states. The being would not be greedy about those states if circumstances did not permit them to continue. It wouldn't bother, because the Insight would be all that [really] mattered. (*Short pause.*) We don't find any evidence that the Buddha hankered after dhyanic states.

Sagaramati: Well, there is that one episode in the *Udāna* where he seems to get fed up with everybody and goes off on his own.²²

S.: Perhaps that was to satisfy the healthy hunger of the whole organism for that kind of experience. Just as he might have been prevented from eating for several days because of the press of business, he might have been prevented from nourishing himself on *dhyāna* for the same reason and now wanted to go and do that. The healthy hunger of his organism for that particular experience [of *dhyāna*] – a kind of nourishment which it was capable of giving itself if left alone for a few days – asserted itself. Dhyanic experience is regarded, in a way, as food, as nourishment, because it represents a highly positive emotional state, one so intensely nourishing to the whole organism that a healthy organism therefore has a desire for it. A healthy organism has a desire to meditate. (*Laughter.*) Yes, and that healthy tendency, like a healthy appetite, will continue after the development of Insight. If you don't want to meditate and experience dhyanic states you are not a healthy organism, not a healthy psychophysical organism, because if you are in a healthy state why should you not desire your optimum wellbeing?



12 Getting Up Steam

Question and Answer Session
Pre-Ordination retreat, Tuscany 1981

Vessantara: Given that it is impossible to generalize, what sort of level of *dhyāna* practice does one need in order for Insight to arise? Looking at the FWBO I see that on the whole, over the last few years, we've been concentrating on such things as work. Simply by continuing in that other-regarding way in those sorts of circumstances – [that is] working in a co-op and doing some meditation morning and evening – is that likely to be sufficient [for Insight to arise,] in the long run?

Sangharakshita: It isn't a question of meditation in the narrow sense. It is an even more basic question of unification and consolidation of all one's energies, and one way of unblocking, integrating and consolidating energy is certainly through work. One shouldn't look at meditation in too narrow a sense, though there is no doubt that when you have progressed beyond a certain point, then you need to immerse yourself in the dhyanic states for considerable periods. You can do that best by periodic meditation retreats, or solitary retreats.

One can't say that so many hours experience of the second, third or fourth *dhyāna* provides the basis you require for the development of Insight; one can't quantify, as it were. But one mustn't forget that one comes down, so to speak, to the first *dhyāna* to develop Insight. It isn't enough to dwell in the first *dhyāna* and then try to develop Insight; you need to have come down from higher dhyanic states, having had some experience of them. It's as though you must catch yourself in a mental state where the energies are really well consolidated, really integrated and refined, but not so refined as to inhibit reflection. You come down from the [higher] dhyanic states but are still in touch with those states. It's not that you literally leave them behind but you come down from them a bit and start some refined reflection or discursive mental activity concerned with

the Dharma – concerned with the nature of existence, and so on – and that gives rise to Insight. [It's] not that you should put aside the higher dhyanic states and then start thinking.

One can't really generalize, but I would say that in most cases, you do need some prolonged *dhyāna* experience in the context of a solitary or meditation retreat. Probably just the experience of a short, daily practice, would not enable you to get up sufficient steam, but nonetheless, one can't rule out the possibility of Insight arising even on that basis.

13 The Right Response

'Dhyana for Beginners' (A Buddhist Bible)
Men's Seminar, 'Nash' June 1975

Notwithstanding his knowledge of the essential emptiness and silence of all phenomena, the Mahasattva-Bodhisattva, by the practice of rightly balanced Insight, may practice all manner of activities in his conception of emptiness as though he were planting trees in the clouds, and also, he may distinguish in sentient beings all manner of relative qualities. As the desires of our nature are innumerable, so the ways of our preaching are innumerable also. As we adapt our various arts of preaching to their various needs, we will be able to benefit all sentient beings in the six realms. This is what is meant by "the viewpoint of expedient adjustment to conditions," which is our insight from emptiness into potentiality. It is also called "insight of equality," "the eyes of the Dharma," and "the garden of intuitive enlightenment." If we make this balanced insight our viewpoint we shall perceive, but with difficulty and dimly because our powers of intelligence are comparatively undeveloped, the true nature of Buddha potential in everything.

A Buddhist Bible, ed. Dwight Goddard, Beacon Press, Boston, 1970, p. 491

Sangharakshita: This passage suggests that it isn't enough to swot up the answers in advance. The adaptation [referred to] doesn't mean that you work it all out in advance and have it ready in your conscious mind to apply as the circumstances arise. It means that *you*, yourself, are ready. It's like a hanging gong which is not thinking about producing notes but it is made of the right sort of material so that when it's struck, the note comes forth. You should just be like that – not bothering about what you're going to say to people or how to say it and whether it's according to their needs. When you are struck, as it were, you will respond.

Buddhadasa: The bigger the stick the better the sound. (*Laughter.*)

S.: It's like the story of the Zen master in which a young monk, who is convinced he's unenlightened, comes to the monastery to see the master. The master says "Monk" and the monk replies "Yes", so the master says "Well, there's nothing wrong with your hearing!" (*Laughter.*) He then bends forward to offer the master something, whereupon the master raises his stick threateningly and the young monk hastily retreats a step or two. The master says "There's nothing wrong with your responses!" and in this way convinces him he is enlightened. (*Laughter*) It's all there and all his senses are intact. Thus it's not that you have to learn something or hold it consciously in your mind, but if your being is such then when you are struck, your being will give the right sort of response. The Bodhisattva's got to think of it more in those terms. You shouldn't be thinking in terms of swotting up all the possible answers to all the possible questions that you might be asked and knowing them all by heart so that you are never stuck for the right answer. Some people do think in those terms and at first no doubt you have to learn specific things and function more on the level of supplying information. However, there has to be much more to one's practice of Buddhism and one's preaching than this. You always know when someone is giving a reply out of the book or from their own experience and conviction, whether that is right or wrong, limited or not limited. Something like the correspondence course

therefore has its limitations because it is on the level of information and you are being examined simply on your knowledge of information. One could even say, therefore, that it is one thing to know *about* Buddhism, but another to *know* Buddhism and a different thing again to *be* Buddhism.

This paragraph ends with quite an important statement that *'If we make this balanced insight our viewpoint we shall perceive, but with difficulty and dimly because our powers of intelligence are comparatively undeveloped, the true nature of Buddha potential in everything.'* Thus it's as though by responding to the needs of others in this spontaneous way, we evoke something from them too, and we begin to appreciate their potentiality, at least dimly. Supposing somebody asks you a question which may be quite superficial. It may be just a matter of asking for information, but if you give a real response that at once raises the whole exchange to another level. There is a possibility of your real response evoking a real response in turn from that person, whatever the basis from which he started. By allowing your potentiality to function freely in relation to him, you encourage and even help him to realise his potentiality. In that way you begin to see his potentiality and the potentiality of people with whom you are in contact.



14 Rooted in Reality

Ratnagunasamcayagatha (The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary)
Men's Mitra Retreat, Padmaloka, August 1976

Where Bodhisattva stands

- 1 *He does not stand in form, perception or in feeling,
In will or consciousness, in any skandha whatsoever.
In Dharma's true nature alone he is standing.
Then that is his practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.*

- 2 *Change and no change, suffering and ease, the self and not-self,
The lovely and repulsive – just one Suchness in this Emptiness they are.
And so he takes not his stand on the fruit which he won, which is threefold –
That of an Arhat, a Single Buddha, a Buddha fully enlightened.*

- 3 *The Leader himself was not stationed in the realm which is free from conditions.
Nor in the things which are under conditions, but freely he wandered without a home:
Just so, without a support or a basis a Bodhisattva is standing.
A position devoid of a basis has that position been called by the Jina.*

'Verses on the Perfection of Wisdom'

The perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary,
trans. Edward Conze, Four Seasons Foundation, California 1975, Ch. 11, p. 13

Sangharakshita: [That last line is] just an inverted construction: 'that position has been called a basis by the Jina a position devoid of basis.' *'Where Bodhisattva stands. /1 He does not stand in form, perception or in feeling, / In will or consciousness, in any skandha whatsoever.'* What is meant by that – that a Bodhisattva does not stand in any of these? What is this 'standing in'? What does it mean to stand in form, to stand in perception? We have really come across this before, but the terminology was slightly different.

Vessantara: The same as resting on.

S.: It's the same as resting on or settling down in. Do you think there's a subtle shade of difference? How do you usually feel when you are standing?

Dominic Kennedy: As if there's something to stand on.

S.: Yes. What does that suggest?

Dominic Kennedy: He doesn't see the *skandhas*¹³ as being real.

Sangharakshita: He doesn't see the *skandhas* as being real, certainly. [But] if you talk of someone standing, what sort of feeling do you get from that?

A Voice: Security.

S.: Security, yes, but is there a subtle difference between settling down or resting on and standing?

A Voice: Standing is more of an active pose.

S.: It's more of an active pose, isn't it? So what would be the difference between settling down in, say, form and relying upon form and standing in form?

Sagaramati: Standing, you feel like you've actually got there. It's a more confident sort of...

S.: It's a more confident attitude, yes. Perhaps this is why the slightly different term is used. Actually you're standing on thin ice but you don't know it. You think you're standing on solid ground but the ice is very thin and it's melting all the time, but you go on standing. Form is like that, it's like the ice. Feeling is like that. You take your stand on these things as though they were permanent realities, as though they were never going to change, and you feel quite confident in your position. You stand there. When you stand you're erect. It suggests not only self-confidence; it suggests you've got a certain pride. You're a bit stiff, upright, erect. *'He does not stand in form, perception or in feeling, / In will or consciousness, in any skandha whatsoever.'* Then: *'In Dharma's true nature alone he is standing. / Then that is his practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.'*

What does it mean, to stand in the true nature of the Dharma?

A Voice: *Śūnyatā*.

S.: To stand in *śūnyatā*, to stand in Reality. But what does one mean by that? After all, that's a phrase, it sounds very nice but what does it really mean – to stand in? Is there perhaps not a better way of putting it, a more real, more concrete, more vivid way of putting it?

Padmaraja: To embody.

S.: To embody, yes, retaining this image of the perpendicular as it were. What is it that stands, that stands very firmly?

A Voice: (*Makes a suggestion.*) (*Inaudible.*)

S.: No, I'm thinking now more poetically. Just drop the metaphysics.

A Voice: A victor.

S.: No, I'm thinking in more simple, primitive terms than that. What just stands? What is noticeable for standing, as it were?

A Voice: Trees?

S.: Trees! Yes, a tree stands, but why is it able to stand?

A Voice: It's got roots.

S.: It's got roots! So one could perhaps speak in terms not just of standing in the Dharma but being rooted in the Dharma, being rooted in the true nature of the Dharma. This would perhaps give one a better feeling. The Bodhisattva is rooted in Reality. The Bodhisattva is rooted in the true nature of the Dharma. When you are rooted in something what does that suggest?

Sagaramati: You draw your nourishment from it.

S.: Yes, you draw your nourishment, your sustenance from it. So you could pursue that and say that ordinary people, that is non-Bodhisattvas, stand, but they stand very precariously, that they're rooted in shallow, stony soil that is perhaps shifting all the time. Maybe they're rooted in sand, they can get blown over very easily. In the *Dhammapada* you get this image of a tree with shallow or weak roots that can very easily be blown down by the wind.²³ In the same way the person who is not rooted in the spiritual life can be blown over by Māra.²⁴ But if you are rooted in Reality your roots go down much deeper. You draw your nourishment, your sustenance from a much deeper level, so you stand much more firmly. You grow much more strongly. So something like this, perhaps, is to be understood from that [phrase]: that the Bodhisattva is rooted in Reality, his roots go very deep down – as deep as existence itself and beyond, you could say. Or you could say that when we stand in form, etc., we are not even rooted at all; we're just very precariously balanced on a surface which is shifting and moving all the time. But when you stand in Reality, in the true nature of the Dharma, you really are rooted, and therefore nourished, and therefore you grow.

So the Bodhisattva stands in the true nature of the Dharma in the sense of being rooted in it. No doubt that's a better way of looking at it. '*Then that is his practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.*' I think if you think of the Bodhisattva standing in the true nature of the Dharma – in terms of his being rooted in the true nature of the Dharma – that line becomes more intelligible. If you're rooted in Reality you don't need to think about practising anything. The nourishment naturally flows in to you. If you're rooted in Reality you don't need to think about practising this or practising that. The fact that you are rooted in Reality will mean that you practise Wisdom – I won't say automatically, but naturally and spontaneously. You cannot do anything else.

Padmapani: Doesn't that imply that [though] the Bodhisattva is not a Buddha [he] in actual fact is coursing in this Wisdom and yet he also finds that there's no effort?

S.: There is no effort in the sense of ego-directed effort, but he draws his nourishment or sustenance from a deeper level. Of course, yes, he makes an effort because he's practising *vīrya*, but it's not the sort of ego-based effort that we are usually acquainted with. There is no question of will. It's power... It's something that flows naturally, just as the sap flows up through the tree naturally.

Padmapani: How does the energy flow through him, so to speak? At the same time he will be developing it without ego.

S.: Right. Now he'll be making himself more and more open to it. At first it flow up through a tiny narrow pipe. His job is to broaden the pipe so that energy can flow through more freely, more abundantly. But that's really an artificial distinction because you're distinguishing between him and his energy, and actually there is now such distinction. It is like when you're painting a picture of writing something: you and the energy flow are one. You are not as it were manipulating the creative energy. So the Bodhisattva, from the point of view of this verse, is someone who is rooted in a deeper level of Reality, rooted even in Ultimate Reality, and who acts from that; and his acting from Ultimate Reality is his practice of the Perfection of Wisdom, his practice of Perfect Wisdom.

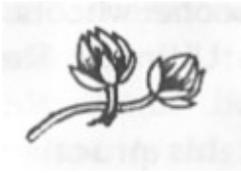
So form, feeling and so on represent phenomenal reality, a lesser degree or lower level of reality. He's not rooted in them. He does not take his stand in them. He's rooted in a much deeper level. You could summarise it by saying that the Bodhisattva is one who lives from a deeper level of Reality which constitutes his practise of Wisdom.

It is very important when dealing with Perfect Wisdom to get away from the conceptual mode of expression. You could even say that the conceptual mode of expression is totally foreign to the content of the expression. The medium directly contradicts the message here and one must really be on one's guard against that. So try to translate the Perfection of Wisdom teachings immediately into concrete terms, metaphorical terms, poetic terms. If you can think of the Bodhisattva as a tree rooted very deep in the soil, that gives you a much better, more correct idea about the Bodhisattva's life than if you take it more abstractly as in '*standing in the true nature of Dharma*' and that being '*his practice of wisdom, the highest perfection*'.

It is quite important to understand this idea of living from a deeper level of Reality. This is what the Bodhisattva does. When you live, as it were, from the deepest level of Reality that is your practice of Wisdom. Your whole life is the expression of that, just as all the leaves and flowers on the tree are the expression of the sap which is coming up through the tree from the earth. So it means, in a way, draw nourishment from a deeper level, not from a relatively shallow, superficial level. Don't draw your nourishment from form, perception, feeling, will or consciousness; don't draw it from any aspect of your conditioned being; but draw it from the depths, draw it from the Unconditioned, draw it from the true nature of Dharma, which is also in a sense your true nature. If you do that, everything you say, everything that you do and everything that you think will be your practice of Wisdom.

Glossary

Kalyana Mitra: Lit. 'god friend'; usually rendered as 'spiritual friend'. Traditionally a kalyana mitra is a spiritual teacher with whom one has a close personal relationship. The Bodhisattva is the Kalyana Mitra *par excellence*. This friendship is 'vertical' in that it is between people of different degrees of spiritual development; its importance lies in its value in nurturing spiritual development. At its highest the communication between the kalyana mitra and the other person can be the setting in which Transcendental Insight arises (after suitable preliminary spiritual practice). Buddhism also recognises the importance of 'horizontal' friendship between spiritual peers and within the FWBO the term 'kalyana mitrata' can refer to spiritual friendship in both the horizontal and vertical senses. Indeed, within the FWBO spiritual friendship, of either type, is seen as of vital importance. Friendship is in fact integral to the spiritual life, and one could look at the latter as the development of friendship as much as the development of 'higher states of consciousness'.



Within the FWBO the term 'kalyana mitrata' has also a more specific meaning, for a Mitra who has asked for ordination may choose two Order Members, with whom he or she has a close relationship, to become his or her 'kalyana mitras'. This relationship is formally ratified at a special ceremony.

See *Mitratas* 20 and 21, 'Aspects of Kalyana Mitrata', Windhorse, London 1979; sGam.po.pa, 'Meeting Spiritual Friends', ('The Jewel Ornament of Liberation'), trans. Herbert V. Guenther, Rider, London 1970 Ch 3; Sangharakshita, 'The Three Jewels', Windhorse, London 1977, p. 175.

Ten Fetters (Skt. *Daśa saṃyojana*): These are the fetters which bind one to mundane existence, and which one must break to attain complete liberation. They are broken only through the direct experience of Transcendental Wisdom, which is cultivated in higher Insight or *vipaśyanā*, meditation. The lower *śamathā*, or tranquillity, meditation only suppresses the more external manifestations of the 'Ten Fetters' in the human mind, such as the 'hindrances', but does not eradicate the fetters themselves. Thus the fetters are factors within the 'depths' of the human mind, well below conscious awareness, from which egocentrism and unskillfulness can develop, and which keep one tied to an existence permeated with unsatisfactoriness and suffering. Buddhist tradition also has other concepts, closely related to that of the 'Ten Fetters', to describe this deep-rooted potential for egocentrism and unskillfulness within the mind: the *anuśayas* or 'proclivities', the *kleśas* or 'defilements', the *aśravas* or 'poisons', and the *akusala mūlas* or 'unskillful roots'. Individually the fetters are:

1. *saṅkāya-dṛṣṭi*, or 'personality view'
2. *vicikitsā*, or 'doubt'
3. *śīlavrata-parāmarśa*, or 'dependence on morality and observances'
4. *kāma-rāga*, or 'sensuous craving'
5. *vyāpāda*, or 'aversion'
6. *rūpa-rāga* or 'craving for the world of archetypal form'
7. *ārūpa-rāga*, or 'craving for the formless world'
8. *māna*, or 'conceit'
9. *auddhatya*, or 'restlessness'
10. *avidyā*, or 'ignorance'

Breaking the first three fetters makes one a Stream-Entrant and one thereby enters the Transcendental Path. These three could be described as 'intellectual' fetters, although strictly speaking they involve more than the intellect. They are expressions of the unwholesome root of 'delusion'. The Venerable Sangharakshita has

rendered these three fetters as 'habit', 'vagueness' and 'superficiality' respectively, to bring out their significance more clearly. So *satkāya-dṛṣṭi* is the potential for holding on to a fixed view of one's personality, as well as the tendency to behave in a mechanically habitual fashion and to want to stay the same; *vicikitsā* is the potential for doubt-ridden unclarity of mind, accompanied by an unwillingness to become clearer; *śīlavrata-parāmarśa* is the potential for 'going through the motions', usually for unskilful superficial reasons. The opposite qualities to those stemming from these three fetters could be rendered as 'creativity', 'clarity' and 'commitment'.

The next two fetters are more 'emotional' in character, and much more difficult to break, requiring the cultivation and application of a higher degree of Transcendental Wisdom; once they are weakened, one becomes a Once-Returner; when they are broken one becomes a Non-Returner, free of the ties to the *kāmaloka* or realm of sensuous experience, not returning to this realm again except out of compassion for others.

The five highest fetters are those binding one to the higher levels of mundane existence. Care should be taken not to interpret the meaning of the last three fetters too literally. With the eradication of these fetters one becomes an Arahant, or Enlightened One.

See Sangharakshita, 'The Three Jewels', Windhorse Publications, Ch. 15. For an explanation of the first three fetters, see Sangharakshita, 'The Taste of Freedom', available on FreeBuddhistAudio <http://tinyurl.com/og8r4x9> and Sangharakshita, 'The Taste of Freedom', Windhorse Publications.



Notes

¹ See *Mitrata* 65 in this series, “Masculinity” and “Femininity” in the Spiritual Life – Part 2’, Glossary.

² See *Mitrata* 59 in this series, ‘The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart – Part 2’, Glossary.

³ *Sambhāra* means ‘accumulation. *Puṇya* is ‘merit’ or ‘meritorious action’; *jñāna* means ‘Wisdom’ in the sense of Insight into the nature of Reality. The two are sometimes referred to as ‘the two stocks’, both of which have to be acquired if the goal is to be reached. They are related to the practice of the ‘Six Perfections’ of the Bodhisattva Path. It is through the cultivation of the first five Perfections (i.e. Giving, Morality, Patience, Energy and Meditation) that the Bodhisattva develops the *puṇya-sambhāra*, and through the practice of the sixth Perfection (i.e. Wisdom) that he develops the *jñāna-sambhāra*.

In Iconographical illustrations of Bodhisattva figures, the halo around the body represents the *puṇya-sambhāra*, while the halo around the head represents the *jñāna-sambhāra*.

⁴ See *Mitrata* 62 in this series, ‘Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life – Part 1’, Glossary.

Bhāvāna means ‘cultivation by mind’ in Pali and Sanskrit literature, or ‘developing by means of meditation’. It is the general term referring to the various methods of mind culture and types of meditation and is usually translated by the word ‘meditation’. Thus Metta Bhavana is the meditation practice in which one cultivates or develops friendliness or loving kindness to all sentient beings; *Ānāpānasmṛti-bhāvāna* is the meditation practice known as the Mindfulness of Breathing, in which one develops unwavering concentration on the breath.

⁵ See *Buddhist Wisdom Books: the Diamond Sutra and the Heart Sutra*, trans. and explained by E. Conze, Allen and Unwin, London 1958, Ch. 3, pp 25ff.

⁶ Vajraloka is the FWBO’s men’s intensive retreat centre in North Wales. Every male Order Member and Mitra is encouraged to spend at least one week there each year.

⁷ See *Mitrata* 57 in this series, ‘The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal – Part 2’, Glossary.

⁸ See *Mitrata* 61 in this series, ‘The Bodhisattva Vow – Part 2’, Glossary.

⁹ The ‘Four Brahma-vihāras’ or ‘Divine Abidings’ or ‘Illimitables’ are metta (loving kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (sympathetic joy) and *upekṣā* (equanimity). See *Mitrata* 61 in this series, ‘The Bodhisattva Vow – Part 2’, Glossary.

¹⁰ Substantialism is a philosophical theory which posits ‘substance’ as something which underlies phenomena, existing independently and persisting through change. An important distinction in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and other thinkers of the Middle Ages is between ‘substance’ as defined above and ‘accidents’ which are various attributes such as colour, movement, size, which characterise the substance. The substance can only be known indirectly, through its accidents.

Pantheism is the philosophical theory that God is All or the totality of existence. The ancient Stoics were pantheists. Spinoza has been described as a pantheist and in more recent times, philosophers such as Bergson, Berdyaev, and Whitehead were pantheist in the broad sense but questioned how creatures can be free though ‘in God’.

¹¹ See *Mitrata* 64 in this series, “Masculinity” and “Femininity” in the Spiritual Life – Part 1’, Note 13.

¹² See *Mitrata* 58 in this series, ‘The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart – Part1’, Glossary.

¹³ For an explanation of the *skandhas* see *Mitrata* 58 in this series, ‘The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart – Part 1’, Note 14.

¹⁴ George Berkeley (1685-1753), an Anglican Bishop chiefly known as a philosopher. His famous saying and teaching is ‘*Esse is Percipi*’ – ‘to be is to be perceived’, meaning that the very existence of the immediate objects of perception and sensation lies in their being perceived. His theory of the nature of our perception of the external world was a challenge of the theory of the philosopher Locke. His most well-known works elaborating this theory are *The Principles of Human Knowledge* and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, Collins/Fontana, Glasgow 1977.

¹⁵ See *Mitrata* 65 in this series, “‘Masculinity” and “Femininity” in the Spiritual Life – Part 2’, Glossary.

¹⁶ According to the Yogācāra, there are eight different kinds of consciousness. Two of these are the *mano-vijñāna* and the *klisto-mano-vijñāna*. The *mano-vijñāna* (literally ‘mind consciousness’) is a discriminating consciousness or awareness which distinguishes between and therefore identifies ideas and mental objects. It is two-fold in that it is; (a) the awareness of impressions coming to it via the senses and; (b) the awareness of ideas and impressions arising independently of the senses, as experienced in recollection and imagination, in dreams and meditation.

The *klisto-mano-vijñāna*, literally ‘afflicted, defiled or soiled consciousness’, sometimes known as ‘*manas*’, is so-called because it is defiled by the dualistic outlook which sees everything in terms of subject and object. It is the empirical consciousness in the sense of the ‘I’ at the centre of experience. The *klisto-mano-vijñāna* is double edged because it can operate skilfully or unskilfully. See Sangharakshita, ‘Depth Psychology of the Yogachara’, available on FreeBuddhistAudio <http://tinyurl.com/lp4d6js>

¹⁷ The Yogācāra (literally ‘practice of yoga’, ‘yoga’ here in the sense of meditation) was an important school of the Mahayana phase of Indian Buddhism (roughly, 1-500 C.E.). sometimes it is known as the Vijñānavāda. It follows on and to some extent overlaps with the Mādhyamīka School (see Note 16). It was to some extent a reaction against the Mādhyamīka, specifically against what the Yogācāra saw as the excessive preoccupation with Wisdom *at the expense of* meditation.

The Yogācāra philosophy was an attempt to formulate what is essentially a spiritual experience; its central tenet was that nothing exists save mind, the famous doctrine of *cittamātra* or ‘mind only’. Berkeley’s theory of perception was similar to that of the Yogācāra in that both insist on the mutual interdependence of subject and object. They do not deny the existence of the object but rather that the object exists separately from the subject. It is rather like the two sides of a coin; though each is distinct, neither can exist without the other. The leading exponents of the school were the great *Ācāryas*, Asaṅga and his brother Vasubandhu. The main sutras associated with the Yogācāra are the *Saṅdhinirmocana Sūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. For a fuller exposition of the central teachings, see Sangharakshita, ‘Depth Psychology of the Yogachara’, available on FreeBuddhistAudio <http://tinyurl.com/lp4d6js> and Sangharakshita, ‘A Survey of Buddhism’, Windhorse Publications.

¹⁸ See *Mitrata* 66 in this series, ‘On the Threshold of Enlightenment – Part 1’, Glossary.

¹⁹ See *Mitrata* 59 in this series, ‘The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart – Part2’, Note 4.

²⁰ In both the *Larger* and the *Smaller Sukhāvātī-vyūha Sūtras*, the Buddha teaches in the sense that he describes to various disciples the origin of the Pure Land of Amitābha, and its various qualities. In the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra*, the Buddha explains to Queen Vaidevi and to Ānanda how to visualize in full detail the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī and its residing Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

See *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, ed. E.B. Cowell and others, Dover Publications inc., New York 1969.

²¹ See *Mitrata* 63 in this series, 'Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life – Part 2', Glossary.

²² *Udāna: Verses of Uplift (Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon, Part II)*, trans. F.L. Woodward, Oxford University Press, London 1948, IV, iv.

²³ The *Dhammapada*. Trans. Nārada Maha Thera, Maha Bodhi Society of India, Calcutta 1962, Sect. 1, v. 7.

²⁴ See *Mitrata* 62 in this series, 'Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life – Part 1', Glossary.

