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## The Dynamics of the Will in Buddhist and Christian Practice

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# The Dynamics of the Will in Buddhist and Christian Practice

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To define the quality of will that the Buddha would have us put forth psychologically is to go very far indeed in an understanding of his doctrine . . . [B]oth Christian and Buddhist associate salvation with the putting forth of a similar quality of will.

Irving Babbitt, *Dhammapada*

"So far as we can wean ourselves from willing, we contribute to the awakening of releasement . . .

[yet] even releasement can still be thought of as within the domain of will . . .

When we let ourselves into releasement . . . we will non-willing."

M. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*

. . . There is a logic of the will, just as truly as there is a logic of the intellect. Personally, I go further still. I assert: all logic is a logic of the will.

Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Truth*

## THESIS AND PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The task of this paper is to suggest that the will-dynamics educed by Buddhist and Christian contemplative paths share fundamental structural similarities, a hypothesis which, if true, lends support to the notion of a *psychologia perennis*. The contemplative dimensions of Buddhism and Christianity, we will suggest, possess formally similar strategies for the attunement of the human will to its source in the Real, an attunement and dynamic balance in which both Buddhist and Christian contemplatives discover the salvation they seek.

To help show common ground between Buddhist and Christian contemplative paths, both are discussed in relation to a *tertium quid*, namely, the tension

between what we will call the "twin ontological motives" and the existential problem that results therefrom. This tension is one that a human being faces *qua* human being and whose contours are etched into the human organism prior to its discovery of religious or cultural identity. The contemplative paths of Buddhism and Christianity,<sup>1</sup> it will be further suggested, offer a profound resolution of this tension, and that such resolution is indeed an essential part of what it means to live in the Way: that life a Christian contemplative calls the union of human and divine wills, and a Buddhist, liberation or the actualization of Suchness.

In a comparative paper which seeks a broad, synthetic perspective, generalizations are inevitable, so it will be helpful in what follows to know their limits. Needless to say, this paper does not pretend to say something that is valid for the whole of the Buddhist and Christian traditions! The Buddhism of Shinran and the Christianity of Luther, for example, would fit poorly, or at best awkwardly, into the present theoretical structure. The Buddhism of Dogen and the Christianity of John of the Cross, however, would fit admirably, as would the Buddhism of Mahasi Sayadaw or Nyanaponika Thera and the Christianity of Thomas Merton. To formulate: the present analysis is applicable only to those forms of Buddhism and Christianity which consider the practices of meditation (that is, a discipline whose *sine qua non* is the practice of sustained attention) absolutely crucial, and second, whose meditative practices are of the form that resist imagining, picturing, representation, reflection and other discursive modes. In other words, my remarks relate primarily to Theravada Buddhism, to Zen Buddhism and to the sort of contemplative Christianity which takes John of the Cross or Hesychasm as its prototype.

Therefore, when in what follows reference is made to "Buddhism" or to "Christianity" the reader should understand these terms through the above parameters. Of course, I am fully aware that the above delimitations still leave a vast, extremely variegated religious landscape yawning before us, and that to attempt structural generalizations within it is a task fraught with peril. Yet as soon as we begin to think in terms of the problems of willing that existence bestows upon the human organism, the task begins to seem, if still daunting, at least not foolhardy.

Finally, I am eager to remind the reader that because the bulk of this paper must be given to theoretical elaboration, the textual evidence needed to fully substantiate the current hypothesis awaits more complete demonstration by those who find it attractive.

#### THE TWIN ONTOLOGICAL MOTIVES

This paper presupposes that two powerful inclinations dwell primordially in the human heart. On the one hand, there is what may be described as the call to individuation, the urge to stick out of the life continuum as something unique, independent and autonomous, the urge to become what one is, to manifest

one's special personal identity and potential. On the other hand, there is the call to shed that lonely autonomy for the sake of reintegration into the encompassing whole, the urge to merge, to surrender, to feel gratitude and humility towards those enveloping powers and sources of life from which one derives.

In proposing this, we are following the lead of Ernest Becker's remarkable *Denial of Death*,<sup>2</sup> a book which, in spite of its flawed critique of religion, remains, in our opinion, of singular importance to the study of comparative philosophy of religions. To be sure, most of what follows can stand independently of the presupposition of twin ontological motives; however, the thesis as a whole increases in elegance, and perhaps in power, if one gives this notion at least provisional affirmation. Arguing for it would take us too far afield and, in any case, one could not in short compass hope to match the persuasiveness of Becker's extended argument. So as not to unduly interrupt the current exposition, a brief summary of Becker's thesis is placed in a footnote.<sup>3</sup>

We need not rely solely on Becker, however, to understand why these motives merit the qualifier "ontological." To that end let us briefly consider the notions of "part" and "whole." The usual sense of these words are ingrained in our speech and thought yet the more closely we examine the world within us and around us, the more we find that "parts" and "wholes" in an absolute sense do not exist—neither in the domain of living organisms, nor in social organizations, nor in the encompassing universe. Each part we seize upon will be seen to consist of constitutive parts which then make that "part" of a quasi-autonomous whole. Yet each "whole" is but a sub-whole of a larger, more encompassing whole in which it performs its functions. The reader will admit that he or she is something of an autonomous whole, yet the "partness" of an individual, both within the social organization and the biosphere, is obvious. As we descend into the living organism we find the same pattern. The body is not a complex chain of atoms telling each other what to do, but a multi-leveled, stratified hierarchy of sub-wholes—the circulatory system, the autonomic nervous system, and so forth—which in turn branch into sub-wholes of a lower order, such as organs and tissues, down to individual cells and the sub-wholes by which they are constituted.

So important does Arthur Koestler find this notion of the interdependent, part-whole nature of living things that he uses it as a sort of grand leitmotif for summing together twenty-five years of inquiry into the mysteries of human nature. He calls his book *Janus*<sup>4</sup> after the two-faced Roman god to emphasize the fact that living organisms always have two 'faces'—one turned 'upward' toward the higher levels and more inclusive wholes of which it is a dependent part, and one turned 'downward' towards its own constituent parts in relation to which it is a quasi-autonomous whole. This universal ontic situation has its dynamic consequence: on the one hand, the part-wholes that make up the continuum of life are permeated by what Koestler variously calls an *integrative*, *participatory* or *self-transcending* tendency, that is, a tendency to subordinate their autonomy to their function within the larger whole. On the other hand,

these part-wholes retain what Koestler calls a *self-assertive* tendency, that is, a tendency to preserve their independence and relative autonomy.

Koestler's two ontological tendencies are, of course, the same dual ontological motives that Becker ponders centrally in the *Denial of Death*. It is noteworthy that in quite independent works Koestler, working from outposts of biology, physics and general systems theory, and Becker, attempting to forge a synthesis of psychoanalytic insight and the wisdom of the western existential-theological tradition, arrive at virtually the same formulation of the two motives and accord them the most profound importance in their mature musings on human nature.<sup>5</sup> It is against the background formed by these dual motives that we want to view the Buddhist and Christian contemplative vocations. For if Buddhist and Christian praxes exist to educate human desire, to root out compulsive ego-centeredness while bringing to birth deeply human persons, then each, we hope to show, must have something to do with bringing into dynamic fusion these two countervailing tendencies—the self-expanding and the self-transcending—that dance and struggle in the human heart.

#### WILL AND THE PROBLEM OF WILLING

The concept of "will" is pivotal for this paper. It is a concept marvelous for its psychological comprehensiveness and notorious for its indefinability. The historical studies of will by Lapsley<sup>6</sup> and Bourke<sup>7</sup> indicate an almost depressingly vast spectrum of usage, definition and interpretation, even while admitting the term's indispensability. But we shall at present need no more than our usual, general, tacit comprehension of "will" as pointing to that dimension of human existence which involves decision and practical working-toward. I shall assume, then, that the reader has no difficulty, at least insofar as a general sense of the term "will" is concerned, with statements like this one by Merton on centuries of Christian contemplative tradition:

The life of the soul . . . is the act of supreme faculty, the will, by which man is formally united to the final end of all his strivings—by which man becomes one with God.<sup>8</sup>

In the Buddhist contemplative tradition there is everywhere apparent the distinction between doctrine and method, and the corresponding insistence that method, the sphere of will-activity, alone makes possible the personal transformation by which mere intellectual understanding becomes wisdom.<sup>9</sup> Mrs. Rhys-Davids was impressed by this same fact and wrote in an article now over ninety years old that "it seems to have been characteristic of the man [Gotama] to have rated nothing higher in conduct than a supreme effort of the will in which 'the whole energies of being consent.'"<sup>10</sup> She went on to note, however, that there are at least seventeen Pali words which connote certain senses of "desire" or "will," and that no single Pali word could be equated with the English word "will." This peculiarity haunted Mrs. Rhys-Davids and in 1940

she confessed: "Forty-two years have passed since then [i.e., the writing of the article quoted above] and I still uphold that conclusion, that Buddhism, early Buddhism, was a gospel of will without a word for will."<sup>11</sup> She added:

The Buddhist teacher was ever directing learners to be in a state of getting further, making new to become, to be not contented with standing still, to be choosing the better, rejecting the worse, to be as wayfarers seeking to get somewhere, enjoined to practice four sorts of "right exertion" or striving (*padhāna*). We find that he who in the far future was to be reborn as "bud-dha" would spend time in "striving the striving" (*padhānam padahitvana*), and would exercise will as to that future by making a "strong resolve," literally a superfetching-out (*abhi-nihara*).<sup>12</sup>

D. T. Suzuki confirms this emphasis on will for Zen practice. He says, for instance, that the koan practice which may seem intellectual or dialectical is actually conative, a training of the will, because Zen understands, in Suzuki's words, that "what involves the totality of human existence is not a matter of intellection but of will in its most primary sense."<sup>13</sup>

In underscoring the centrality of will, however, neither Rhys-Davids, nor Suzuki, nor Merton, nor the traditions for which they speak, are blind to the psychological fact that untempered exertions of willpower by one part of an organism to forcefully subdue another part, lead not only to psychic imbalance and rigidity but to reinforcement of the illusion of an independent and organism-controlling ego. The question for contemplative practice becomes: can the will be exerted supremely, yet without reinforcing the ego illusion? Can the self-expansive motive of the contemplative aspirant be given its due through striving for human apotheosis—sainthood, arhatship or bodhisattvahood—at the same time that the call of the self-emptying motive is answered by an ever-deepening sense that the aspirant is but an instrument of God's grace or an interdependent flicker of light in Indra's shining net? It is a crucial part of our task to show the genius by which Buddhism and Christianity disabuse the aspirant of the illusion of autonomous selfhood while at the same time continuing to stir his/her will toward ultimate human development. As we unpack the notion of "will" we will see how Buddhist and Christian *sadhanas* aim at evoking in their aspirants an incomparably subtle fusion of effort and surrender, of struggle and acceptance, of will and equanimity. In this way they respond with consummate beauty to the call of the two ontological motives, avoiding lopsided enslavement to either.<sup>14</sup>

#### THE WILL AS ATTENTION AND INTENTION

When we analyze with all the tools modern psychoanalysis brings us, we shall find ourselves pushed back to the level of attention or intention as the seat of will.

Rollo May, *Love and Will*



May's words provide a convenient point of departure now, for to understand the quality of willing (and non-willing) that Buddhist and Christian contemplative strategies evoke, we shall break human willing down into its two central manifestations, attention and intention. Attention is crucial because it is the cornerstone of contemplative work, and intention is equally crucial because attentional practices take on meaning only in relation to and bear fruit only in accordance with a larger intentional framework.

### THE CENTRALITY OF ATTENTION

Sustained attention is the common denominator of all meditation and the root of Buddhist practice. Whether practicing the *satipatthana* exercises or the *samatha/vipassana* meditation of the Theravada school, or *zazen* (*skikantaza* or *koan* practice) of the Zen school, one is engaged primarily in a discipline of diligent mindfulness, of acute presence, of vigilant attentiveness. Attention may be 'handled' in different ways in these various exercises, but the *sine qua non* factor—and the factor that is crucial for the synthetic, comparative level at which we're working—is the attention itself.<sup>15</sup>

So, too, is attention the root and basis of Christian contemplative prayer—most obviously in forms like 'centering prayer' or the 'Jesus prayer' of Eastern Orthodoxy—though this fact is currently in the process of being rediscovered and revalidated as contemporary Christians journey into their past, and into Zen, to reinvigorate their own contemplative tradition. The last calls to mind a proviso that should be kept in mind as we proceed: Buddhists have raised the discipline of attention to a highly differentiated science while in Christianity, especially in the West, that discipline remains in a comparatively undeveloped state. Neither in breadth nor in depth can Christianity match Buddhism's psychological expertise regarding attentional exercises for the training and purification of the mind. Thus, though we shall be speaking of transformative effects of attentional practices as if our words applied equally to Buddhist and Christian contemplative ways, they will actually be more *descriptive* in regard to Buddhism, more *prospective* in regard to Christianity. We hasten to add our personal conviction that Christian cosmology, symbology and metaphysics are wholly adequate to accommodate the most profound of human transformations. But that Christianity can learn from Buddhism something important about contemplative *method* is a fact that Buddhist-Christian studies need not be afraid to admit.<sup>16</sup> Of course, in order to maintain our synthetic efforts, we shall resist for the most part the attempt to employ the psychological vocabulary of Buddhism and instead employ a more neutral psychological language.

### ATTENTION IN BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIAN PRACTICE: AWAKENING FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL UNFREEDOM

Buddhist and Christian contemplative paths contain attentional exercises because they understand that even ordinary mental turbulence is antithetical to

the quiet clarity, recollection and self-possession needed to understand and appreciate reality in subtler than usual ways. So too, they contain some notion or other of the false consciousness, or false self, which when overcome, rendered transparent or otherwise dismantled, allows the self-manifesting quality of truth to disclose itself. Let us say, therefore, that the central significance of attentional exercises is to release the human being from bondage to the machinations of the false self. And just as one might attempt to explain an eraser by referring first to that which it erases, an explanation of the will-dynamics involved in contemplative attention is best begun with a notion of the false self which attention combats. Limitations of space require that the following treatment be schematic and condensed.

Human beings come into this world possessed of a pervasive need, the need to persist in and expand their being. Let us call the life activity which follows upon this need the self-project. The self-project is pursued along two avenues, namely, those marked out by the twin ontological motives. One pursues the self-project through individual achievement, ego-development and autonomy (i.e., self-assertive tendency) or, paradoxically but quite intelligibly, one pursues the self-project by merging with or subordinating oneself to some great Others (i.e., the integrative tendency). One-sided enslavement to either of these tendencies is clearly inimical to what we understand as authentic human beings, not to mention psychologically unwholesome, for they would amount to the extremes of sadism and masochism.

But now we must see that irrespective of which of the two motives is playing the dominant role in the self-project at any given time, from the very beginning of human life experience is being appropriated along two other lines. On the one hand, the self-project manifests in the organism as a desire for and attachment to any loci of thought or experience which affirm the self and enhance its will to be. On the other hand, the self-project manifests as a defense against or aversion for those loci of thought or experience which negate the self and impress upon it its contingency and mortality. The lineaments of the personality are built up along these lines. The psyche becomes a multidimensional webwork of likes and dislikes, desires and aversions both gross and subtle, which manifest the personality in the same way that black and white dots can create the illusion of a face. Time and repetition harden parts of the webwork into iron necessity. With increasing automatism experiences both internal and external are evaluated according to whether they affirm or negate the self-project. The self-project gradually unfolds into an egocentric system in which beliefs, feelings, perceptions, experiences and behaviors are automatically viewed and assessed around one's sense of value and worth as an individual. By the time the human being is old enough even to begin to take an objective view of the self-project, s/he is hopelessly enmeshed in it. Predispositions have become so implicit and unconscious that the ego has little chance of recognizing the extent to which its psychological life is determined. One automatically limits, selects, organizes, and interprets experience according to the demands of the self-project. The chronic quality of this self-centeredness and



the distance it creates between the person and reality indicates the common psychological wisdom behind, for example, the Christian's insistence of the originality of sin, or the Buddhist's on the beginninglessness of ignorance.

What both Buddhism and Christianity might term the "false self" can thus be understood as a metaphor for psychic *automatism*, that is, automatic, ego-centric, habit-determined patterns of thought, emotive reaction and assessment and imaginary activity which filter and distort reality, and skew behavior, according to the needs of the self-project. Having hardened into relatively permanent psychological 'structures,' these predispositional patterns may be conceived as constantly feeding on available psychic energy, dissolving it into the endless associational flotsam in the stream of consciousness.<sup>17</sup> Energy that would otherwise be manifested as the delight of open and present-centered awareness is inexorably drawn to these structures and there disintegrates into the image-films and commentaries—the noise—that suffuses ordinary consciousness. The psychic machinery runs by itself, ever exacerbating one's slavery to conditioning, and, moment to moment, steals attention from the real present. Our imaginative-emotive distraction is so constant that we come to accept it as normal. We see it not as the drain of energy and loss of being it actually is but as the natural state of affairs.

What allows the self-aggravating automatism of the false self to function unchecked is, in a word, *identification*. Every desire, every feeling, every thought, as Gurdjieff once put it, says "I."<sup>18</sup> As long as we are unconsciously and automatically identifying with the changing contents of consciousness we never suspect that our true nature remains hidden from us. If spiritual freedom means anything, however, it means first and foremost a freedom from such automatic identification. Contemplative traditions affirm in one metaphor or another that our true identity lies not in the changing contents of consciousness, but in a deeper layer of the self, mind or soul. To reach this deeper layer one must slowly disentangle oneself from automatic identification with the contents of consciousness. That is, in order for the self to realize the *telos* adumbrated for it in the doctrines and images of the contemplative tradition to which it belongs (total purification of the mind through eradication of greed, hate and delusion, realization and actualization of Buddha-nature, conformity of the human will to the will of God), it is necessary to cut beneath psychological noise, to disidentify with it so as to understand it objectively rather than be entangled in it, and ultimately, to gradually de-struct the very habit-formed structures which ceaselessly produce it.

Once *automatism* and *identification* are understood to be the chief sustainers of the false self, of the sin or ignorance that hides our true natures and our fundamental alignment with the Good, we are in a position to understand the psychotransformative power of contemplative attention and the quality of willing essential to it. For whether a human being is practicing the Theravada Buddhist's bare attention, Zen's *shikantaza* or the mantram-like Jesus prayer, s/he is, to one degree or another, cultivating the *disidentification* that leads to the *deautomatization* of the false self. This needs to be spelled out.

We have already said that the common denominator of contemplative practice is sustained attention. We recognize, in other words, that attentional efforts from Theravada Buddhism to contemplative Christianity contain a common *concentrative* element. What is less easily and less frequently realized is that this concentrative element has, as if built into it, a second element as indispensable to contemplative transformation as the concentrative, attentional efforts themselves. It is not properly grasped in isolation, but can be properly understood only within the very effort to establish sustained, concentrated attention. This second element is the *receptive* or *nonreactive* element. It stems from the unavoidable *failure* of the attempt to maintain concentrative attention.

No one attains attentive equipoise for the mere wishing, and the question arises of what is to be done when the inevitable distractions occur. The concentrative work is constantly interrupted by autonomous mobilizations of psychic energies which dissolve the unity of attention and carry it away on a stream of associations. What then? There are only two choices: to react with frustration and judgment in which case one has unwittingly slipped into the very egocentric perspective from which contemplative exercises are trying to extricate one; or, to simply observe the distraction nonreactively, to note it, accept it and then to gently bring the mind back to its concentrated mode. Contemplative traditions clearly tend to encourage the latter choice. The theistic constant of "acceptance of God's will," the Christian contemplative's *apatheia* (indifference), and Buddhist *upekkha* (equanimity) (not to mention the *Gita*'s "willing without attachment to the fruits of willing" or the Taoist *wei-wu-wei*)—all of these when brought to bear on attentional exercises encourage the attitude of nonreactivity, of acceptance, of no-self-willing.

Thus, given the fact that the deep-seated habit patterns of the psyche will repeatedly overpower an inchoate concentrative ability and assuming that the practitioner will repeatedly attempt to establish active, concentrative attention, his constant companion in all of this is impartiality, equanimity and nonreactive acceptance. When concentrated attention falters, one is to be a nonreactive witness to what has arisen. Whatever emerges in the mind is observed and let go of without being elaborated upon or reacted to. Images, thoughts and feelings arise due to the automatism of deeply imbedded psychological structures, but their lure is not taken. They are not allowed to steal attention and send it floundering down a stream of associations. One establishes and reestablishes concentrated attention, but when it is interrupted one learns to disidentify with the contents of consciousness, to maintain a choiceless, nonreactive awareness and to quiet the ego which has preferences.

The Christian doctrine of "grace" and the Buddhist doctrine of "anatta" serve identical psychological functions at this point (a theme we will take up again later). For each reminds the aspirant that he/she alone can do little. One is asked to assert one's will but simultaneously to realize that one is but a wave on an ocean of causes, wholly implicated in and subordinate to the Order of Things we call *Dhamma*, *Pratitya-Samutpada* or God.<sup>19</sup> To be non-reactively

attentive is for Christians to bring no new sinful selfwillfulness to the practice of contemplation; for Buddhists it is to bring no new *karma* to the psyche. *Dhamma*, *Pratitya-Samutpada* and God 'respond' to these overtures with the 'freeing' force that is their nature.<sup>20</sup> There is a time in prayer and meditation when our job is to simply and nonreactively observe and let the Order of Things do the rest.<sup>21</sup>

Note that even here in the circumscribed crucible of personal consciousness contemplative praxis strikes a delicate balance between the dual ontological motives, between the self-assertive motive (the will to keep the mind focused) and the self-transcending motive (a letting go, a decontraction of the egoic grip, a nonreactive observation of consciousness' contents).<sup>22</sup>

Let us recall a final time that the experience of failure *inherent* in both Buddhist and Christian concentrative attempts is the first great step in objectifying one's mental flow, of seeing that flow not as something that "I" am doing but something that is simply happening. When the Christian attempts to link his attention solely to the name of Jesus or the Theravadin solely to the passage of air through his nostrils, the first lesson they learn is that they *cannot* do it. (Generally speaking, the result of greater mastery in attentional work is longer and longer periods between inevitable distractions.) The more this failure is encountered the more directly and deeply does the practitioner understand that his ordinary mentation, even his intellection, is foreign to the deepest reality of his will, and thus of his being. It becomes even clearer that whatever one is, one is not one's thoughts, and that there must be a distinction between the contents of consciousness and ultimate subjective reality. As the contents of consciousness are thus objectified, disidentification with them is a natural outcome.

At the same time that the contemplative learns that the mental flow cannot be what s/he deeply is, s/he understands from the tradition that neither is it the ultimate reality s/he seeks to know. The theocentric contemplative is reminded that God cannot be captured within a construct of consciousness and that, as John of the Cross says, God does not fit into an occupied heart. The Zen Buddhist understands that the *koan* whose solution may reveal Buddhature cannot be solved by an intellectual construct. Not surprisingly, the metaphor of emptying—i.e., the self-emptying that is somehow necessary to the new indwelling of truth—spans both traditions. The lesson of self-emptying seems always to be that the mental flow can neither be nor contain the reality-source one seeks. The aspirant is thus doubly disposed to disvalue the incessant discursion of the mind, to disidentify and detach him/herself from it. Attention becomes less a slave to external stimuli and becomes more consolidated within. Increasing disidentification with mental contents enhances the ability to see and assess impulses *before* they are translated in action, thus permitting increasing freedom from the impulsive, automatic behavior of the false self.

As attentional training progresses and detachment from the automatized flow of mental contents is achieved, the coiled springs responsible for that very

automatism begin to unwind. In other words, disidentification leads to *deautomatization*. One elaboration must suffice. The incessant discursion of the mind may be conceived as the result of the useless consumption of energy by the overlearned structures or patterns of the psyche. Associational thought-sequences which seem to stimulate each other in virtually unending series, may be thought of as the palpable record of this consumption. An increasingly quiet and disidentified attention would be able to catch associational sequences in their beginnings and thus forestall the automatic stimulation of still other sequences and some of the behavior that flows impulsively therefrom. The integrity of the automatized processes, however, depends upon reinforcement through repetition. Forestalling associational sequences and interrupting habitual behavior would weaken that integrity. Unwholesome impulses caught by attention would be deprived of a chance to bear fruit in action or associational elaboration. Attention—or presence, or mindfulness—may thus be thought of as depriving predispositional patterns of their diet; contemplative attentional exercises are, in other words, strategies of starvation. Every moment that available energy is consolidated in concentrative and nonreactive attention is a moment when automatized processes cannot replenish themselves. In the dynamic world of the psyche, there is no stasis: if automatisms do not grow more strongly solidified, they begin to weaken and dissolve. When deprived of the nutriment formerly afforded to them by distracted states of mind, the automatized processes of the mind begin to disintegrate. Contemplative attention practiced over a long period of time may dissolve and uproot even the most recalcitrant pockets of psychological automatism, allowing consciousness to recollect the ontic freedom and clarity that is its birthright. “Deautomatization,” then, is a psychological, tradition-neutral term which describes an essential aspect of the process of spiritual liberation, the freeing of oneself from bondage to the false self. It names, furthermore, a *gradual, long-term* process of psychological deconditioning without which a mystical experience, no matter how powerful, will almost surely fade into an ineffectual memory.

In upsetting normal functioning, attentional work is bound to involve eruptions from the unconscious. Contemplative texts contain few instructions on how to deal with the mass of psychic material that is bound to arise in the long course of the work. One would guess, however, that the proper attitude would be one of recognition of those contents and insight into them without, however, fascinated fixation upon them. A part of attentional work, then, is like the therapeutic process in depth psychology: its purpose is to reclaim and reintegrate parts of the unconscious for the self. But attentional work is unlike depth psychological work in another, crucial respect. For while the contemplative recognizes the contents of the unconscious as belonging to the self, s/he simultaneously sees that self (or is exhorted by tradition to see it) objectively, remaining cognizant of the fact that attachment to it or identification with it will continue to prevent truth from disclosing itself in its fullness.

Ideally, then, long coursing in attentional exercises increases the mind's abil-

ity to conserve and rechannel energy, to spend less of it on the useless imaginative-emotive elaboration of desire and anxiety characteristic of ordinary mentation. Ideas, emotions and images continue to arise autonomously in the mind, but the attentive mind, the emptying mind, is less easily caught up in spasmodic reactions to them, less easily yanked into the past or flung into the future by them. Emotions and impressions begin to be experienced in their 'purity'; they "leave no tracks" as Zennists are fond of saying. Energy formerly spent in emotive reactions, ego defense, fantasy and fear now becomes the very delight of present-centeredness and a reservoir of compassion. As the psychic habit patterns of the former person are deautomatized, new patterns are formed in alignment with his/her strengthening intention-toward-awakening. Deautomatizing attention and reconstitutive intention lead to a new reticulation of the predispositional structures of consciousness, to a new ecology of mind. By emptying the self of unconscious compulsions and reactive patterns built up over time by the self-project, the contemplative discovers a new life of receptivity, internal freedom and clarity. Impartial observation of one's existential situation becomes increasingly acute. Intuition is awakened. The fear-and-desire bound natural man begins to taste his primordial, ontic freedom. Released into the Present, s/he knows that intersection of time and eternity where Divinity dwells. This is the culmination of the psyche-logic of attention-disidentification-deautomatization which, it may be theorized, lies at the core of a wide variety of contemplative practices.

#### THE CONTEXT OF ATTENTION: INTENTION

Concentrated and nonreactive attention, we have suggested above, is the radiating core of contemplative practice. But human transformation is effected not solely by isolated bouts of intense attentional training but only when such disciplines are linked to ordinary life by an *intention* that makes every aspect of life a part of the spiritual work. The contemplative opus, in other words, is hardly limited to formal periods of attentional practice. Ordinary activity and formal contemplative practice must reinforce each other and between them sustain the continuity of practice that alone can awaken the mind and help it realize the *telos* adumbrated for it in the images and concepts of the tradition to which it belongs. And it is precisely the traditions *teloi*—as found in its doctrines, symbols and moral exhortations—which, by evoking the aspirant's deep intention, provide this continuity. If contemplative life is to have true psycho-transformative power, the discipline of attention must be supplemented by another effort of the will more pervasive than the formal gesture of meditative attention. Contemplative attention is a willing within a more encompassing willing, one that comprehends the whole of human being. We are referring to contemplative *intention*, the willing of an overarching Aim, a willing of which attention is but one, albeit the most important, manifestation.<sup>23</sup>



## CONTEMPLATIVE INTENTION AND THE PROBLEM OF IDOLATRY

One of the reasons that the maturation of the human will is rare and difficult is that the very dynamics of human intending take original shape in childhood, that is, in an environment permeated by need and apprehension. In order to establish itself as a self in a world of crushingly superior forces, the budding human being, in an attempt to overcome what Becker compellingly describes as the "horror of emergence," learns the art of linkage. The growing child's various intendings take shape under the aegis of a dominant theme, namely, the urge to link its own meager self-powers to loci of empowerment outside itself. Psychoanalysis has taught us that there are an infinite number of such loci, both external objects and internal fantasies, and all offer their lures to the individual upon life's long way: mother and father, the lover, the political leader, the flag, golden calves, churches, ideologies, gurus, psychoanalysts, spiritual directors, status symbols, academic degrees, the size of a bank balance and, of course, the idea of sainthood. Whether external object or internal image, these 'idols' are capable of providing refuge for the significance-seeking self. This automatic tendency to project and to idolize, in order some way to succeed in our self-project, is virtually inescapable. Freud called it transference, a universal reflex from which no one born of a mother's womb can, in the process of growing up, escape.

By the very fact that it has dawned on the contemplative aspirant that a wisdom tradition may indeed be the ultimate response to his heart's desire, it may be assumed that s/he has come to understand the inauthenticity and insufficiency of many of these loci of power or meaning. Nevertheless, even the contemplative remains susceptible to transference and idolatry of a subtle kind. For in its early stages contemplative intention is fueled by images of transcendence. These images form the core of intentionality which will continue to exert a powerful and formative influence in the aspirant's life. But such images, though an integral part of every religious mythos and crucially important to the evolution of the will, nevertheless, like all language and symbol, conceal as well as reveal. They snag as well as draw. The contemplative who transfers onto the image of sainthood, arhatship or bodhisattvahood can get stuck there. No less than any other species of religious willing, contemplative intention can succumb to idolatry.

Buddhist and Christian wisdom nevertheless calls the will to know its True Ground and Nature and to finally surpass every particular symbolism upon which it has depended, to free itself from those phenomenal supports no matter how subtle or refined they have become. Now we see the final purpose and genius of contemplative prayer: through long coursing in right practice in which consciousness becomes free from identification with the objects that flow upon it, the passion for transference, for idolatry, even in its most rarefied forms, is quieted. Contemplative attention thus takes its subtle iconclasm to



the most inner altars of the mind. The Christian contemplative attempts to follow Eckhart's admonition that one must know God "without semblance . . . without image" and the Buddhist contemplative knows that the Buddha met on the road must be an impostor. Each aspirant seeks to surpass in his/her search for the ultimate 'object' of human yearning even the subtlest constructions of the mind.

If idolatry is given no quarter in the realm of the object, it is also resisted in the realm of the subject. Let us notice the demur that runs the full length of the contemplative path: the aspirant is, in reality, utterly contingent. Constant exhortations to do one's utmost to reach awakening are everywhere joined by reminders of the self's powerlessness, of its relative nothingness *vis-a-vis* the more Encompassing Order in which it finds itself situated. This seeming paradox teems with psychological wisdom. For there can be no psychic integration without a task that invites heroic, individual willing and self-expansion: one is called to become Christ, united one's will with God's, experience love for all created things; one is called to become Buddha, experience compassion for, and work to save, all sentient beings. But all this heroic effort can turn brittle if not complemented by a sense of relinquishment, surrender, or self-forgetfulness. The aspirant is accordingly reminded of his/her own nothingness, and in two ways.

First, the goal is never reached. "What good is a goal if one can reach it?" we recently heard a Zen roshi ask during a *teisho*. Should we object that satori and enlightenment are quite reachable, we would ask "for whom?" suggesting that any answer to this question will involve false views of the nature of the self. For the desire to save all beings is but the Buddhist portrait of the universal ethical horizon against which the life of awakening is *endlessly* pursued. To reach complete Buddhahood,<sup>24</sup> or to enlighten even the grass, are the infinitely distant horizons against which the aspirant patiently wends his/her way, deepening insight and compassion, as inappropriate notions of selfhood fall away. Christian ideals of ultimate perfection similarly insure that no one shall perfectly realize them. The beatific vision and complete union with God are said to be possible only in the afterlife; here on earth only an approximation can be reached. Christian and Buddhist contemplatives alike understand that the goal is the *Path*, the continued and ever more subtle treading of it, in which its fruits are increasingly enjoyed and more widely shared. Thus we have one of the defining characteristics of all sacred cosmologies: they are inexhaustibly evocative and hortatory. Contemplative 'strategy' demands that the self leave itself no satisfaction in beyonds that are reachable.

Second, psychologically speaking, the Christian doctrine of grace and the Buddhist doctrine of *anatta* serve closely similar purposes: in the midst of striving for apotheosis the aspirant is reminded that a ripeness, beyond his control, is all. The will to *attend* and the will to *intend* are kept delicately balanced by the knowledge that constraint can actually vitiate the inner work. Only when complemented by a surrender to a 'higher' or more inclusive order can the

effort of the personal will bear wholesome fruit. This is commonplace in Christianity. It is also a commonplace in the Zen tradition. There, stories abound of Masters undercutting disciples' strenuous efforts by reminding them—perhaps the famous tile-polishing story is prototypical—that ultimately there is nothing to do nor to attain. As seen from the “host” position of the enlightened mind, things are possessed of a certain Suchness, a perfection beyond one's own hankerings. Any reader of this paper who has tried to sit still more or less constantly for sixteen hours a day at a Zen *sesshin* and yet amidst these agonizing efforts reads each day the passage from the Heart Sutra that asserts that there is “no path” and “nothing to attain”—this person knows well both legs of the paradox. Moreover, a strong case can be made for the proposition that Dōgen himself understood effortful Zen practice as taking place in a Cosmos permeated by grace, in an Order, that is, in which surrender, or at least alignment, but not attainment, was the proper attitude.<sup>25</sup>

If such notions seem less a commonplace in Theravada Buddhism, it is because few commentators have had the eloquence of someone like Sangharakshita. In his *Survey of Buddhism* this English Theravadin monk writes:

Only at the preliminary ethico-meditative stages of the Path is it helpful to speak of spiritual attainments as depending on . . . the will of the disciple. Should this mechanistic and individualistic manner of speaking be too literally understood self-reliance will harden into self-sufficiency and . . . the disciple will be threatened by difficulties and dangers largely of his own creation. In the sublimer realms of spiritual experience the ego-sense becomes attenuated to such a fineness, transparency and luminosity, that the terms “self” and “non-self” lose their ordinary meanings, and it becomes no less difficult to speak of the spiritual life in terms of self-effort than to speak of it in terms of reliance upon divine grace, sometimes more difficult in fact.<sup>26</sup>

Even at its most acute pitch, then, the contemplative will is reminded of its emptiness, its interdependent status, its subordination to the order of *Dhamma* and *Kamma*, its dependence on grace. Seeing into its own utter contingency and nevertheless embracing it, contemplative consciousness escapes from the compulsions of transference and find its only truly real linkage in the undying life of the All. As it becomes authentically nothing, it is supported by everything. By dying it lives. The twin ontological motives are met: the self comes most fully to birth as the illusion of self melts into acknowledgement of the more encompassing reality.

#### INTENTION, ATTENTION AND THE FULLY BORN WILL

Do you do unto others what you will they do unto you—by willing only one thing? For this will is the eternal order that governs all things, that brings you into union with . . . foreign people whose language and customs you

do not know, with all men upon the whole language and customs you do not know, with all men upon the whole earth, who are related to each other by blood and eternally related to the Divine by eternity's task of willing only one thing.<sup>27</sup>

Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing*

Thus might Kierkegaard explain why, for example, though the ordinary Buddhist and Christian may find each other alien, Buddhist and Christian monks offer each other a deep bow in tacit, respectful recognition of their common human purpose. They recognize in each other, perhaps, a common commitment, a human link as deep as blood and spine, that overshadows cultural and doctrinal differences. They recognize, perhaps, the purity of heart that wills one thing.

If "willing one thing" names a real psychological possibility, it is clearly not a possibility that is ready to hand, available for the mere wishing by anyone at all. Rather it must name some special kind of fruition that presupposes a long chain of efforts. But as we hinted in the preceding section, the fruition of the contemplative path is characterized by a certain quality of nonwilling. We again face the paradox: willful efforts if pursued long and properly on the contemplative path resolve themselves into a kind of nonwilling, an attunement to the activity of a more encompassing Order.

To soften the strangeness of this paradox we can note that at least two contemporary thinkers have thought along the same lines. The psychologist Assagioli asserts the centrality of will in human development as well as the curious change of valence it undergoes in coming to maturity. Thus he describes the fundamental human vocation as the journey from *having* a will to *being* a will.<sup>29</sup> But the most complete anticipation of what I am suggesting here is found in Heidegger's analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, "willing," "wishing," "urge," and "drive" are multiple and conflicting forms of will in a Dasein which has not yet become free nor yet discovered the true nature of its will. For the human will fully born and unified Heidegger reserves the special term "care" (*sorge*)—a term especially helpful in this context as it carries within it distinct overtones of Buddhist *karuna* and Christian *caritas*, terms which themselves suggest the ultimate existential fruits of contemplative transformation. Heidegger calls care the "single primordial unitary phenomenon behind Dasein"; it is a reality toward which the human existent moves and in which it finds its true nature.

But how does it so move? "Willing" in the ordinary phenomenal sense of self-assertion would seem to be counterproductive to the birth of care. Heidegger knows there is no logical way out of this; but there is an existential way. Even though phenomenal willing exacerbates the sense of an independent ego, it is only through effort that this situation can be overcome. The link between inchoate, phenomenal willing and the will-fully-born-as-care is, for Heidegger, resolve (*Entschlossenheit*). Only by willing resolutely (as contemplative tradi-

tions call us to do) can the thousand mile journey to the willing of non-willing be begun. In other words, though the contemplative aspirant must begin his/her journey from an illusory base, unless s/he begins *somewhere*, s/he will remain so situated. For it is only by resolute willing in the contemplative practices of attention and intention that the aspirant will eventually come face to face with the existential and ontological contradictions inherent in the notion of "I will," and only in through this confrontation find releasement into the primordially unitary phenomenon in which the human will is grounded—a Heideggerian wording with obvious analogues in the Buddhist and Christian traditions.

Now if the inner work accomplished by attentional training is largely destructive and deautomatizing, we can see that the entire work of intention as the journey to willing one thing is the constructive power which complements it. As the conditioned patterns of the 'old man' are deautomatized and the bonds of transference are loosened, the psyche's structures begin to be reshaped according to the underlying intention of the aspirant. The net of the psyche undergoes continuous reticulation. Energy formerly bound in fear-and-desire habit reaction, is gradually freed for use according to the religio-ethical ideal with which the practitioner aligns him/herself; such energy also begins to be experienced as the delight of present-centeredness. As the aspirant's personal construction of reality is dismantled, it is replaced by ever subtler understandings of reality as presented by the tradition. The central difference between the reality-versions at the beginning and then well along the contemplative path is, of course, the ontological status of the ego: in the former the ego is the core of reality; in the latter it is empty or 'nothing' *vis-a-vis* the greater Order in which it is situated. As one begins to understand What Is and to subordinate oneself to it, the authentic will—the will as *panna*-informed-*karuna* or as wisdom-informed-agape—comes closer to being fully born.

## CONCLUSION

The dynamics of the will described in the foregoing pages prove, I believe, to be homologous for Buddhist and Christian contemplative attempts to educate human desire to its true end. A final crystallization of this thesis will close this paper.

As the force of desire is experienced, primordially, within the human existent, it is usually turned outward as the desire for some *objective condition*. The contemplative sensibility, however, has immemorially sensed that desire—as desire for an *objective condition*—cannot make ultimate sense. The ephemeral world mocks attempts to hold it fast, to arrange it according to personal liking. Even if that desired objective condition should be an unassailable perfection of the self, reality will at some point insist on presenting a mirror to our broken faces, reminding us of our fundamental dispensability. No; desire for an objective condition must be complemented by, *subordinated to*, another

desire, a desire which *does* make sense of our endless human longing. This desire is desire for a subjective condition and the name of that subjective condition is fully born will. Purged of the desire for that which is not, the fully born will is a willing to conform with what most truly is. Desire is but confused and clamorous willing by an entity that has mistakenly evaluated its own ontological status. But leading itself beyond itself, the desire for what is not yet becomes transformed into a willing of That Which Is. It becomes, so to speak, an empty willing or a non-willing. "Union with God" and "enlightenment" may be understood as expressions announcing the dawn of the empty will, of the purity of heart that wills one thing, a willing now that neither seeks nor receives an explanation outside itself in terms of something desired. It is a oneness of willing with attunement to God's will, to reality as it is (*yathā-bhūta*).<sup>30</sup>

The Christian contemplative seeks his/her life as an instrument of God's will; the Zen Buddhist as an embodiment of Tathata, the Theravadin as a manifestation of Dhamma. Such contemplatives employ methods whose *sine qua non* ingredient is the practice of sustained attention. But this practice, though crucial, takes its place and finds its meaning only in a life whose many aspects are permeated by an intention toward Awakening.<sup>31</sup> These two existential postures, these two manifestations of the will—attention and intention—complement, strengthen and amplify one another as the personality of the aspirant is transformed from a tangle of desires into a unity of will. From this fundamental transformation of character comes a knowledge, not merely intellectual, which alone deserves the names *panna*, *prajna*, wisdom. It is the liberating knowledge that one is most truly oneself when one discovers one's no-selfness within the Dynamic Totality. In this realization there is delight and freedom, a fusion of the urge to be a self and the urge to be no-self.

## NOTES

1. The emphasis in this phrase is decidedly on contemplative paths rather than on Buddhism and Christianity. The analysis presented here may well be applicable to Hindu, Muslim, Jewish and Taoist contemplative paths as well for it has more to do with a psychology inherent in a life of contemplative practice than it does with any particular instantiation of that psychology. To develop my hypothesis I chose *two* traditions because I find dialectic fruitful, and Buddhism and Christianity in particular because, on the one hand, a synthetic treatment of a theistic and nontheistic tradition necessarily expands that treatment's range of applicability and, on the other hand, because they are the traditions with which I am most familiar.

2. Ernest Becker, *Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973).

3. Working a philosophical vein at least as old as Plato's *Symposium* and whose most brilliant modern proponent Becker takes to be Otto Rank, Becker argues that the core of human motivation is the longing for immortality, or, conversely, the denial of death. On this view, the individual human personality as well as the entire historical array of human culture is understood to be a multilayered, multifaceted programme for defending the human self against the fact of its complete and utter contingency. The urge to persist in one's own being, i.e., the urge to deny death, manifests in the individual in two basic modes. On the one hand, there is the self-assertive or self-expansive mode (Becker uses the term "Eros"), the attempt to aggrandize oneself through heroic achievement. On the other hand, there is the self-merging or self-transcending mode (Becker uses



the term "Agape") wherein the human being seeks refuge from nothingness through submission to or transference onto some more potent Whole. Each trend has pitfalls, the human vocations which unite and resolve them being few indeed. Becker puts it this way: "If he gives into Agape he risks failing to develop himself, his active contribution to the rest of life. If he expands Eros too much he risks cutting himself off from the healing power of gratitude and humility that he must naturally feel for having been created, for having been given the opportunity of life experience" (Ibid., p. 153).

4. Arthur Koestler, *Janus* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

5. Becker and Koestler, we want finally to mention, felt compelled by their different bodies of evidence to correct Freud's version of the two universally powerful antagonists he called Eros and Thanatos. Eros, as the self-assertive tendency, remains. The crucial difference is that the barren negativity of Freud's Thanatos now becomes for both Becker and Koestler a creative negativity, the self-naughting involved in any genuinely self-transcending activity. Thus, Freud's musings on sex and aggression as reflexes of Eros and Thanatos here undergo a reversal. For Koestler and Becker, aggression is the pathological extreme of the self-assertive tendency (so-called Eros) when provoked beyond a critical limit. Such an explanation would not require, Koestler notes, "the gratuitous postulate of a death instinct for which there is not a trace of evidence anywhere in biology" (Ibid., p. 65). And sexuality is not to be classed under "eros" at all. For sexuality is fundamentally in service of the species, not the individual. It is a species drive, something that unites it with the large whole. Sex then is a specific manifestation of the integrative or 'agapaic' tendency, the desire to submit, to merge oneself with the whole, and only in connection with the individual's self-assertive desire, turned pathological, does sex become an aggressive act. As if to anticipate the moves made by Becker and Koestler, Paul Ricoeur's own earlier study of Freud posed the question precisely: "Do we not find in the idea of Eros/Thanatos the beginning of a genuine dialectic of desire in which negation is placed at the very center of desire? Are we not invited thereby to reinterpret the death instinct and relate it to the negativity through which desire, Eros, is educated and humanized?" (P. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 482).

6. James Lapsley, *The Concept of Willing* (New York: Abingdon, 1967).

7. Vernon Bourke, *The Will in Western Thought* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964).

8. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1948), p. 191.

9. Expressed, for example, in the Pali Scriptures distinction between *cinta-maya panna* and *bhavana-maya panna*.

10. Mrs. Rhys-Davids, "On the Will in Buddhism," in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1898, p. 50.

11. Mrs. Rhys-Davids, "The Will in Buddhism," in *The Hibbert Journal*, January, 1940, p. 252. To quote but two typical passages from the Pali Canon: "The monk . . . inclines his mind to exertion, to application, to perseverance and to energetic effort," *Anguttara Nikāya*, V, 20. "[The monk] generates an ambition, he struggles, he activates energy, he concentrates and exerts his mind," *Anguttara Nikāya*, IV, 363. The translations above were taken from R. E. A. Johansson's *The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism*, London and Malmo: Curzon Press Ltd., 1979, pp. 102, 111.

12. Mrs. Rhys-Davids, "The Will in Buddhism," op.cit., p. 253.

13. D. T. Suzuki, "The Koan", in Fromm et al. *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 48.

14. See fn. 3.

15. *Sati*, *samatha*, and *manasikara* are the Pali terms which suggest Buddha's sense of the importance of attention and attentiveness. In the *Samyutta Nikāya* (V, 411) the Buddha lists four conditions that contribute to the attainment of wisdom. One is listening to the doctrine, two others concern *sila*. The fourth is *yonimanasikaro* which Johansson renders "systematic attention" or "proper attention." Cf. Johansson, op.cit., pp. 189, 213.

16. It is precisely in relation to method that Thomas Merton, who must rank as a patriarch of Buddhist-Christian studies, said: "And I believe that by openness to Buddhism, to Hinduism and to these great Asian traditions, we stand a wonderful chance of learning more about the potentiality of our own traditions, because they have gone, from the natural point of view, so much deeper into this than we have." *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 343.

17. The Pali terms most closely connected with the analysis offered here are perhaps *anusaya*,



*asava*, *papañca* and *sankhara*, all of which may be construed as ways Buddha used to describe the psychomental consequences of *kamma*. *Asava* seems to point particularly well to the idea of a personal construction of the world, an unrealistic superstructure built on sense impression, wrong habits of thought and a mistaken view of one's own nature. *Papañca* seems to point quite clearly to what is here described as the prolific tendency of the mind for association and imaginary construction related to the self-project. Cf. Johansson, op.cit., pp. 106–110, 177–183, 190–196, 41–56.

18. Gurdjieff's name is invoked here only in an effort to maintain neutral terminology. The Buddha's own words may as well have been quoted for the *Sutta Nipata* contains almost the exact thought: "May the wise man break up every thought 'I am' which is the root of the associative chain," *Sutta Nipata*, 916, from Johansson, op.cit., p. 196.

19. That these terms for ultimate reality are different in their denotation as well as in their connotation, no one would deny. Yet the starkness of those differences is mitigated when we turn our attention to the existential responses they evoke. Patterns of human acting and willing are simply not as protean as the productions of the speculative intellect working, one might add, in a wide diversity of tongues. The fact that the moral codes of the great religions are vastly more similar to each other than are their philosophical elaborations supports this notion, and it suggests that man can do far more things with his tongue and mind than he can with his whole existential posture and moral fibre. The important general point here is this: Do the notions of Dhamma, Pratitya-Samutpada (or Suchness, or Emptiness) and God conform in the suggestion of a transpersonal and immanent Order, a Law or Will to which an aspirant must find his right relation in order to find release from the false self? The answer seems clearly affirmative. Whitehead has argued that human history knows four great conceptions of cosmic law, the two deriving from explicitly religious cosmologies being the notions of Immanent and Imposed Law. At this level of generality, it is clear that contemplative Buddhism from Theravada to Zen is pervaded by the notion of Immanent Law. The remaining question is whether contemplative Christianity is imbued with this same notion. Certainly for Christianity as a whole, as for the other monotheisms, the opposite notion of Imposed Law looms large. One might point to Calvinist Christianity as an extreme instance of this notion wherein God's will is arbitrarily imposed upon the physical order and grace is dispensed with the same arbitrariness. But contemplative Christianity, tinged as it always has been with Platonic *theoria*, takes its place on the opposite end of the Christian spectrum and affirms far more consistently the graceful immanence of the Divine Order.

20. No personalistic or anthropomorphic association should be attached to the use of the word "respond." It might be said that if a stone is thrown in the air, gravity will respond by letting it fall. So too, when mental equipoise is established, the Dhamma responds by curtailing the exacerbation of karmic conditioning. (Cf. fn. 21). For Zen this sense of Dharmic response is well expressed by Liang-chieh of Tung-shan, co-founder of the *Ts'ao-t'ung* sect of Ch'an Buddhism. R. Masunaga translates a verse of his *Hokyoizammai*, a work often chanted in Soto temples, in this way: "Supreme Mind/In words can never be expressed/and yet To all the trainees needs it does respond" (*The Soto Approach to Zen*, Tokyo, 1958, p. 190). No argument needs be made for Christianity in this case since it is characteristic of this tradition to speak in terms of God's response to our seekings.

21. A Theravada teacher of Burmese vipassana under whom we have studied would, in the course of a ten day intensive, repeatedly urge the practitioners to "just maintain choiceless evenness of the mind; let the Dhamma do the rest!"

22. Writers on the psychology of meditation (Ornstein and Naranjo, *On the Psychology of Meditation*, 1971; Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness*, 1972; Goleman, "The Buddha on Meditation and States of Consciousness," *J. Transpersonal Psychology*, 1972a; Brown, "A Model for the Levels of Concentrative Meditation," *International J. Clinical Hypnosis*, 1977; Sopa, "The Leading Principles of Buddhist Meditation" in Kiyota, *Mahayana Buddhist Meditation*, 1978; and Washburn, "Observations Relevant to a Unified Theory of Meditation," *J. Transpersonal Psychology*, 1978) agree that meditation is of two main kinds, concentrative and receptive. But insofar as this implies that these are mutually exclusive forms of schools of meditation, we object. To us they seem a necessary complementarity, especially when meditation is viewed not as a discrete 40–60 minute activity, but a discipline practiced *over a lifetime*. As Washburn puts it in the exceptionally fine article noted just above: "... they are related not merely as opposites, but as opposing [we would say complementary] species of a *single genus*, [italics mine] namely, sustained attention, i.e. continuous uncaptulating alertness. Sustained attention can in fact serve as the defining characteristic of meditation *per se*" (p. 59).

23. The Eightfold Path has two steps that are directly concerned with what I am calling inten-

tion. *Samma-vayama*, the sixth step, is often translated "right effort," but unlike *virya* which seems to suggest energetic effort in general, *vayama* connotes deliberate decision, planning and an effort to carry out that plan. It is interesting that *samma-vayama* heads the tripartite *samadhi* subgroup of the Eightfold Path, as if to underscore the obvious: that mindfulness and concentration training can only progress in a mental environment pervaded by a certain kind of decision or goal orientation. The closest approximation of what I am calling intention, however, is the second step of the Path, *samma-sankappa*, usually translated in fact as "right intention." As one of the two parts of the *panna* subgroup, it suggests a mental attitude that affects the conduct of the entire Path. The following description of *samma-sankappa* from the Majjhima Nikaya, III, 73, reflects well the sense of intention we are trying to suggest, that is, a pervasive mental context which affects every aspect of the attentional training: "Whatever reasoning, thought, intention, focussed and distributed attention, concentration of the mind, speech activity is to be found in somebody who has a noble and unflattered mind and who follows and cultivates the noble method—this is right intention."

24. Is even arahantship attainable? The scriptures certainly indicate that it is, or at least used to be. In connection with this, Winston King has noted that, "reading the scriptures reveals a contrast between Buddha's day and our own: *then* there were hundreds, perhaps thousands of monks who achieved arhantship; now there are few *if any* [italics mine] arahants" (*Theravada Meditation*, Penn State University Press: 1980, p. 118). I once asked Nyanaponika Thera if in his sixty years as a Theravadin contemplative he had ever heard of anyone claiming to be or declared (by whom??) to be an arahant. He said he was not aware of any such cases. Whether these contemporary indications cast doubt on the arahantship attainments of the past or whether they indicate modern degeneration, I think we can say at least that arahantship and Buddhahood are extremely rare attainments. If follows that what we have in the vast majority of Buddhist lives are not final "attainments" but closer and fuller approximations of the final goal and increasing degrees of ripeness on a scale of virtually infinite degrees.

25. If we take seriously the Buddhist teaching; unanimous in all its fundamental forms, of the illusory character of the human claim to selfhood, we understand at once that the Buddhist's goal, whatever we name it, cannot be a passive object awaiting our will's penetration of it. Because Buddha-nature *is*, as Dōgen reminds us, who and what we *are*, Buddha-nature is the source of our aspiration toward it as well as our capacity for faith in it. It is the subject of our practice as well as its ostensible object. Dōgen's "thought of Enlightenment," says Francis Cook, is ultimately "the determination of the Buddha to realize himself through us (1977:35)." Amid Dōgen's exhortations to practice we find reminders to surrender to Buddhist activity. Dōgen's sense of practice may be likened more closely to the reception of an omnipresent Gift than to the attainment of a distant goal. Indeed, this seems to be a central meaning of his doctrine of the identity of practice and enlightenment. The dynamism of Buddha-nature is all-pervading and the fulfillment of the bodhisattva vow depends not so much on our attaining to it, but on our *not obstructing* its continuous salvific activity: "The principle of realization functions unceasingly. Because of this when even just one person at one time sits in *zazen* he is performing the eternal and ceaseless work of guiding beings to Enlightenment" (*Bendowa*, in Waddell and Abe, May, 1971:136–137). The practitioner's chief task seems to be to enter the stream of Buddha-naturing in the way a tributary regains its confluence with a larger river thereby becoming an expression of its larger will. Is this not Dōgen's meaning in the *Bendowa*? "The man in *zazen* conforms totally in himself to the genuine Buddha-Dharma, and assists universally in performing the work of the Buddhas, circulating the inexhaustible, unceasing, incomprehensible, and immeasurable Buddha-Dharma inside and outside throughout the universe . . ." (Waddell and Abe, May, 1971:134–135). The concept of special grace dispensed intermittently by a Supreme Being is, of course, totally foreign to Zen, but if grace goes largely unproclaimed in Zen, it is because the fish does not think to comment upon the ocean. Far closer to the truth than the notion that grace is absent is that it is always and everywhere present. One of Zen laments is that we remain blind to the graceful immanence of the Buddha-nature, failing to draw on its power. (The Cook reference above is from *How to Raise an Ox*, the Waddell and Abe references from *Eastern Buddhist*).

26. Bhikshu Sangharakshita, *Survey of Buddhism* (Westminster, Maryland: Shambhala, Random House, 1980; previously published by the Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, 1957), p. 132. Cf. Marco Pallis' "Is there Room for Grace in Buddhism?" in *Sword of Gnosis* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974, pp. 274–295).

27. Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1938), pp. 205–206.

28. A paradox richly contemplated by M. Heidegger in his "Conversations on a Country Path" ("Gelassenheit") in *Discourse on Thinking*. See the set of Heidegger quotations on the title page of this paper.

29. Roberto Assagioli, *The Act of Will* (New York: Penguin, 1976).

30. The language of this paragraph, especially the nuanced notions of "desire" and "will" owes a debt to the concluding pages of a remarkable book by Sebastian Moore, *The Crucified Jesus Is No Stranger* (New York: Seabury, 1977). I take full responsibility, however, for using this language to underscore the Buddhist-Christian conformity I have been arguing in this paper. Moore's statements were made in an exclusively Christian context and, most surprisingly, were used to argue the final non-comparability of Buddhism and Christianity on these matters.

31. Such intention of course includes the perfection of conduct which, though it has been barely mentioned in this paper is certainly to be understood as the absolutely necessary foundation for psychological transformation as understood in religious traditions.