OPENING A DIALOGICAL SPACE BETWEEN BUDDHISM AND ECONOMICS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSIGHT AND ACTION

Submitted by
David C. Bubna-Litic

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate of Philosophy

2007

University of Western Sydney

Australia

DEDICATION

This journey would not have begun without my formative year in India, where generous people inspired my passion for meditation and inquiry into other ways of being. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Nisagardatta Maharaj, Swami Jananda of Nityananda Ashram, Kanhangad, Swami Ramdas and Mataji Krishnabhai of Ananda Ashram, Kanhangad, who first embodied for me the fruits of insight. I would also like to thank Robert Aitken for introducing me to Zen, John Tarrant, whose passion and love of Zen and poetry opened me to another world, Ross Bolleter for his guidance and holding steady when it was important, and the many other teachers who have helped to open my senses to more fully inhabit this world.

I also cannot ignore the huge influence and mentoring given to me by the late Professor William P. Birkett, whose breadth and depth of knowledge and confidence in me gave me the guts to take a road less travelled.

I wish to thank my parents and family, who have been a never-ending source of love and generosity. I am thus incredibly grateful to my dear sons Matthew, Anton and Akira, who have waited patiently on shore for my return, and especially to soul mate Subhana, who has taught me what it means to truly appreciate another person.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis has been a voyage across several disciplines and into relatively uncharted waters. The long journey could not have been possible without a hardened and sturdy crew. My supervisor, John Cameron, played a pivotal role and has been with me from the beginning. It has been a great pleasure working with John on this thesis. He has given himself tirelessly through illness and personal difficulty, he has maintained confidence in me when my own had waned, and his ability to remain positive, providing thoughtful feedback, continuing to encourage me through my travails and keeping me engaged in my thinking with humility, openness and compassion will always be a source of inspiration. My co-supervisor, Brenda Dobia, provided useful comments, thoughts and encouragement when John was on leave. I would also like to acknowledge Winton Higgins, who read the thesis and added his valuable comments, pointing out where my tendency to wordiness and to mangle the English language required attention. I am also greatly indebted to Professor Anita Leal-Idrogo, of San Francisco State University, for her comments, guidance and help with the transcription. I would also like to thank Susan Murphy, whose sharp intelligence and elegant words helped form some of these ideas. I also feel a debt to the intellectual temerity that characterised the School of Social Ecology at the University of Western Sydney, particularly the leadership of Professor Stuart Hill, without which I would never have been brave enough to tackle such a topic.

I am also grateful to Professor Paul Bate, Professor Stewart Clegg, Tom Cole, Gillian Coote, Distinguished Professor Dexter Dunphy, Maggie Glueck, Jill Jameson, Joanna Macy, Terrence McBride and Liz Turnbull, who have helped me in ways of which they might not have been aware.

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature of Candidate

……

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES i

LIST OF FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS ii

ABSTRACT iii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Personal context 4

1.3 Outline of thesis 8

1.4 An interdisciplinary approach 11

1.5 Significance of the research 12

CHAPTER 2: ENCOUNTERING BUDDHISM 16

2.1 The value of a dialogical encounter 16

2.2 Orient-ations to Buddhism 20

2.3 Entering a dialogical space 24

2.4 Basic Buddhist conceptions 28

2.5 Western perspectives on the dharma 48

CHAPTER 3: ENCOUNTERING BUDDHISM IN A POSTMODERN CONTEXT 49

3.1 Introduction 49

3.2 Buddhism and romantic tensions in modernity 64

3.3 Buddhism as a postmodern sensibility 70

3.4 Liberating experiences: ‘real’-ising not-self 72

3.5 The changing view of self in cognitive science 85

3.6 The dialogical space 87

CHAPTER 4: ENCOUNTERING ECONOMICS 96
4.1 Introduction 96
4.2 Engaging with mainstream economics 97
4.3 Fault lines in the culture of modernity 115
4.4 Buddhist economics 126
4.5 Mapping the dialogical space 153

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY 158
5.1 Introduction 158
5.2 The research approach 160
5.3 The research design 164

CHAPTER 6: THE EXPERIENCE OF INSIGHT 175
6.1 Writing the interviews 175
6.2 A new sense of self 179
6.3 Spontaneous experiences and insight 185
6.4 The processes of ordinary everyday mind 186
6.5 The process of gaining insight: sudden or gradual 192
6.6 Validation and confirmation of insight experiences 196

CHAPTER 7: THE TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS OF INSIGHT 205
7.1 Introduction 205
7.2 General changes resulting from insight 205
7.3 Effect on relationships with others 210
7.4 Relationship towards nature 215
7.5 Self-image or sense of self 220
7.6 Rebirth and past lives 223
7.7 Insight and the unconscious 228

CHAPTER 8: INSIGHT EXPERIENCE AND ACTION IN THE WORLD 234
8.1 Introduction 234
8.2 How experience of insight affects action in the world 235
8.3 The actualisation of insight 249

CHAPTER 9: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION 268
9.1 Introduction 268
9.2 Contemporary Buddhist insight 272
9.3 Insight and transformation 292
9.4 From insight to action 304
9.5 Validity of interview accounts 323
9.6 Towards a fusion of horizons 328

REFERENCES 358

APPENDIX 1 384

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The Eightfold Noble path 41

Table 2: Research themes 166

Table 3: Type of insight experience 179

Table 4: Descriptions of ordinary mind 187

Table 5: Nature of insight validation 197

Table 6: Examples of the heart theme 211

Table 7: Selected examples of the theme of interconnectedness 253

LIST OF FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: 2

Figure 2: 283

ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary study explores the dialogical space between Buddhism and economics grounded upon an empirical examination of the lived experience of western Buddhist teachers. The goal of Buddhist practice is enlightenment, a powerfully liberating and transformative understanding in which the ordinary sense of self is extinguished. There is a variety of claims made by Buddhist traditions regarding enlightenment, and little agreement as to its exact nature; most Buddhist traditions, however, regard the self as having no essential basis. This view contrasts sharply with those of contemporary economic thought. Modern economic thinking has generally seen Buddhism as one of many religions, and has resisted taking its claims seriously. At the heart of this divide lies a hermeneutic barrier that is not simply between East and West, but has its roots in modernity, which maintains a separation of humans from nature, a distinction between knowledge and power, and a distrust of human subjective experience.

By engaging in a dialogical approach, this study attempts to bridge this divide. It builds on experiential corroboration of Buddhist conceptions of self, based on semi-structured interviews of 34 western Buddhist teachers, to critically examine their experiences of insight into the nature of self, its impact on their relationships with others and nature, and its impact on their decisions about everyday economic activities. The purpose is twofold: to examine the nature of realisation experientially and to explore its transformative potential with a view to unfolding implications for economic action.

The findings clarify many traditional Buddhist understandings, challenge and validate previous interpretations, and suggest an embodied rather than transcendent view of consciousness and spirituality. The implications for economic thought include a new conception of the economic individual (*homo oeconomicus*), recognising the old conception as based on a misplaced idea of concreteness of self; a new epistemology which incorporates a phenomenological appreciation of life; and a new perspective of agency as the mindful embodiment of a seamless interconnection between consciousness and the social and natural world.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge – and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves – how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves? 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also';[1] *our* treasure is where the beehives of our knowledge are. We are constantly making for them, being winged creatures and honey-gatherers of the spirit; there is one thing alone we really care about from the heart – 'bringing something home.' Whatever else there is in life, so-called 'experiences' – which of us has sufficient earnestness for them? Or sufficient time? Present experience has, I am afraid, always found us 'absent-minded'; we cannot give our hearts to it – not even our ears! ... Rather, as one divinely preoccupied and immersed in himself into whose ear the bell has just boomed with all its strength the twelve beats of noon suddenly starts up and asks himself: 'what really was that which just struck?' so we sometimes rub our ears *afterward* and ask, utterly surprised and disconcerted, 'what really was that which we have just experienced? and moreover: 'who *are* we really?' and, afterward as aforesaid, count the twelve trembling bell-strokes of our experience, our life, our *being* – and alas! miscount them. – So we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves, we *have* to misunderstand ourselves, for us the law 'Each is furthest from himself' applies to all eternity — we are not 'men of knowledge' with respect to ourselves.
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche (1887/1989: 15)

1.1 Introduction

In addressing 'men of knowledge' in the above passage, Nietzsche (1887) alludes to the modern mind, which, schooled from childhood, is disposed to seek its treasure in knowledge.[2] Nietzsche's candid account suggests that this way of being comes with a price: 'We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge'. The contemporary human mind is preoccupied, anxious about 'bringing something home'; we are collectively blind to how this shapes us, so that we become strangers to our own experience. Like many people, Nietzsche senses this, but sees no alternative and does not even suspect that by paying close attention to 'whose ear the bell has just boomed' leads to a completely different and valuable sort of knowledge about who we really are. In

---

[1] Mathew 6.21.

[2] The terms 'modernism' and 'modernity' are used loosely in the literature. The term modernity is used in this text to distinguish between the historical, cultural, economic and political conditions of the time, and modernism is used to refer to the philosophical or cultural representations of (or responses to) those historical conditions (see Cahoone, 1996).

noticing his own lack of ability to be present to the moment, Nietzsche recognises a connection between his lack of attention to experience, and knowledge about himself. But, having no sense its possibility, sadly he gives up, concluding that 'for us the law "Each is furthest from himself" applies to all eternity' – a conclusion that has largely remained unchallenged, and stems from a central assumption in western thought, that separates self from experience. This state of estrangement or alienation has become an existential fact in western discourse and, for us, as Nietzsche observed, 'Present experience has, I am afraid, always found us "absent-minded".'

When people begin a meditation practice, they become acutely aware of their lack of ability to maintain attention to the present moment. They find their minds, like Nietzsche's, 'count the twelve trembling bell-strokes of our experience, our life, our being – and alas! miscount them'. This state is not peculiar to the West, and is a common theme throughout Buddhist literature. In the famous Oxherding pictures from Sung dynasty China (1126-1279 CE), the first picture in the series (Figure 1) depicts a man looking for his ox: there is something missing – 'he is unknown to himself'.[3]

Figure 1:
A man looking for his ox.[4]

The notion that something is missing is a powerful theme in the many critiques of neoclassical economics. The present thesis also takes up this theme and explores what

[3] The ox symbolises one's true nature.
[4] From *The Oxherding Illustrations*, by Tomikichiro Tokuriki (1957).

Buddhism offers to providing insight on this theme. In his exploration of 'modern identity', Charles Taylor (1989: 3) suggests that there is a tendency in moral philosophy to 'focus on what it is right to do rather than what it is *good to be*, defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life'. Understanding what it is *good to be* is inextricably connected to fundamental questions about what it means to be human, and the purpose of economics. Buddhism points out how our learned inability to simply *be*, and our incapacity for deep engagement with present experience, obscures knowledge of who we are. The 'twelve trembling bell-strokes' that call Nietzsche from his preoccupations is, for the 14th-century Japanese Rinzai teacher Bassui Zenji, *just* – 'booming bell'. When he asked the famous *koan* question 'Who is [the Master of] hearing that sound?', Bassui was pointing to a way of knowing ourselves that is clearly alien to modern identity.[5] When we are *fully* present to a sound, as Bassui (cited in Kapleau 1967: 163-164) explains:

> At last every vestige of self-awareness will disappear and you will feel like a cloudless sky. Within yourself you will find no 'I', nor will you discover anyone who hears. This Mind is like the void, yet it hasn't a single spot that can be called empty. This state is often mistaken for Self-realisation. But continue to ask yourself even more intensely, 'Now who is it that hears?' If you bore and bore into this question, oblivious to anything else, even this feeling of voidness will vanish and you won't be aware of anything – total darkness will prevail. [Do not stop here, but] keep asking with all your strength, 'What is it that hears?' Only when you have completely exhausted the questioning will the question burst; now you will feel like a person that has come back from the dead. This is true realisation.

The world of 'true realisation' forms the backdrop for this inquiry. Makransky (2000b: 115) argues that the 'trans-historical Buddha' is the 'wisdom of enlightenment embodied in the practice experience of accomplished members of the Sangha'.[6] Buddhism opens up the modern identity and answers the question 'what is it good to be?', offering a method to find out about our own being. The true realisation, which arises in Bassui's instructions on Zen practice, reveals itself in the sound of the bell:

---

[5] A koan is a type of life question, developed by the Zen traditions of Buddhism, which, like any big questions in life, does not offer up an easy answer. In the case of the Zen koan it takes the form of a question that defies understanding and our normal modes of thinking. It is a question to hold, one which defeats your thinking, creating a pressure cooker situation which must be endured until there is an experience of insight.

[6] *Sangha* usually refers to the monastic community; however, it also has a wider meaning which encompasses the broader community of practitioners.

eventually the ox makes its presence known. It seems that this experience is as true for Zen practitioners today (Bolleter, 1991) as it was for the Buddha over two thousand years ago. Despite the apparent commensurability, however, we should not accept such a comparison uncritically, as for our purposes this foundation of experience needs to be taken up and investigated carefully.

1.2 Personal context

My engagement with the question of the nature of realisation began in the 1970s when, like many of my contemporaries, I became fascinated with eastern thought, and travelled to India to learn more about meditation. My experiences in India were mixed, and after a year of intensive practice I returned to Australia, to study psychology. I continued to meditate, however, developing an interest in Zen Buddhism. In particular, I was intrigued by the recorded dialogues between Zen masters, which, like most people, I found difficult to comprehend. Still, I was convinced that Zen koan dialogues were authentic exchanges, although making sense of them required something beyond my western understanding.[7] Intrigued, I found myself called to the challenge to comprehend passages like the following:

> Yun Men imparted some words saying, 'Everyone has their own light; when you look at it, you don't see it, and it's dark and dim. What is everybody's light?'
>
> He himself answered on their behalf, 'The kitchen pantry, and the main gate.' He also said, 'A good thing isn't as good as nothing'. (Pi-yen-lu; Cleary & Cleary, 1997: 554-558)

After a few years of reading and practising alone, I had determined to get to the bottom of such conundrums. In 1985, I met an American Zen teacher, Robert Aitken, who impressed me with his confidence on such matters. I decided to establish a practice with

---

[7] Following Baumann and Prebish (2002: 5): 'the notion of the West denotes non-Asian industrialized nation states where Buddhist teachings, practices, people and ideas have become established'. Baumann and Prebish (2002) include Australia, Brazil, Canada, Europe, Israel, South Africa and New Zealand. There is an argument that geographic boundaries are not as significant as the culture of modernity, which has created differences between strata of both Asian and non-Asian communities. For example, educated elites in Asia may have more in common with western Buddhists than non-educated Asians in the United States.

his group in Sydney, the Sydney Zen Centre. During this time, I had worked as a management consultant and was eventually offered an academic appointment with an Australian management school. After some years, I gradually came to understand some basic koans. As this new clarity arose, I realised that Buddhist practices have something to offer that was of great significance, and beyond my own self-cultivation – something that could potentially benefit the broader community. As a critical scholar, however, I felt suspicious about the traditional institutions of Buddhism, and that an open and reflexive dialogue with western thinking about the practice was essential. In the mid-1990s, I became aware of the misconduct of a prominent Zen Buddhist teacher. These revelations did not completely surprise me, nor did they cause me to lose confidence in the practice, but they did challenge my own lack of critical reflection on Buddhism and its traditions. In the same year, Brian Victoria (1997) published *Zen at War*, a critique of the complicity of traditionally acknowledged Zen teachers in the ultra-nationalist fervour which arose in pre-war Japan, lending their support to the Japanese engagement in the Second World War. These actions confronted the generally held view in Buddhism of enlightened action, which D.T. Suzuki (1970: 16) asserted were spontaneous and natural ethics, exemplified by his reference to the injunctions of the poem by the 17th-century Zen master Bunan:

> While alive
> Be a dead man,
> Thoroughly dead;
> And act as you will,
> And all is good.

According to Suzuki (1970), the poem reflects the Zen way of *wu wei*, which suggests that when the mind is free from attachments, like that of a dead man, one naturally transcends evil.[8] Why, then, was the Zen hierarchy so clearly complicit in ultra-nationalist aggression? The answer is not clear and, as David Loy (2004: 73) surmises, Victoria's account challenges western Buddhist practitioners to be more 'mature in our appropriation of the tradition, especially our understanding what it means to be

[8] *Wu wei* is a complex term which has different meanings to Daoists, Confucians and Buddhists, as well as its western interpretations. Varela (1999: 30) engages in a discussion of this concept and suggests it is a way of acting which is incompatible with 'mere habit or obedience to patterns or rules'. The mastery of *wu wei* is often said to be 'becoming one with the activity'.

enlightened'. It was obvious that a deeper knowledge and understanding of these meditation practices was needed. My suspicions about Buddhist traditionalism were reinforced as I continued to practise with a group that subscribed to what was really a western variant of the Zen tradition, one which continued to focus on the koan curriculum as inherited from Japan, but in a way that incorporated its implicit structures of power and authority, and limited critical reflection.

The second source of motivation to investigate further came from an increasing contrast between the worldview of management studies, which I taught, and the worldview which I was experiencing through the practice, as captured by the poetry of Basho (1644-1694) poetry. For example:

> When I look carefully
> Nazuna is blooming
> Beneath the hedge!
>
> (Aitken, 1979: 74)

The nazuna (shepherd's purse) is just a common Japanese flower, but the mindful attention which Basho brings to his encounter with it points to a dimension largely missing from modern corporate culture in Australia (and elsewhere). The poem also speaks to the nazuna's mystery, as even a common flower that grows almost invisibly beneath the hedge expresses a fathomless beauty. D.T. Suzuki (1970: 3) adds that 'even in a blade of wild grass there is something really transcending all venal, base human feelings, which lifts one to a realm equal in splendour to that of the Pure Land [or paradise]'. This dimension, however, seemed far from anything that I had encountered teaching management studies. Basho's awareness of the nazuna blooming also reflects a different way of being, something alien and paradigmatically remote from anything that I had encountered in my academic training in the social and physical sciences. Something that, like the nazuna, we do not pay enough attention to.

I began to realise that this lack was reflective of a predominantly modern sensibility. My education had been entirely secular, and, until I encountered meditation, my knowledge of religion (outside of dusty school religious education classes) was virtually non-existent. I had grown up in an atheistic family, in a secular culture in which 'religion' and its questions were shunned from almost every arena. My academic

education never engaged in a dialogical discussion on questions of religion, and I doubt whether Buddhism had ever been mentioned.

At the same time, I was becoming more confident that modern life was lacking in this direction. My attempts to integrate these two culturally distinct worldviews were at first disorientating, but I began to realise that my struggle to make sense of these divergent perspectives reflected more than a personal issue; the observation that *something is missing* is a perennial theme in the critiques of neoclassical economics and it became clear that broader and much more fundamental questions regarding this division in western society were at stake. Given the growing significance of Buddhism in the West – visible in the increasing number of Buddhist books being published and the interest in the mainstream press – it points to a collective issue.[9]

A decade ago, I decided to address these questions through my research. Recognising that my early attempts (Bubna-Litic, 1995a, 1998, 1999, 2000) were limited, I chose to revisit some core unresolved questions in this research. Given that a strong case can be made that there is no supernatural causation in the Buddha's awakening, I decided to re-explore that territory and review what it was that he discovered. This forms the foundation of this research and defines the three thematic research questions:

1. What is the nature of the insight gained through the lived experience of Buddhist practice?
2. What changes might a practitioner undergo as a result of gaining insight?
3. How does insight gained through the lived experience of Buddhist practice influence economic action?

I have chosen an empirical study to explore the experiences of a number of contemporary Buddhist teachers. My hypothesis is that the Buddha's claims are a naturally founded human experience which not only lies at the heart of Buddhist traditions but is present elsewhere. Therefore, it is possible to significantly uncover and recover the original experiences of Buddhism in the present day. These original

[9] As observed by the cover story 'America's fascination with Buddhism' in *Time* magazine, 13 October 1997.

experiences point to a new way of being in the world, one in which the self in economic theory is extinguished. I have extended the scope of this research to economic issues, because the conceptualisation of the individual, as Davis (2003) points out, is crucial to its theorising. Moreover, if the distinctive Buddhist view of self can be experienced, what is this experience like? And what does it tell us about the nature of the individual in economic thinking? Does a different experience of self impact on how people act in the world? I hypothesise that action and experience interact, and that it is likely that experiences of Buddhist insight will affect these teachers' actions in the world. I am particularly interested in how Buddhist insight experiences affect economic actions, taking a wide view of economic action, and what implications this Buddhist mode of experience might have on how foundational economic questions might be framed.

1.3 Outline of thesis

Over the past three decades, a new phase of Buddhist development has begun in the West (Prebish, 1999). Its growing influence can be seen in the increasing number of Buddhist books being published and increased interest in the mainstream press. This process, although strongly anchored in Asian traditions, has developed its own unique and innovative variations. The theme which is arising has, according to Rick Fields (1992: 2), 'an emphasis on householder instead of monk, community instead of monastery, and a practice that integrates and makes use of all aspects of life, for all people, women as well as men'. This shift in emphasis reflects the core concerns of the vastly different cultural context of western societies, and suggests a distinctively new approach to Buddhism.

The encounter between Buddhism and western culture is a two-way process, and it is important to recognise that, out of this highly complex interaction, changes are likely to occur in both. Batchelor (1994: 275) argues that 'not only is the current practice of Buddhism in the West transitional, it is heretical'. The reasons for its transitional nature are, according to Batchelor (1994: 275), that it is 'yet to realize a distinctive European or Western identity', and it is heretical because it implies a rejection of the existing worldview and a commitment to something 'other' than the Judeo-Christian-Hellenic tradition. The way things oriental are depicted as the 'other' been strongly criticised by Edward Said (1978) in his influential book *Orientalism*, where he argues that the West has created the East in its own projected mirror image. Clarke (1997) finds this view to

be an extreme position based on selective instances, and it appears that the issues and problems raised by Said (1978) concerning methodology relate to a wider problem, of which orientalism may be one particular variant.

Chapter 2 begins by seeking to explore this two-way process through dialogue. A dialogical encounter between Buddhism and economics involves, as Robert Hattam (2004: v) suggests, 'moments of reciprocal speaking and listening, respectful and rigorous interrogation, and thoughtful introspection and modification of views'. Dialogue is an exercise in hermeneutical suspicion. This chapter begins by letting Buddhism 'speak' first, setting out fundamental ground which is common to most Buddhist traditions. A dialogue is maintained throughout, highlighting issues and points of contention.

Chapter 3 explores the western engagement with Buddhism that has occurred both at the academic level and in terms of practice. I begin this chapter by asking the question: Is Buddhism simply a set of cultural practices and beliefs which has no enduring substance or essence? At the heart of this question is whether there is one *dharma* (truth) or many. This crosses debates which have recently caused a major upheaval in western philosophy, as it explores the question of essentialism and issues of epistemological authority. It is argued that the fundamentally deep nature of Buddhist experience, being at the level of ontology, makes it clear that Buddhist thinking reflects more than a passing relation and is in fact an important position in this debate. The exploration of this debate forms the general thrust of the thesis, specifically because it forms the dialogical space where Buddhism and economics can meet. Moreover, this space provides a generative foundation which goes beyond simple normative differences, and takes the research into relatively neglected territory of ontology in mainstream economic thinking. It is also argued that Buddhist thinking can be triangulated with other western research agendas which implicitly and explicitly problematise economic assumptions about the nature of the individual, particularly cognitive science and postmodern theories on the self.

Chapter 4 argues that mainstream economics has developed in a culture of modernity, and manifests itself as three interrelated dimensions of mainstream economic theorising which are important to this dialogue. These are the distinctive purpose of material progress, the methodology of positivism, and individualism. Buddhism is a compelling

touchstone for reflection on these aspects and a potent source of critical reflection on economic thinking. The second part of chapter 4 critically examines the literature on Buddhist economics, identifying some key deficiencies.

Chapter 5 develops an explorative research strategy to address the limitations of predominantly normative approaches to Buddhist economics. The strategy chosen uses as its foundation contemporary understandings of the core experiences of Buddhism. The method is based on qualitative examination of the experiences of a sample of advanced Buddhist practitioners (teachers), and seeks to find out if the consensus of their experience supports any aspects of Buddhist doctrine. This step of examining experiential material is aimed at explicating the experience of insight, and how it is related to action, based on in-depth interviews of Buddhist teachers. The research focuses on the three thematic research questions.

The results are set out in chapters 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 6 reviews the findings on the nature of insight, recognising that these experiential accounts present a unique and relatively untapped source of material for understanding Buddhism. The findings of this study bring to light new material which has important implications for how Buddhism is understood. Chapter 7 examines the transformative consequences of the Buddhist teachers' insight and how their learning and experiences have changed their experience of life. Chapter 8 reviews the finding regarding how insight influences action, and examines how the Buddhist teachers engaged with the modern world.

Chapter 9 examines what the western Buddhist teachers had to say about their insight experiences and their relationship to action, bringing it into the conversation established in chapters 2, 3 and 4. This dialogical encounter explores the implications of their learning for both Buddhism and economic thinking. The key finding, a consensual understanding that the self assumed in modern economic thinking is an illusory construct, supports traditional Buddhist views common to all traditions. It is argued that these experiential accounts, however, can be interpreted by drawing on the work of Gregory Bateson (1972) on higher-order learning. This makes possible a new interpretation of Buddhism, one which regards it as simply an existential insight into the natural cognitive construction of consciousness. Such an account provides fertile common ground upon which new theorising can take place. In economics, establishing an empirical basis is critical for forming a dialogical space capable of generating new

knowledge, as it meets economics' concerns with normative assertions halfway. This finding allows for a merged horizon of economics and Buddhist thinking, one which emphasises an appreciative relationship with the world, where action is informed by a mindful engagement with one's habitus ('lived in'). This sense of habitus is one which Bourdieu (1997) uses for deep-seated generative and organising principles, practices or representations. It sets out an ontology of 'interbeing' and an ethics based on natural compassion rather than the competitive individualism of modern economic thinking.

1.4 An interdisciplinary approach

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) defines interdisciplinary as 'An area of study which comprises elements of two or more branches of learning'. An interdisciplinary approach can also be understood as a synthesis of knowledge that comes about by the bringing together of diverse ideas to create something new which may not perfectly 'fit' with any individual discipline. This research is interdisciplinary in a number of ways. Firstly, I have probed the lived experience of Buddhist practitioners and crossed disciplinary boundaries in order to understand this aspect of Buddhism. Secondly, I have pursued methodological and theoretical diversity, as several disciplines shed light on phenomena on which Buddhism focuses. Thirdly, I seek to overcome the dismissive view of Buddhism in economic thought, and to extrapolate its contribution to economic action. In breaking down these boundaries, I allow ideas and knowledge that are familiar to one area to flow on to arenas in which they are virtually unknown. In this way I hope to forge a nexus between study and practice, one whose distinctive procedures, frameworks and cultural understandings of Buddhism may be applied to work, organisation and economic activity.

Beggs (1997: 49) argues that 'one of the most significant characteristics of genuinely interdisciplinary theory and research is that they are "middle range", that they will not strive to become metadisciplinary syntheses but remain restricted in scope by the uniqueness of phenomena'. This research aims to restrict its scope specifically to investigating the nature and effects of Buddhist insights and experiences and their implications for economic action. However, insight explicitly relates to a notion of self which poses a wide range of interdisciplinary questions. This naturally creates obstacles to the development of a relatively coherent outcome, because these wider questions engage prematurely with a potential broader metadisciplinary project. While this leaves

a number of loose ends, there is good reason to believe that a sustainable and substantive development can arise from this line of inquiry. Beggs (1997: 49) suggests that a second characteristic of genuine interdisciplinarity arises from the ability of disciplinary categories to 'communicate by reciprocally interpreting one another'. This has been facilitated by drawing on a dialogical approach to bring two historically opposite disciplines into relationship. Finally, according to Beggs (1997: 49), a third characteristic is that 'new value and epistemological questions will be raised'. Buddhist practice is a form of inquiry into the nature of self. The focus on Buddhist insight raises new questions about the nature of modern learning. Harking back to Nietzsche, if 'We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge', then how we might become known to ourselves raises fundamental epistemological questions – questions that economics has largely taken for granted, as solved, by its privileging of methodological individualism.

1.5 Significance of the research

The impact of a candle in daylight cannot be compared with that of a candle in darkness. The Buddhist traditions in the West have experienced a period of growth in the number of people who identify themselves as Buddhists; in Australia, for example, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004), its growth has outstripped that of all other religions. But numbers offer a crude measure and incorporate extraneous variables, such as Asian immigration. If we wish to understand the full impact of Buddhism in the West, we should recognise that its influence reaches far beyond its adherents attending introductory courses, meditation classes, retreats and so on, into key discourses. Clearly, what at first appeared as my personal concerns represented the dilemmas of many others. Buddhism presents a distinctive view, and reflects a position that is gaining increasing currency in contemporary thinking.

This is not the first time there has been an interest in Buddhism outside of Asia. There has been a long history of interchange between the two geographic regions of Europe and Asia, and each encounter has left a legacy of creative understanding in a wide range of areas. J. J. Clarke (1997) explores the nature of these encounters between Asian and western thought in his book *Oriental Enlightenment*, outlining the historical development of oriental influences on the range of disciplines they have touched. From his survey we can see cycles of influence spanning the 18th and 19th centuries, as

interest in Asian thought has waxed and waned, drawing upon different Asian countries and cultural movements.

Over the past four decades, however, a renewed interest in oriental thought has led to a quantum leap in understanding, which, like a candle in darkness, Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991: 22) believe shows all the signs of a 'second renaissance in the cultural history of the West, with the potential to be equally important as the rediscovery of Greek thought in the European renaissance'.

Essential to this development is a cohort of westerners who have an *experiential understanding* of Buddhism, including awakening experiences and a mastery of its techniques and philosophy. These have been crucial missing elements of western understanding of Buddhism in the past, and might be compared with the writings of astronomers before the radio telescope, or a group of wine experts who know everything about wine except what it tastes like. The opening of this experiential frontier allows for a new critical grounding. Misunderstanding has plagued western views of Buddhism, and cultural gaps, particularly in language and education, have exacerbated this. Now there are an increasing number of western Buddhists who have been trained as teachers by their Asian traditions. Their emergence offers an unprecedented opportunity to explore Buddhism through first-hand experience without the problems of cultural translation.

The problem of cultural translation works both ways, and our understanding of Buddhism reflects a paradigmatic difference between it and western thinking, as B. Alan Wallace (2003: 5) has pointed out:

> To understand Buddhism on its own terms, it is imperative that we in the West recognize the cultural specificity of our own terms religion, philosophy, and science and not assume from the outset that Buddhism will somehow naturally conform to our linguistic categories and ideological assumptions.

The great body of western writing on Buddhism, according to Dale Wright (2000), can be divided into two distinct approaches: scientific and romantic. Underpinning this separation is a centuries-old epistemological debate that separates objective from subjective knowledge. This debate has had a recent revival in the social sciences, and has resulted in a resurgence of qualitative studies. One strand of this debate has opened up deeper questions about the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, and

problematises the possibility of objective knowledge, independent of the historical, cultural and even biological position of the knower. This thesis makes a contribution by showing how Buddhist experience engages with this debate and problematises these distinctions, both at the level of ontology and epistemology. It contributes by elaborating on the nature of Buddhist engagement with experience, to open a new and important dimension to this debate.

This problematisation gives rise to theoretical commitments which affect central tenets of economic theorising. The assumptions of *homo oeconomicus*, upon which much economic theory is founded, while not erased, need to be reconsidered taking into account the possibility of a processual view of self. This view understands the self, as we ordinarily experience it and as has been the focus of so much deliberation in economics, to be an epiphenomenon.[10] The experiences of these western Buddhist teachers suggest that it is possible to recognise this dual aspect of self, with transformative consequences. The most significant is a sense of freedom from the burdens of egoism, which is experienced as liberating and enriching. In other words, it serves as an alternative method of solving the economic problem which defines needs and wants as given. Through their insight and practice these teachers were able to significantly reconfigure their needs and wants, and this was exemplified in their lifestyle choices, as well as in their discussion of the effects of this insightful learning.

Recognising that the ecological imperative to drastically stem consumption requires a fundamental change that at present appears only remotely achievable, this learning offers new hope. As Carolan (2004) points out, too much emphasis has been placed on the supply side of sustainability, and ecological modernisation will not achieve sustainability unless consumption patterns are addressed. In this regard, a shift in our understanding of human satisfaction in life seems timely. Out of this dialogue between Buddhism and economics have come new insights which set up a *mestiza* view which is neither traditional nor western but one that problematises the assumptions of both.[11] It

---

[10] This should not be confused with epiphenomenalism, which denies that the conscious mind has any causal influence on the body.
[11] A *mestiza* is a woman of mixed racial ancestry, particularly European and native American.

highlights the importance of understanding the phenomenological basis of our being and how closely this understanding affects what we want and how we might get it – providing new answers to core economic questions.

CHAPTER 2

ENCOUNTERING BUDDHISM

The religion of the future should transcend a personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both natural and spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description ... If ever there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism.

Albert Einstein (1954)

2.1 The value of a dialogical encounter

In every culture lies a range of significant assumptions, inconspicuous by their ubiquity, which do not intrude into the regular discourse because they are taken-for-granted. Another culture, however, may regard such assumptions differently and thus give rise to *other* knowledge. A powerful way to expose acculturated assumptions for reflection is to engage in dialogue with another culture, particularly one that has different core assumptions. Such a dialogue draws participants out of their particular view of a problem to become open to what the *other* has to say. This time-honoured method for bringing about understanding can be traced to Plato.

Camic and Joas (2004: 5) argue that 'postdisciplinary' developments which transcend disciplinary boundaries, as well as subdisciplinary compartmentalisation, have led to intellectual fragmentation being a major challenge for social scientific disciplines. The merit of a dialogical approach lies primarily in its interdisciplinarity and its ability to provide a perspective outside the normal discourse of a particular discipline by contrasting it to that of another. Fundamental to a dialogue is the finding of mutual points of reference, common points of shared agreement which are essential for any 'transmission' of meaning or achievement.

Buddhism provides a compelling touchstone for such reflection, and a potent counterpoint to contemporary economic thinking, for a number of reasons. Firstly, Buddhism implicitly and explicitly raises different assumptions than those which

underpin the current economic discourse. For example, the Buddha's search for well-being and happiness began from the position of relative abundance: the Buddha was born into a wealthy family, yet he found that wealth did not deliver these boons. Many economists regard abundance as self-evidently leading to happiness, and define economics as the study of the optimal allocation of scarce resources. The fact that scarcity can only be defined as a relative term adds to the slippery foundations upon which the discipline is built. What contributed to the story of the Buddha as something of enduring interest is that people commonly have ambitions to attain a position of relative plenty as a solution to existential problems. Buddhism (and other religions) regard such a purpose in life as folly, but recognise its attractiveness to those who do not yet have deep self-knowledge. At his birth, it was prophesied that Buddha was destined to become a great king or a saint. The Buddha's father attempted to avert the later part of the prophecy by giving him an extraordinarily sheltered upbringing; he connived to deny him knowledge of the existential realities of the human condition, specifically sickness, old age and death. The plan backfired when the Buddha, suddenly and belatedly, was exposed or simply became aware of these aspects of life to which most people have long become inured. Since the Buddha had never been desensitised to such things, these normal aspects of life were especially salient, and this catalysed his spiritual quest.

Buddhist teachings recognise that desire and attachment, and the clinging to an egoic self, which is ultimately subject to death, are the causes of dissatisfaction. Buddhism thus regards hedonistic paths to well-being as illusory. Many contemporary economists, on the other hand, implicitly regard the task of economics to be the fulfilment of individual desire or wants, and these (as Buddhism recognises) are unlimited. Since wants are unlimited, and scarcity is a function of wants, many textbook definitions of economics focus on scarcity, treating it as given. Buddhism thus sets out an interesting counterpoint, as its practices seek to work with desire itself. It recognises that a great deal of desire, or wants, are entangled with notions of a separate selfhood or identity. By engaging these contrasting assumptions through dialogue we can reveal potentially new perspectives on the generative problems of both views. This thesis seeks to make a contribution in this area.

A second reason for dialogue is that, over the past few decades, a number of developments in areas such as scientific research appear to converge with some core Buddhist ideas. This convergence has two aspects. Firstly, there is growing support for research that explores Buddhist ideas, and a number of western advocates of Buddhist ideas are exploring potential concordances with their specific areas of interest, including psychology (Kalupahana, 1987), psychotherapy (Welwood, 2000), consciousness studies (Hayward & Varela, 1992), ecology (Batchelor & Brown, 1992; Badiner, 1990; Bastick, 1997), systems theory and complexity theory (Macy, 1991b; Capra, 2002), quantum physics (Capra, 1975) and management (Bubna-Litic, 2000).

The second aspect of the convergence takes the form of new developments in science and philosophy which problematise old assumptions in ways that evoke a Buddhist perspective. For example, the notion of the individual as bounded and autonomous where subject and object are clearly distinct has been questioned in recent theories of cognition (Metzinger, 2003; Blackmore, 2003; Varela et al., 1991). Pickering (1999) points out that these views suggest that selfhood is a process in which components reside both inside the individual *and* in the environment around the individual. A whole area of research has emerged under the rubric of 'transpersonal' which, according to Walsh and Vaughan (1993: 3), seeks to add further dimensions to the normal view of individual experience, including 'experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of human kind, life, psyche and cosmos'. Braud and Anderson (1998) define transpersonal studies as an integrative field which uses and develops the concepts, theories and methods of a variety of disciplines to explore the subject matter and practices which extend 'beyond or through the personally identified aspects of self'.

A further area of convergence can be found in contemporary strands of philosophy which also problematise modern conceptions of the self. For example, Derrida (1976) and others have argued against the idea that the narratives can ever be isolated to an autonomous self-sufficient individual source, since the meaning of any text is intersubjective. Gergen (1991, 1994) has highlighted the need to recognise that behaviour is embedded in the social context of the actor, and that the individual subject is socially constructed. There is a range of views contributing to a powerful sense of a

new relativistic sense of the social world which challenges many economic views of the relationship between the individual and the social world.

Claims of convergence, however, need to be regarded with a degree of caution. We need to be wary of selectively appropriating material from diverse Buddhist canonical sources to support a particular viewpoint. Despite this, approaches to contemporary Buddhism can become open to scientific collaboration. According to Payne (2002: 4-5), this can take the form of a dialogue which does not constitute:

> an attempt toward some grand resolution demonstrating the perfect harmony of Buddhism and cognitive science ... nor an appeal to the authority of ... science as legitimating Buddhism ... [Rather] the goal is twofold: to find a critical perspective from which to evaluate the contemporary relevance of traditional Buddhist teachings, and to provide Buddhist models of consciousness and its transformation critically different from those already under consideration in cognitive science.

Allan Wallace (2002: 15) extends this idea, suggesting that while:

> Buddhism has a rich contemplative tradition for the first-person exploration of states of consciousness, it never developed the sciences of the brain and behavior that we have in the modern West. So the integration of the first-person methodologies of Buddhism with the third-person methodologies of the cognitive sciences may lead to a richer understanding of consciousness than either Buddhist or Western civilization has discovered on its own.

Moreover, the development of Buddhist thinking as a first-person methodology founded on its practices of detailed inner observation may, ironically, constitute an innovation in the methodology of introspection. Varela et al. (1991: 33) argue that Buddhist practices present a 'disciplined perspective on human experience that can enlarge the domain of cognitive science to include direct experience'.

Finally, there is already a growing body of new research emerging out of the dialogue between Buddhism and western thinking in general. This suggests unexplored implications for economic and related social theory, in particular the relationship between individual and social levels of action. Buddhist notions of the self make a distinctive contribution to understanding the nature of the individual. This contribution adds to recent work by Davis (2003) which questions the dominant view of a bounded self in economics. This view, after all, only arises in subjective experience and assumes that consciousness is centred on the control and ownership of a body. Buddhism posits that meditative experience shows this perception to be problematic, something which

will prove to be a confusion of a particular subjective state and one of many contending perceptions of the individual's ontology.

This chapter continues with a discussion of how to approach such a dialogue between Buddhism and economics, and particularly how to interpret and situate Buddhism, by letting Buddhism 'speak' to western schools and seek to isolate (or even just problematise) what contemporary adherents of all the strands of economics theory unconsciously presuppose. In order to do this, it is necessary to introduce what Buddhism might contribute to this dialogue. The chapter will be followed by a comparative exploration of Buddhist ideas with new thinking in the social sciences. A further chapter will explore which key assumptions in economics theory are relevant to the dialogue.

2.2 Orient-ations to Buddhism

In a dialogical space, hermeneutic issues need special attention, as meaning is essential for progress towards understanding. Hermeneutic issues have plagued understandings of Buddhism from its very beginning. It needs to be pointed out that 'Buddhism' is a collective descriptor which was invented by western scholars to categorise a range of beliefs, rituals and practices found Asia that were derivative from the historical Buddha (Mishra, 2004). Since the very notion of Buddhism as a coherent entity or even as a body of knowledge is a western view, the question of what, if any, commonality can be found among the various Buddhist schools needs to be addressed.

Finding a starting point is somewhat problematic given the immensity and diversity of the Buddhist world, which might best be described as a geography of beliefs and understandings linked together under a single rubric, rather than anything monolithic. An enormous range of practices, rituals, textual material and understandings has developed, reflecting Buddhism's genesis through different cultures and places. Each Buddhist tradition reflects a complex and distinct history, and most have developed a variety of unique practices. Garfield (2006: 19) takes a wide view, suggesting that there is simply no such thing that can be called 'authentic' Buddhism, and suggests that:

> Some things count as Buddhist because of causal connections to other Buddhist practices, doctrines or institutions; some because of ordination or textual lineages; some because of resemblances to other Buddhist phenomena; some because they

> conduce to awakening; some because they are connected to refuge; some because they involve certain rituals.

Over time, there has been a considerable divergence regarding the interpretation of the original understanding of the person who became known as the Buddha, and controversy arose very soon after his death. This led, after some centuries, to the development of two generically distinct forms of Buddhism: Theravadin Buddhism (the Way of the Elders) and Mahāyāna Buddhism (the Great Vehicle).

In his *Short Introduction to Buddhism*, Damien Keown (1996a) used the old parable of the blind men and the elephant to highlight the difficulties in defining Buddhism. The parable describes a group of blind men encountering an elephant for the first time. Lacking the gift of sight, each has only a partial experience of the animal's immense form, mistaking the particular part they had touched as the whole animal: one describes the animal as post-like because he had felt the legs, another as like a water-pot because he had touched the head, and so on. Keown (1996a: 1) noted his own experience of a general tendency of students of Buddhism to fasten onto 'a striking, but unrepresentative, part of the whole animal'. This tendency extends to both the critics of Buddhism, who regard the inevitable inconsistencies as problematic, as well as a significant proportion of the literature written by practising Buddhists who see their particular sect, lineage or teacher as being specially privileged over others. Keown (1996a) extends his interpretation of the parable to highlight the projective possibilities for seeing what we expect or want to see, in something that is as vast and complex as Buddhism. This problem is cogently set out by Roof (1999): modern scholarship has enabled access to such teachings in unprecedented ways, creating in effect a supermarket of Buddhism where one can pick and choose.

Any comprehensive account would be encyclopaedic, and the notion that it is possible to encompass anything like Buddhism in some grand, all-embracing story has been powerfully challenged; thus we need to proceed with caution. Accordingly, Keown suggests that we need to be wary of generalisations about 'Buddhism', as any degree of rigour requires qualification, specifying which particular Buddhist school we are referring to. In light of this, many academic studies have directed their attention towards capturing a particular tradition at a specific time and place. While such approaches have the benefit of being able to avoid problems of selectivity and are able to include a range

of contextual and social elements, they are not free from issues of interpretation, which have become increasingly important in the academic study of Buddhism.

The recent shift in awareness of hermeneutics has brought religious studies closer to related disciplines such as anthropology, and a new generation of thinkers concurs with Geertz's (2005) suggestion that '[a]nthropology is not an experimental science in search of a law but an interpretive one in search of meaning'. In line with this thinking, King (1999: 1-2) argues that:

> religious studies as a discipline might better conceive of itself as a form of 'cultural studies', rather than as an offshoot of theology. In this way, the study of religion can bring an interest in cross-cultural engagement and the role of religion within culture to an emerging discipline that has generally been characterized by its secularist agenda and the Eurocentricity of its approach.

It is important to recognise at the outset that culture impacts on the study of Buddhism in powerful ways. Every manifestation of Buddhism is inevitably a hybrid of the original and how it is understood through different eyes separated historically and culturally.

Culture impacts on the study of Buddhism, defining the construction of the very categories that we regard it by. This view has been highlighted by Edward Said's (1978) work on orientalism, which contends that many western ideas about the East constitute, in a sense, projected mirror images of the West itself. Said (1978) portrays such projections as essentially instrumental and imperial processes, ones through which the West constructs the East as o*ther* to subjugate and control it. This tendentious view may however fall into the same projective trap. While there is no doubt that there is substance to Said's case, particularly in regard to bias in western (mis)understandings of Asia, several writers (e.g. Clarke 1997) are critical of Said's approach, regarding it as an extreme and selective reading. Perhaps a better hypothesis may be, as Bernard Faure (1993: 7) suggests, that orientalism represents a common problem in cross-cultural understanding and thus is just an 'exotic variant of the hermeneutical circle'. The hermeneutical circle is the back and forth or dialectical movement of interpretation, in which each iteration potentially adds to our understanding and needs to be recognised as a necessary and important process in understanding Buddhism.

While Buddhism is heterogeneous and dynamic, the conceptual frameworks by which it is understood are equally diverse. How westerners make sense of Buddhism cannot possibly escape their own frameworks of sense-making. Orientalism does not just misrepresent the Orient, but also articulates internal dislocations within western culture. For example, the very idea that Buddhism is in some ways complementary to Abrahamic religions seems to reflect more the evolution of western thinking on 'religion' than any commonality of the religions themselves. The multiplicity of Buddhism both allows and resists its simple categorisation as a religion, at the same time highlighting the ease with which it is open to selective categorisations.

Furthermore, some scholars are suggesting that the evolution of Buddhism in a variety of countries has created deep-seated differences; for example, Faure (1993) found that there are 'many historical, cultural and doctrinal differences' between Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen alone, despite their historical links. Moreover, Faure (1993) argues that the differences between Zen and Chan are not merely superficial, but fundamental, with discontinuities that are as obvious as the continuity. This diversity may render problematic the notion of studying 'Buddhism' as something that endures outside of subcultural manifestations.

A further complication arises with acknowledgement of the significant ways in which Asian thought has entered into western thinking and vice versa, which has been highlighted by Clarke (1997).

A good metaphor for this bewildering interplay characterises contemporary Buddhist scholarship as a maze of mirrors in which it is hard to distinguish between illusion and reality. This situation presents a considerable challenge as there are significant differences in the interpretation of Buddhist ideas. It will be argued that this heterogeneity is already being encountered by western Buddhists. There is no easy way around this obstacle, although for the purposes of this dialogue the experiences of western Buddhist teachers in re-encountering the basic claims of Buddhism provide an empirical foundation for discussion which comfortably sits with both the traditional point of view of Buddhism and also fits with economics' ideal of empirical confirmation. This comfortable juxtaposition; however, is not necessarily stable and may change as the dialogue unfolds.

2.3 Entering a dialogical space

Hattam (2004: 1) suggests the notion of a 'dialogical space' as a useful approach to Buddhism, as it metaphorically suggests a place which is occupied or 'lived in', and gestures towards a commitment to some form of active embodiment of what is created or constructed. This sense of 'lived in' resonates well with Bourdieu's (1997) notion of 'habitus', which extends dialogue to deep-seated generative and organising assumptions embedded in practices or representations that underlie economic activity, and fits well with the aims of this research. Hattam (2004) powerfully uses this as a vehicle of critical reflection, to give voice to a Buddhist perspective and to explore critical social theory. A dialogical space implies openness to integrating something new. The engaging in new cross-cultural discourse which allows for the juxtaposition of elements that hitherto have been regarded as incommensurable. A dialogical space, according to Hattam (2004: 1), also evokes 'the idea of pedagogical space, a place for hybridity or double consciousness, a borderland'. The mixing of two very different genealogies of understanding may create a 'mestiza consciousness' or a 'third position'. To create a dialogical space between Buddhism and economic thought requires an interdisciplinary approach which engages with key assumptions behind economic theory and Buddhist thinking in order to open new arenas of inquiry. This approach recognises that economics, like any discipline, has a tree-like structure with a system of root assumptions which is often much larger than the visible part of the tree above the ground.

The most salient attempt to set up a dialogue between Buddhism and economics has been Schumacher's (1973) widely read work *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. The chapter entitled 'Buddhist economics' describes how Buddhist thinking can reframe many taken-for-granted assumptions of what he calls 'modern economics'. Here Schumacher puts forward Buddhism as a distinctive viewpoint from economics because it sets out the highest goal in life as liberation, rather than material accumulation. According to Schumacher (1968), Buddhism implies a conception of work with a different set of ends – for example, work as a means to self-actualisation by which a person can develop their potentiality, overcome their 'ego-centredness' and create goods and services needed for 'a becoming existence'. The Buddhist challenge to

these assumptions in economic theory is significant, and, according to Schumacher (1968: 45), 'the consequences that flow from this view are endless'.

While Schumacher's work was a significant and commendable first step towards a dialogue, it is also instructive in its limitations. Hattam (2004: 11) argues: 'a dialogue demands more than a description of the broad architecture. Dialogue demands that interlocutors share their significant issues.' Schumacher's contribution was important because it signalled to a wide audience that Buddhism presents a range of interesting contentions around taken-for-granted and foundational assumptions in economic theory. These contentions, which will be articulated in this and the following chapters, are continuing to gather support in several disciplines. This small but growing body of research explores ideas which may radically undermine key assumptions in western thinking, including neoclassical, post-Keynesian, Marxist and institutional economics. The consequences of Buddhism's distinctive contribution at this generative level are potentially immense. It is therefore imperative that an effective dialogue take place built upon a developed understanding of both perspectives. Although Schumacher recognised powerful implications for economics theory in his account of Buddhist thinking, its depiction of Buddhism was, according to Batchelor (1990b), highly selective.

In particular, Schumacher's view that Buddhism represents a generic spiritual perspective on economics is an extension of Aldous Huxley's notion of the 'perennial philosophy' – a term originally coined by Leibniz, but one that can also be traced back to the Hindu conception of the variety of religions as being different pathways to the one goal. Huxley (1945: viii) saw this goal, overarching all religions, as being concerned 'with the one, divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things and lives and minds'. The nature of this essential reality was not apparent to the ordinary person except through spiritual cultivation. Schumacher depicts Buddhism as just another door to this essential reality, and in this oversimplification, Batchelor (1990b) contends, he and many contemporary ecological economists fail to recognise the significance of the challenge that Buddhism represents, as the basis of an alternative philosophical framework. Batchelor (1990b) argues that, rather than being an ethical framework only, the primary contribution of Buddhism lies in the premise of non-dualism – that is, the recognition that the distinctions between agent, agency and object are 'merely conceptual'. This observation highlights the point that the distinctive

contribution of Buddhism cannot simply be subsumed under existing western conceptual categories. Schumacher's oversimplification of Buddhism suggests the need for a deeper engagement with Buddhist thinking.

In this respect, Haywood and Varela's (1992: ix) suggestion, of a respectful trans-cultural exchange in which mutuality is paramount, elides the true challenges of encounter in which there are competing and contrasting claims. As Clarke (1997: 5) observes, 'there is still a reluctance in the academic world to take traditional Asian thought seriously'. This reluctance is understandable if it implies undermining the orthodoxy of some the base assumptions in the mainstream of economic thinking. A deeply reflexive encounter may also cut both ways and undermine the orthodoxies of Buddhism. Do we take sides, as Varela (2000: 71) suggests when he wrote, 'it's not about having an interface or an encounter, it's more about *rediscovering* some fundamental insights of Buddhism from *within* [science]'? One possible outcome of this encounter is a revised process by which these fundamental insights are rediscovered and *validated* through scientific research. This opens important aspects of Buddhism to scientific exploration. This new approach has limits, however, as science itself is built on contested terrain and also needs to be understood in this context.

Added to the problem of selective interpretations in contemporary western approaches to Buddhism is the view that Buddhist ideas can be treated as useful hypotheses rather than unconditional and axiomatic injunctions. Batchelor (1998) argues that a major task for contemporary interpretation of Buddhism is to differentiate between teachings which address primary existential questions and those concerned with secondary philosophical, psychological and religious questions. Batchelor (1998: 18) argues for an agnostic stance towards Buddhism which 'looks to the Dharma for metaphors of existential *confrontation* rather than metaphors of existential *consolation*'. Batchelor's (1998) view of Buddhism as a culture of awakening is an emancipatory project that is not contingent on historical time and place.

Buddhist practices, however, cannot operate outside of cultural specificities, as they invoke shared meanings and experiences, and thus the line between the purposive core and the secondary, culturally contingent projects that have created and maintained its institutions over time may not be easily drawn. Crucial to this view is the assumption that Buddhist practices engage with existential issues which transcend culture. The view

that Buddhism is entirely culturally constructed is contentious, and Batchelor (1997) outlines an inherently agnostic approach which resonates with many contemporary Buddhists' sense of a loosely empirical foundation to their practice. While many may regard the various historical traditions as the best available guides to uncharted territory, they recognise that there are inherent dangers in trying to reconstitute premodern understandings in a different cultural milieu.

Contemporary Buddhist writings, such as Batchelor's, challenge an uncritical acceptance of all Buddhist notions, bracketing the various traditional Buddhist ways of thinking as provisional. If the assumptions that Buddhist practices reflect and engage with some real existential reality, then time will reveal them.

In one sense, Buddhist tradition can be seen as a 'living tradition' which, according to MacIntyre (1984: 222), 'is a historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition'. The members of any tradition encounter arguments which explicate its practices, and which make sense of the experiences of its members. In monastic Zen, for example, almost every daily action is choreographed in explicit detail, and with each action there is an explanation. In contemporary western Zen, where such explanations do not always meet western sensibilities, they are often allegorised; for example, offerings to demons and hungry ghosts are taken as symbolic rather than literal. This foundation of its members' practices, however, does form a sort of practical knowledge, which has a basis, as Bourdieu (1990/1980) shows, in social beings that are 'embodied knowledges and skills' operating beneath the level of discourse and consciousness, and who arise out of the mutual interpenetration of being – in the flesh and in the world. Buddhist practices have evolved 'in and for practice' over two millennia into a cumulative technology that echoes centuries of reflection on what works and what doesn't. This reflection creates a dynamic process which is strongly influenced by culture and, as Batchelor (2000: 57) points out, 'Buddhism is ... unfolding over time rather than a fixed body of ideas and practices that is preserved without change in a timeless vacuum'.

The notion of the core project, specifically the premise of non-dualism, is a useful entry point into the dialogical space between Buddhism and economics, since questions of agency and the individual go to the heart of existing economic theory, but are largely taken for granted. These are not simply economic questions but ontological ones in

which a dialogue between Buddhism and philosophy, whose contributions underpin these concepts, is valuable. Since an effective dialogue is a two-way process which involves circularity, the intention is to interweave key Buddhist notions while highlighting important tensions with assumptions that sustain contemporary economic theories, and vice-versa. Where appropriate, a significant dialogue will be opened to explore commonalities and differences with a view to new synthesis. The next section provides a critical exploration of some foundational Buddhist doctrinal concepts which are recognised in most western Buddhist traditions. The aim in engaging in a process of critique and evaluation is to develop a synthesis and significant reappraisal of Buddhist thinking in light of contemporary thinking.

2.4 Basic Buddhist conceptions

2.4.1 The life of the Buddha

Most Buddhist traditions include an account of the life of the person destined to become known as the Buddha. While these may be derived from historical fact, there are significant variations across stories, and historical comparisons make it obvious that there has been embroidery over time. To understand Buddhism, however, it is important to get a sense of who the Buddha was, and hagiographic accounts of the Buddha play a critical role in the construction of the religion across its diverse cultural manifestations. The legend presents a number of core ideas, although interpretations are likely to vary significantly across diverse Buddhist groups. Western religious studies offer important critical perspectives on these accounts and are helpful in any attempt to reconstruct the historical context of these events. In terms of a dialogical engagement, they add a new dimension of critical reflection. In this regard, perhaps the most vital issue they raise is that, as Mabbett (2002: 24) states, 'The story of Buddha's life as presented by the Buddhist discourses (there is little other evidence) is essentially legendary'. The original accounts of the Buddha's life are, according to Harvey (1990: 15), in general agreement about the details of his life and around historical facts, but 'they also contain legendary and mythological embellishments, and it is often not possible to sort out one from the other'.

This raises the key issue of how reliable the accounts of the Buddha's life and teachings actually are. There is undoubtedly no direct authorship, since there is no record of the

Buddha having writing anything, and, according to Williams and Tribe (2000), it is not clear whether he was literate. Furthermore, there is little that remains except textual accounts by members of his community and their successors, and no coherent account of his life was written for well over a century after his death. In this regard, the earliest archaeological evidence written in an Indian language, according to McMahan (1998), are the inscriptions of the Emperor Asoka dated circa 258 BCE. At that time, Indian culture valued recitation over writing, which may have also been linked to the Brahamic belief that sound syllables had spiritual power. However; as (McMahan 1998) suggests, many scholars believe that the Sangha, which was the monastic community, was also concerned that recitation most fully and authentically transmitted the dharma and that writing was open to variation in ways that collective recitation was not. Gombrich (1996: 3) suggests that the Buddha's 'early followers, in attempting to preserve the Buddha's teaching, subtly and unintentionally may have changed them'. It is clear that the massive body of literature that has evolved in the name of Buddhism was not begun until well after his death.

The question of reliability needs to be understood in the context of western Buddhist scholarship, which has had a tendency to transfer frameworks developed largely from Christian theological perspectives, and place absolute authority on the word of the founder. One consequence of this is the search, by both western scholars and the traditions themselves, for the 'original Buddhism' as a means of validation and legitimacy. Garfield (2006: 5) is highly critical of such approaches:

> However attractive this approach sounds, it is not only impossible in practice but incoherent in principle. It is impossible in practice simply because we are too far from the time of the Buddha to determine, even given the best textual criticism and palaeography, precisely what he said to whom, and what went through his mind of those to whom his words were addressed. Even the Pali canon was first committed to writing long after his demise and only a hagiographic understanding of the process of its construction could lead one to belief in its historical purity.

Words attributed to the Buddha continue to have privileged status in both the Theravadin and Mahāyāna traditions. In the Mahāyāna traditions, particularly Chan and Zen sects, the words of the Buddha have been gradually supplanted by other voices. This includes the development of the notion of a two-tier system which downplayed other traditions under the rubric of being based on 'provisional teachings' given by the Buddha to those of limited capacity and which privileged its own (Mahāyāna) teachings

for those considered to be of greater capacity. In Zen Buddhism, the Buddha's words became reference points for Zen teachers to provide their own interpretations and developments. Zen koans often utilised stories which involved a dialogic interaction with the Buddha, for example, in one mythical story, Manjusri (the Bodhisattva of Wisdom) is standing outside the gate of a temple. The Buddha calls out to him, "Manjusri, Manjusri, why do you not enter?" Manjusri replies, "I do not see myself as outside. Why enter?" This koan story presents a question to the Zen student, as to how Manjusri could enter, whilst being outside — focusing on an aspect of non-dual thinking. It is also a skilful manoeuvre to open up a space for a different orthodoxy; subverting the old without contradicting the historical authority of the Buddha upon which claims of the tradition are founded.

The rise of Chan Buddhism in China, followed by Zen Buddhism in Japan and Korea represents a unique strand of Buddhism. The history of these Buddhist traditions comes largely from within its own institutions either as hagiographic accounts of leading historical figures or translations and analyses of their own texts. In China, a range of key figures comprised what became known as a 'lineage', which was purported to be a continuous line of succession that originated with a semi-mythic founder Bodhidharma. In Tang and Song China, these 'lineages' split off into several sub-traditions or schools reflecting variations inspired by the different teachers including Linji, Caodong, Guiyang, Yunmen, and Fayan. These lineages continued through to Japan, as precursors to Rinzai (Linji), and Soto through Dogen. The Chan/Zen tradition regards itself as maintaining "true" Buddhism. Recent academic research has challenged many of the historical claims of the Zen orthodoxy. According to Heine (2007), this has lead to a new strand of research which utilises critical practices and methods for studying these traditions from outside their own conventions and narratives.

Given the sociopolitical environment of medieval China and Japan, where Buddhist institutions were often threatened by the upheavals brought about by dynastic change, Buddhists may have judiciously chosen to suppress any internal dissention regarding the veracity of earlier understandings. Some theorists, such as Sharf (1994: 43), argue that claims to orthodoxy are critical elements to the survival of any religion, and that we should be 'careful not to confuse pious mythology with institutional reality'. This suggests that political accommodation was the defining force rather than the basis of

some truth-claims. According to Sharf (1994: 47), 'Zen has had to reinvent itself repeatedly in the face of shifting political, social, and economic circumstances'. While all traditions vary at the level of practice, and clearly some Mahāyāna traditions were, at least initially, quite heterodox in terms of doctrine, a key question is whether they have evolved in ways that continued to authentically convey the 'truth' that the Buddha had discovered, or created something new under its rubric.

These epistemological concerns are not evident in Buddhist traditional writing. However, as Wright (1998: 111) points out, 'Modern historians of Buddhism ... have set out to rewrite this history and, on the basis of critically defined sources, to set straight the historical record on Zen'. Wright (1998) makes the distinction in Buddhist scholarship between making the text the object of study, which is something to learn about, rather than the subject of study, as something to learn to embody. This is a crucial distinction, and, according to Wright (1998), it illuminates two major kinds of western approaches to the dialogical space: objective approaches which are quintessentially scientific, and subjective approaches which Wright (1998) calls 'romantic'. The next chapter will explore the implications of each of these approaches, and examine their role in western understandings of Buddhism.

Recent scholarship suggests the Buddha was born in the region of the Ganges basin in north-east India at around 480-400 BCE (Dillon, 2000), and lived for 80 years. This period of Indian history was one of social transformation along several dimensions. Tribal life still dominated the social structure, but it was a time of agrarian revolution in the Indian subcontinent. A growing number of merchants and artisans were settling in urban dwellings, and, while large cities had not yet developed, this was a significant enough shift to place pressure on the composition of the rigid social stratification system, known as the caste system. Following this system, Indian society was divided into four classes, on the basis of occupation. These consisted of the *Brahmin* priestly class; the *Ksatriya* ruler and warrior class; the *Vaisya* class, which included farmers, merchants and artisans; and the *Sudra* menial work class, which served the other three. Social relationships between these groups were limited by rules that prohibited intermarriages and other social interactions, such as eating together.

The Brahmin class exercised domination through its position as the interpreters of the dharma or spiritual law, derived from the Vedic texts. The distinction between spiritual

and secular law did not exist at that time. As in Europe, changes in agriculture were accompanied with growth of the monarchies, and this was the case in the rich Ganges basin. According to Hirakawa (1993), at the time of the Buddha the Brahmans had lost much of their prestige, and adherence to Vedic thinking weakened. Society was broadly influenced by two groups of religious practitioners: *Brahmanas* and *Sramanas*. The Brahmanas represented the orthodox views and followed established religious rituals and traditions; the Sramanas (Pali: *Samanas*), or 'persons who strive', sought direct understanding through practices of inquiry, yoga and austerities. In traditional biographical accounts, the Buddha followed the practices of a variety of different Sramana groups for many years, culminating in a program of extreme austerities. According to Harvey (1990: 19), the Buddha practised austerities to the point where he realised that, while he was putting his life at risk, he was not reaching his goal.

It was at this point that the Buddha made a pivotal shift, asking 'Might there be another path to awakening?' (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995: 339-341 – *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*, i246-249), and remembered an earlier practice that he had spontaneously entered in his youth; eventually this led him to a distinctive resolution of his quest. Whatever the circumstance that brought him to make this vital shift, we can assume that this variation in method involved the rejection of austerities. The result of this new approach ultimately led the Buddha, while sitting under a tree, to a special insight, which he called *nirvana* (Pali: *nibbāna*). This concept is described in the *sutras* (Pali: *suttas*) as 'profound, hard to see and hard to understand ... unattainable by mere reasoning' and literally means blowing out, say, of a candle. According to Keown (1996: 56), 'In the last analysis the nature of final nibbhana remains an enigma other than to those who experience it. What we can be sure of, however, is that it means an end to suffering and rebirth.'

Following his awakening, the Buddha established a monastic community similar to other Sramana groups of the time. After his death, this group followed the rules and teachings they had committed to memory and preserved by oral recitation. It is generally agreed that it was a long time – about four centuries after the Buddha had died – before even the earliest discourses were recorded. These early discourses were written on dried banana leaves, which were sown together and later became known as sutras. These early sutras came to be regarded as the foundations of the Theravadin school,

which dominates in South-East Asia, although the later Visuddhimagga (Path of Purification) by Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, a 5th-century Indian Theravadin Buddhist commentator and scholar, is the dominant source of Theravadin Buddhism. Buddhism has a different relationship to its texts as compared to Christianity. According to Harvey (1990: 32), 'Buddhism begins and ends with the Buddha's enlightenment experience, for this is the ultimate source of Buddhist teachings ... At his enlightenment, the Buddha gained direct knowledge of rebirth, karma and the Four [Noble] Truths ... All of the central teachings of early Buddhism can be arranged under one or other of the three heads.'

2.4.2 The four noble truths

The most succinct outline of the Buddha's teaching is set out in the four noble truths, which is a doctrine basic to all major Buddhist traditions. They have value as indicators akin to the four seals of doctrine which Garfield (2006: 13) suggests have descriptive value as 'the dimensions of family resemblance that connect diverse strands of Buddhist thought to one another, and as central characteristics of the roots of these traditions, they come out as pretty good descriptors of Buddhist doctrine'.[12] The four noble truths are structured as in the practice of ayurvedic medicine, and while there are varying interpretations of these four truths, the general thrust follows this format:

a) First noble truth: Diagnosis

The first step in ayurvedic medicine is to diagnose the nature of the illness, that there is a problem and, if so, what it is. There are numerous interpretations of the Buddhist position that life is characterised by the inevitable existence of *dukkha*, which is a Pali word often interpreted as 'suffering', although the original word has a far wider range of meanings, from unpleasant, imperfect, agitation, discomfort, dissatisfaction and ill-being to the more severe states such as suffering, angst and misery. Arguably, what the Buddha observed, in his own life and those around him, was a number of existential

[12] The four seals of doctrine in Tibetan Buddhism are: (1) all conditioned phenomena are impermanent; (2) all contaminated phenomena are of the nature of suffering; (3) all phenomena are empty and selfless; (4) only nirvana is peace (Garfield, 2006: 10).

dilemmas that faced the ordinary peasants and urban dwellers of his time. It is unclear whether the Buddha intended that his words be regarded as universal truisms, and there is overwhelming reason to hold that most Buddhist thinking pertains to a worldview in which there was a far greater engagement with subjective reality, as opposed to modern objective thinking. The eminent western monk Ajahn Sumedho (1981: no page) reflects this sense and challenges the interpretation of dukkha as something beyond a felt sense:

> When one talks about dukkha, the first noble truth, one is not talking abstractly ... One experiences the first noble truth within oneself ... If one really looks at one's mind, one finds discontentment, restlessness, fear and worry ... It would be idiocy to say 'I believe in the first noble truth', It is not a matter of believing or disbelieving, but rather one looks inside and … it comes and goes. It arises (the second noble truth), it ceases (the third noble truth), and from that understanding comes the eight-fold path (the fourth noble truth), which is the clear vision into the transcendence of it all – through mindfulness. The eight-fold path is just being mindful in daily life.

This adds a further dimension to the hermeneutic maze of understanding Buddhism. Arguably, Buddhism has been formulated from a subjective perspective sense rather than an objective sense, but not all interpretations maintain this perspective, tending to objectify and extend these ideas, for example, to physics and systems theory. The generalisation of the dissatisfaction that motivated the Buddha in his own quest to explore a range of possible forms of deliverance, from his own existential conflicts to human life in general, may not have been the Buddha's intention. There are, however, existential realities of sickness, old age and death, and these are universal aspects of the human condition which afflict everyone. In this sense, what the Buddha found is universal, as we are continually and inevitably vulnerable to suffering, just as we are vulnerable to dissatisfaction with aspects of our life – which is the nature of the human condition.

b) Second noble truth: Cause

The second step in ayurvedic medicine is to identify the cause of the malady. The methodology of science also recognises the importance of understanding the nature of a problem prior to reaching its solution. Through deep meditation, the Buddha identified dukkha as being caused by craving, attachment and desire. According to early discourses, dukkha is not caused by these factors in a linear fashion but simply arises

when they are present. In other words, the causes operate sequentially and simultaneously.

This process is best described as arising from interdependency, as a healthy tree depends on a plethora of sufficient causes, which biologists understand depends on the right soil, water, sunlight, temperatures, insects and birds, which in turn depend on other things. In acknowledging the complex interdependencies of the tree, we would not say, for example, that a tree is caused by a seed. This complex causal process known as 'dependent arising' (Pali: *paticca sámuppada*) arises out of the principle that:

> When there is this, that is. With the arising of this, that arises. When this is not, neither is that. With the cessation of this, that ceases. (Bodhi, 2000: 65)

This process of causation has been extended in Buddhist doctrine to become a comprehensive theory of reality. According to Patrick Kearney (1994: 1), 'The doctrine of interdependent arising points to the structure of reality as experienced'.

As noted earlier, this interpretation suggests a phenomenological epistemology, one in which claims are not about some abstract objective reality, but rather the subjective reality of experience. Thus dependent arising is simply the normal state of nature as we experience it. A common misconception of dependent arising, according to Kearney (1994), is that it accounts for the arising of objective entities outside of us, rather than one's own consciousness and how it interacts with the world. Kalupahana (1992: 53) concurs: 'The Buddha's explanation of the nature of existence is summarized in one word paticcasámuppāda ... meaning "dependent arising", a theory that he *formulated on the basis of the experience* [italics added] of dependently arisen phenomena (paticca-sámuppānna dhamma)'.

The 'state of nature' observed by the Buddha was impermanence (Pali: *anicca*), which betokens ceaseless change; where nothing is enduring, everything is transitory. This is a surprisingly similar view to that of Heraclitus, who said that 'all things go and nothing stays', and compared existence to the flow of a river: 'you could not step twice into exactly the same piece of river' (Graham, 2005: np); rivers in effect stay relatively the same over time, even though, and perhaps because, the waters change. For example, although no element is the same, the Nile remains the same river as it was in the Old Testament. Likewise, many things change according to certain patterns of relationship,

and these patterns are also changing. In a dynamic system nothing does not change and even the Nile will eventually disappear. This transience is both a cause of suffering and potentially its cure.

Kalupahana (1975: 98) argues that 'the causal principle as stated in the Pali *Nikayas* and the Chinese *Agamas* seems to include all the features of the scientific theory of causation – objectivity, uniqueness, necessity, conditionality, constant conjunction, productivity, relativity – as well as one-one correlation'. The concept of causation of events is open to confusion. Western thinkers since Heraclitus have been aware of the existence of complex interrelationships in the process of causation of most naturally occurring events; for example, the weather is hard to predict because there are so many factors that may affect it. While this is not new, the analytic turn of the European Enlightenment was partially driven by the success of reductionism. Reductionism focuses on specific elements of reality which can be isolated and understood. In engineering, for example, the general formulas of classical mechanics were used with great practical utility. Culturally, these lead to the valorisation of reductive techniques as the hallmark of scientific endeavour.

The direction of such endeavour is related to social mores, as Kuhn (1962) recognised, and while reductionism solved some problems that were critical to the imagination of the early modern period, it was less successful at others. The complexity of most natural events, such as the economy or human behaviour, which involve thousands of interacting of variables, limits the utility of such linear approaches. In recent years, mechanistic and linear approaches have been questioned in the social sciences (Globus, 2005). Complexity has also become a topic of interest, particularly in disciplines that deal with organised phenomena such as the social and biological sciences. One approach that Joanna Macy (1991a) recognised could illuminate Buddhist ideas is general systems theory, which attempts to understand the meta-organisation behind interactions and complex phenomena.

What makes Buddhism distinctive from conventional western views of causation, however, is its application to existential, religious and ethical questions. The doctrine of causality is grounded upon the Buddha's awakening experience, in which he understood the human self as an artefact of the process of dependent arising, rather than as a substantive entity. The Buddha realised that he had no abiding self and thus could not

identify any basic cause or principal source for his suffering. Suffering thus co-arose as through patterns and interlinked causes. This pre-scientific observation has modern counterparts, for example, the foundation of cognitive behavioural treatment for depression is the recognition that certain modes of thinking have negative emotional consequences (Beck, 1979). Similarly, the Buddha found that what he experiences as suffering (dukkha) was sustained by interdependent factors that converged to *effect* the experience of suffering, in particular his normal sense of self was found to dependently arise. A crucial link in this process is the clinging to the idea of an abiding, essential self; which is what the Buddha regarded as the basis, sine qua non, for suffering.

Dependently arising causation is a key element in Pali accounts of the Buddha's notion of suffering. It also features prominently in the Tibetan traditions that draw, in particular, on the work of Nāgārjuna, the founder of Madhyamaka school. Nāgārjuna, according to Ian Mabbet (1998), is an enigmatic figure, whose exact history is unclear, but has been praised as responsible for a significant progression in Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy. According to Garfield (2001), the central focus of the Madhyamaka text is that the fundamental nature of reality can only be understood if one understands the nature of dependent origination. Nāgārjuna exhaustively applies a critical analysis to any phenomena or process that might be regarded as having an independent existence. In philosophical terms, the question of existence is a metaphysical problem. Buddhist views lie between the two extremes of "eternalism" and "nihilism." Eternalism is the view that phenomena have an inherent existence and at the core of Buddhism is the questioning of the inherent existence of the self. Nihilism, however, lies at the other extreme and suggests that there is no inherent existence and is sometimes called "eliminativism". The complexity of Buddhist thinking means that the not-self view is often misconceived as a form of nihilism; however, the idea that actions (karma) have no ethical consequences, insofar as the agents of actions cannot be said to endure as the subjects who will experience their effects, is contrary to Buddhism doctrine.

The thrust of Nāgārjuna's argument, according to Garfield (1994), is that no phenomena exist independently, and yet, despite this lack of inherent existence they appear as conventionally real. Garfield (1990) suggests that Nāgārjuna's challenge to imputed independent existence, inherent existence, or essence in things anticipates the arguments of Hume and Wittgenstein, and is a middle ground between the reification of causality

(eternalism) and nihilism in which causality is essentially random and purposeless. Ultimately, the arguments of these philosophers address the problem that theories of causation are potentially subject to an infinite regression, and thus, in practice everyday explanations are necessarily local (isolated to the nearest events in time and space).

For Nāgārjuna, there are two truths or two realities — a conventional or nominal truth, and an ultimate truth. The conventional truth, in the Buddhist context, is our habitual way of seeing the worlds (which is why it is a lower truth) which is founded on substance and attributes. The ultimate truth is the highest system and, according to Hopkins (1983), it is the Prasangika division of the Madhyamaka, which argues that things are conventionally but not inherently existent phenomena produced from the aggregation of causes and conditions. The distinction between the two truths, according to Hopkins (1983), is set out in the Tibetan Buddhist categorisation of four doctrinal positions, known as the four tenets or 'established conclusions'. These are also viewed as four stages in a hierarchical system of Buddhist understanding. The first two stages, Vaibhasika and the Sautrantika are categorised as Hīnayāna or "lower vehicle" views. The ideological import of Tibetan Buddhism is that the Buddha taught differently according to the capacities of his students. Therefore, Tibetan Buddhism does not directly challenge so called Hīnayāna views, but places them as ultimately inferior understandings of reality. The second and higher two stages are Yogacara (Cittamatra) and Madhyamaka which are considered to be Mahāyāna paths. The Mahayana is portrayed as being based on the higher motivation of the Bodhisattva, which is to save all beings.

Ve´lez de Cea (2005) points out the close connection between the concepts of emptiness and nonself in the Pāli suttas, and argues that Nāgārjuna's notion of emptiness is consistent with the Pali view. This resolution of this debate ultimately relies on an experiential understanding; however, the distinctions also appear powerfully tied to hegemonic claims of legitimacy rather than on substantive differences in practice.

Complementary to this was the Buddha's observation of impermanence – that phenomena are dynamic and the self is in a continual state of flux in which nothing is fixed and everything is changing. This means that everything in the mind is also part of a continual flow of emergence and subsiding. The Buddha recognised that suffering, whether individual or collective, is caused by the interplay of factors, in particular three

psychic energies: delusion, aversion and craving. These arise from a misapprehension which is caused by reifying and clinging to what is by nature contingent and transient – to transitional objects. Christensen (1999: 40) suggests a modern definition of suffering, centred on the loss of self/other as a transitional 'object':

> the loss of a self-state previously experienced (in memory) or the loss of a potential self-state (in fantasy). Another way of describing this state is that suffering is the anxiety and depression associated with the desire and longing for one's experience of self to be different than it currently is. In depression the desire relates to a wish that the loss of self/other would not have occurred. In anxiety the desire is that the anticipated loss will not occur or that the current loss will not continue.

A path away from such states is available through Buddhist practice, which works in accordance with how these natural conditions arise and cease, highlighting the value of non-attachment. This leads to a phenomenological understanding of the elements of one's own mind, which arguably led the Buddha to a significant discovery about the nature of his suffering.

c) Third noble truth: Cure

The third noble truth in this sequence refers to freedom and emancipation from the condition of dukkha. Buddhist practice involves gaining insight into the process of dependent arising, which strategically goes beyond the mere letting go of arising and cessation, and of what arises and ceases. It entails recognition that shifting causes and conditions constellate the self and that the self has no substance outside of this flux. There is nothing inherent in being a person – the self only exists as an evanescent constellation of factors, like a pattern is made up of different coloured beads or a wave emerges from water in motion.

This surprising insight came about as the culmination of the Buddha's determination to sit under the Bodhi tree to resolve his search for an end to suffering. According to the sutras, he recalled a childhood experience of joy and tranquil happiness which occurred spontaneously while he was attentively watching someone ploughing a field. This single-pointed concentration forms the basis of many Buddhist meditation practices. Developing this attentive state enabled the Buddha to move though various states of meditative absorption until he gained this deep insight into the nature of self.

How distinctive this method was from other practices of meditation around at the time of the Buddha is not certain. However, there have emerged clear differences within Buddhist circles about the most efficacious means to nirvana, which suggests that this particular method may not be critical to the experience. What is crucial is that the Buddha gained an *insight* through such practices by which he made the distinctive metaphysical shift from an extant Vedic view of a primordial self, called the *ātman*, to understanding the nature of the self in terms of *anattā*. While superficially the ātman has the characteristics of being, consciousness and bliss, it is obscured in the unenlightened by illusion. This view seems experientially akin to anattā, the crucial difference lies in the latter's non-transcendent reality. Thanissaro Bhikkhu (1993: np) argues that, 'the Buddha taught the *anattā* or not-self doctrine, not as a metaphysical assertion, but as a strategy for gaining release from suffering: If one uses the concept of not-self to dis-identify oneself from all phenomena, one goes beyond the reach of all suffering and stress.'

To make further sense of this point, we need to understand the context of the Buddha's awakening. If we bracket the supernatural aspects of the legend by assuming that the Buddha was neither a god nor a superman, but rather an exceptional human being, we can see him as a pioneer in the analysis of the human psyche. We can see him as working without recourse to magic, supernatural events, drugs or para-normality, sitting alone deeply concentrated and discovering a state of mind in which he experiences a certain insight. He describes it as best he can, in his own language, as nirvana, evoking the image of a fire going out, which has been translated as the fires of passion which cause suffering. Thanissaro (1996) explains that his use of the metaphor of fire reflected a view very different from the modern view. In ancient India, fire was considered to have two states, one when it burnt due to the belief that it had become entrapped by certain objects (fuel), and the second state, which was not extinguishment but due to the freeing itself from the object and thus becoming calm. Thus, for the Buddha this metaphor of nirvana implied a similar freeing and calming effect. Others recognised this transformation as desirable, and hence he became known as the Buddha. Buddhist history contains many claims to similar experiences. Despite the potential for variation, we could assume that other people, practising similar forms of concentration, are likely to have similar experiences.

This is critical because, as Batchelor (1997: 5) suggests:

> The Buddha was not a mystic. His awakening was not a shattering insight into a transcendent truth that revealed to him the mysteries of God. He did not claim to have had an experience that granted him privileged, esoteric knowledge of how the universe ticks. Only as Buddhism became more of a religion were such grandiose claims imputed to his awakening. In describing to the five ascetics what his awakening meant, he spoke of having discovered complete freedom of heart and mind from the compulsion of craving.

This demystified view of the Buddha's awakening is not completely peculiar to western interpretations of Buddhism, but one that arguably could be accommodated within both the early Buddhist canon and many later Mahāyāna writings. Nirvana is the basic goal of Buddhist practice. However, the experience gained its significance only because it brought about a personal transformation for the Buddha. As Batchelor (1997) points out, 'Awakening was not just the acquisition of a more enlightened view point. It granted a natural integrity, dignity and authority to his life.' Whatever was the exact nature of this experience, something convinced the five ascetics – his fellow Sramanas who had previously spurned him for relaxing his austerities – that Buddha had learnt something significant.

d) Fourth noble truth: Method

The fourth noble truth and the final step in ayurvedic regime, which directly addresses the method of cure, is the path that leads to the end of suffering. This sets out how the final state of nirvana was to be achieved. Early Buddhist doctrine elaborated a detailed 'eightfold noble path' (depicted in Table 1) as being the method by which 'cessation of suffering' could be achieved.

Table 1: The eightfold noble path

Knowledge/Wisdom – *Paññā*/*Prajna*	
1	Right View
2	Right Thought/Intention
Ethics – *Sila*	
3	Right Speech
4	Right Action

5	Right Livelihood
6	Right Effort
Meditation Practice – *Samadhi*	
7	Right Mindfulness
8	Right Contemplation

These eight elements can be grouped into three categories or foundations. The first foundation, of *prajna* (Pali: *paññā*) or wisdom, includes the practitioner's understanding that action issues from knowledge and intention and the right level of motivation to reach the goal. Right intention includes renunciation, goodwill and harmlessness. The second foundation focuses on ethical practices known as *sila*, and consists of a number of precepts. Over time, the precepts expanded to include a number of variations on not killing, not stealing, not misusing sex, not lying, not giving or taking drugs, not discussing the faults of others, not praising yourself while abusing others, not sparing the dharma assets, not indulging in anger, and not defaming the Buddha, dharma and Sangha. Without going into a detailed analysis of each, it should suffice to say that they are essentially designed to complement the development of *samadhi*. Robert Aitken (1984), however, explains that, at least in Zen training, the sila or precepts are both a means to *and* an expression of Buddhist insight. The third foundation of Buddhist training is awareness through meditation and mindfulness, which develops samadhi, or concentration states necessary to gain insight.

Each category has both a realisation and a practice dimension. Firstly, prajna arises through the cognitive realisation of not-self (Keown, 1996) and manifests in confidence, but it applies to the development of an intellectual understanding of the practice (Gowans, 2003). Second, sila is the manifestation of realisation through affect but is also developed through practices of moral conduct as set out in the precepts. Finally, samadhi is the state of meditation where a high degree of concentration has been developed and is also an intentional practice.

These two dimensions, particularly in affect and understanding, seem to be consistent across the different traditions. For example, Mahasi Sayadaw (2002) a *vipassana* teacher, suggests prajna is an experientially based knowledge, as does Zen teacher

Robert Aitken (1984). There remains a significant degree of confusion around these two aspects, particularly among non-practitioners. This might be explained by the fact that there is a developmental dimension to insight. Before insight, a practitioner needs to study the doctrine and gain an intellectual understanding of the path, practise meditation to facilitate concentration, and follow the precepts as guides to character development, which act as a container in which insight can develop.[13] The precepts can bring about a change in thinking by invoking a state of mindfulness that leads to insight, as well as eschewing actions which interfere with a necessary clarity of mind-state. They are not simply moral imperatives, but provisional and functional guidelines.

This dual function applies to most aspects of the eightfold noble path, which is both a means and an expression of Buddhist practice. These aspects are widely regarded as mutually dependent, because ethical action facilitates concentration and supports character development. For example, Bateson outlines how a therapist confronts a patient by demonstrating contradictions between premises that govern the patient's behaviour. Similarly, adherence to the precepts provides an alternative set of premises, such as living without deceit, by which a practitioner can challenge their own behaviour. This 'self-intercept' allows a person to observe contradictions between their actual behaviour with the behaviour that corresponds to a more mature character.

Insight provides a new basis of reflection, and, once available, allows the Buddhist practitioners to learn through the examination of their own experience. The eightfold path provides a reference point for how this new knowledge fits with what others have previously learned. In monastic Buddhism, the extended set of monastic precepts is taken as vows upon entry. Monastic life is highly ritualised, particularly in Zen monasteries, where a finely choreographed schedule leaves little room for deviance. In Zen, the precepts are used as points for contemplation through which a deeper and spontaneous expression was sought.

---

[13] Containment is used here in the Jungian sense whereby a non-linear psychodynamic process is brought about by containing certain impulses.

The eightfold noble path does not have a prominent place in some branches of Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as Zen Buddhism. This divergence may not be as significant as it might appear, however; in Zen there has evolved the ideal of the six perfections, which are closely related to the three branches of the eightfold noble path. According to Aitken (1994), the first four perfections (giving, morality, patience and vitality) relate to ethical conduct. The fifth perfection is meditation, and the sixth is the perfection of wisdom itself. It is also suggested that the perfections are not rules of conduct, but expressions of the enlightened mind and, in fact, relate to character development.

Charles Prebish (1993) observes that much of the literature on Buddhist ethics reviews only the lists of rules and precepts and omits to examine the implicit ethical principles. This omission simply points to a cultural mode of reading Buddhist texts which reflects, as Charles Taylor (1989) suggests, the narrow focus of western moral philosophy on obligations or prescriptions, rather than the teleological or ontological aspects of selfhood which focus on 'what it is good to be'. The link between insight, which is the experience of self as non-abiding, and action thus becomes a fundamental connection between ethical prescriptions of practice and the expression of that way of being. The practitioner's relationship with ethical behaviour is therefore unlikely to be ahistorical or acontextual, and, as Chappell (1996: 48) suggests, 'an adequate discussion of Mahāyāna ethics requires interpreting the various lists of moral regulations found in these ... texts in the light of the dominant worldview, values, and practices represented in each text'. The worldview, values and practices are related to the culture and time in which a text was written. To disentangle ethical principles from rules thus becomes a monumental task. In regard to Mahāyāna ethics, Chappell (1996: 62) concludes:

> While there are some general common characteristics that linked Indian Mahāyāna, there never existed an institutional or textual unity. Given the broad sweep of so many texts and movements, and the lack of any institutional integration, it seems premature to broadly talk about 'Mahāyāna ethics'.

The need to view Buddhist ethics contextually brings up some important considerations, particularly as ethics in Buddhism emerges from an experiential foundation through nirvana and also practices important to the achievement of insight. Moreover, it is clear that ethics in Buddhism cannot be separated from its historical and situational context, which suggests that Buddhist ethics is not a set of universal laws, but rather a stance or orientation towards certain actions, particularly those which facilitate harmony and a

non-dual perspective. In different contexts, there is no reason why Buddhist ethics might not be interpreted differently.

As Martin Baumann (2002) points out, interpretations differ between 'traditionalist and modernist' Buddhists from Asian as well as non-Asian backgrounds. The setting up of ethics as guidelines rather than as imperatives means that a wide range of interpretations of Buddhist ethics is possible. This breadth of interpretive possibility has, arguably, made Buddhism so accessible to western adherents.

Buddhist ethics have formed a foundation for numerous approaches to economic questions, since Schumacher's (1968) popularising of 'Buddhist economics'. Many of these have transposed Buddhist ethics to form the basis of an economic ethics, particularly the notion of right-livelihood which Harvey (2000: 187-188) suggests means 'that one's livelihood should not be dishonest or otherwise cause suffering to other living beings'. The potential for new normative frameworks as a basis for economic thinking will be discussed in detail in chapter 4, building on the foundational discussion in this and the following chapter.

2.4.3 Karma and rebirth

It is impossible to understand traditional Buddhist ethics without understanding karma and rebirth. According to Harvey (2000: 8), 'Fundamental features of Buddhism's world-view relevant to ethics are the framework of karma and rebirth, accepted by all schools of Buddhism, with varying degrees of emphasis'. Buddhist karma is concerned with two types of consequences of action: personal (internal) and social and ecological (external). On the personal side, actions are said to mould character, and this in turn affects later actions for better or worse. There is no simple linear relationship between an action and its consequences and no calculus for the law of karma. The Buddha's explanations of karma tend to be metaphorical, using biological terms like seeds planted in a garden, or the ripening of fruit. The nature of a person's actions affects their experience of themselves: harmonious actions create harmonious consequences, and, while one negative action in itself may not have a significant negative consequence, over time a history of negative deeds develops which affects the person and the nature of their lives. The complexity of the consequences of actions is hard to disentangle.

Macy (1991a) suggests that the Buddhist view of karma, when seen in the light of dependent arising, complicates simple cause and effect conceptions. This complexity gives rise to unpredictable karmic results. Using a general systems theory framework to explain Buddhist conceptions of karma, Macy (1991a) outlines how an open system is constantly remade by the interplay of present and past changes. The history of these changes makes the 'present organisation [of the world] a gift of the past' (1991a: 93) and so the present state of organisation continuously moulds future states. According to Macy (1991a: 174), 'Self-reflexive consciousness emerges when the degree of complexity has evolved to the point that self-monitoring is required for evaluation and selecting between alternative courses of action. Freedom enters.' What lies at the heart of the concept of karma is that no action is an isolated event in a dynamic interconnected complex system; while there are always consequences, it is difficult to predict what they might be. The actor also has an experience of an event. In events such as violence and harming, the act affects the perpetrator as well as the victim, although not in the same way, as well as their families, friends and so on.

Batchelor (1997) argues that the view held by the Buddha on karma more or less reflected the worldview of his time, just as generations accepted the belief that the earth was flat. Harvey (2000) challenges this view, pointing out that during the upheavals around the time of the Buddha the question of karma was strongly debated among Sramana groups. The Buddha's conception of karma, however, was unique, because he shifted the emphasis in explaining the key determinants on the fruit of karma from ritual actions to ethical ones. The early Buddhist view deviated from the view held by his contemporary Mahavira (the founder of Jainism) because they emphasised the intention or motive behind an action, rather than the action alone. Intention (Pali: *cetana*) is a crucial question because it suggests choice – that people can make their own destiny through their moral choices. From an early Buddhist perspective, the three types of action – physical, verbal and mental – are all subject to volition. Previous karma, although powerful, only results in tendencies which can be overcome.

Traditional accounts depict the birth of the Buddha as the result of previous karma, which implies that the Buddha accepted the existing Hindu view of rebirth – the idea that human life is subject to innumerable rebirths across different realms and worlds ranging from hells to heavens. The movement between rebirths is accordingly subject to

the law of karma, seen as a principle by which the nature and quality of present and past actions determine future rebirth and destiny. Bad actions have bad karma, and this will result in calamitous events in this life or a lower or less fortunate rebirth after it. Good actions create merit, which is believed to result in improved rebirth. Rebirth as a human was considered rare, and, depending on the nature of the merit, one could potentially be reborn into any of the 25 states of existence in Brahman cosmology, including among beings of the heavenly realm (*devas*), hungry ghosts (*pretas*), demons (*asuras*) or animals (*tiryagyoni*), or to find oneself in a hell realm (*nairayika*). A key theme that has emerged from the traditional emphasis on karma is that the Buddha was an exceptional 'super' person as a result of his past good karma.

A survey of western Buddhists conducted by Coleman (2001: 122) found that the majority accepted the idea of karma and rebirth. In regard to rebirth, Coleman's survey question regarding the statement 'after death we are reborn into another life' was, however, somewhat unrefined, and left room for a range of beliefs about the exact nature of the process. It also elided the evolution of important differences between western and popular Asian views, particularly in terms of its centrality to their beliefs. Spiro (1966: 1167) observed that, for the ordinary uneducated lay Buddhist in Burma, and probably elsewhere in Asia, the state of nirvana was little understood and 'believed to be all but impossible for the typical human'. This had the effect of placing great emphasis on the doctrine of karma and rebirth, giving rise to the idea that human life is subject to innumerable rebirths across different realms and worlds.

Batchelor (1997) contends that, although it is difficult for many Buddhists to question the concept of karma, it is also difficult to answer the question 'what is it to be reborn?', given the central idea of Buddhism is that no intrinsic self can be found and that what most people naively believe to be their self is an unreflected habitual conception which ultimately is just an illusion. This is known as 'the consistency objection', which is that the notions of karma and rebirth are inconsistent with the conception of no-self. According to Gowans (2003: 106), the notion of no-self is better understood as a process view of self and 'the dependent reality of process-selves is sufficient to render the ideas of karma (Pali: *kamma*)… and rebirth intelligible'. There is a range of debates about this, but even the Buddha saw no value in wondering about the possibility or character of other existence; he suggested that if one has insight one will not waste time

pondering such matters. In the *Brahmajala Sutta* this is set out as one of the wrong views, and speculation of this kind is not encouraged in most Buddhist traditions. Even so, this is an important question which will be addressed later.

2.5 Western perspectives on the dharma

Traditional Buddhism has over the millennia inspired millions of people. Recently, increasing numbers of westerners have taken up its practices. In doing so, they have taken traditional Buddhist practices outside of their cultural contexts, and it is evident that new interpretations are arising (Prebish & Baumann, 2002). Western engagement with Buddhism has occurred both at the academic level and in terms of practice. Both of these have spawned some interesting developments which highlight some fundamental questions about religion and the place of Buddhist thinking in western thought in general. The next chapter explores these questions, which arise in the process of Buddhism engaging a dialogue with western thought. In particular, the chapter highlights how Buddhism relates to certain recent developments in western philosophy and cognitive psychology. It will be argued that Buddhism seeks an experiential insight into the nature of consciousness, which is the ordinary sense of self as an illusion. This view suggests that the place of Buddhism in the West should not be to continue to replicate a cultural development from Asia, but a potent new understanding of human nature and a counterpoint to the assumptions which underpin current economic discourse.

CHAPTER 3

ENCOUNTERING BUDDHISM IN A POSTMODERN CONTEXT

Of all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism.

Pierre Bourdieu (1990/1980)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by asking whether there is anything more to Buddhism than a set of cultural practices and beliefs which have no enduring substance or essence. In other words, is there one dharma or many? The debate on the question of essentialism is explored, including the issue of authority. These issues draw us closer and closer to questions which have recently created a major upheaval in western philosophy. The fundamentally ontological nature of Buddhist experience and thought crosses these debates. It became clear that Buddhist thinking reflects more than a passing relation, but an important position in this debate. Rather than ignore this, I have chosen to explore this debate, precisely because it is the dialogical space where Buddhism and economics can meet and one that goes beyond simple normative differences. Engaging in this debate takes the research into relatively neglected territory; particularly given that previous attempts to make a connection between Buddhism and mainstream economics have been marginalised. There are exceptions; Buddhist economics as a cultural framework has found some support in South-East Asian countries, where Buddhism is the dominant religion. It will be argued that this new view, which opens up a dialogue, has relevance to economics because it implicitly and explicitly problematises assumptions which support the superstructure of current economic thinking.

3.1.1 One dharma or many?

While the generic concept ‘Buddhism’ is a western artefact, it would seem that there is little evidence that this categorisation is greatly contested in Buddhist cultures. The

encompassing term ‘Buddhism’ may best be used, however, as a reference to common origins rather than a reflection of a common discourse and shared practices. Even so, there is a widely held view that the varieties of Buddhist practice encountered are ‘essentially’ about the same thing. Recent scholarship, however, has challenged the idea of Buddhism as a general spiritual phenomenon, to which can be assigned a trans-cultural, trans-historical reality. Some scholars ardently contest any essential Buddhism, suggesting that modern religious scholarship has effectively naturalised what Sharf (1994: 44) describes as the ‘somewhat Platonic distinction between timeless essence and localized manifestation’. There is a growing consensus, especially among poststructuralists, that universal essences are illusory, drawing attention to how essentialist perspectives often reduce social and cultural phenomena to fixed categories that are artificially bounded and constructed.

The problem of essentialism is part of a wider and ongoing debate in philosophy and the social sciences – one that overlaps with several broad concerns in the debate over postmodernity. This debate has significance on both ontological and epistemological levels for how Buddhism is understood in relation to economic thinking. Clearly the literature on Buddhist economics (discussed in section 4.4) builds on a particular understanding of Buddhism. Treating Buddhism as a cultural creation which evolved as sense-making narratives has an entirely different significance for economics than a Buddhism which reflects some deep underlying ‘truth’ about human nature. Given that western conceptions of Buddhism derive in part from preoccupations of western culture, there is reason to review this position.

The following section explores the problem of essentialism and non-essentialism, recognising that Buddhism itself has something to contribute to this discussion.

3.1.2 The problem of essentialism

Ontology has traditionally applied to a somewhat narrow area of philosophy concerned with analysing the nature of existence. However, White (2000: 1) suggests that there has recently been an ‘ontological turn ... characterised generally as the result of a growing propensity to interrogate more carefully those “entities” presupposed by our typical ways of seeing and doing in the modern world’. This new attention queries assumptions regarding the human subject and opens the possibility of alternatives to what White

(2000) calls the 'Teflon subject', which is relatively independent and disembedded from the social and political milieu in which it exists. White (2000: 2) suggests that these 'ontological concerns emerge in the form of deep re-conceptualizations of human being in relation to its world'. At the heart of this reconceptualisation lies a debate between the polar opposites: the essentialist and the anti-essentialist perspectives. According to White (2000: 3), 'strong ontologies' claim to show us 'the way the world is' in a way that is a clear and distinct essence, whereas 'weaker ontologies' highlight contingency and indeterminacy.

According to Davis (2003: 1), '[w]e cannot understand the historical evolution of political systems in terms of democracy, freedom, and human rights, the development of knowledge and science, and the quality and meaning of life without recognizing the centrality of the individual to our thinking'. Buddhist thought raises many ontological questions and suggests a distinctive view which resonates with White's (2000) 'weaker ontology'. At this level it has something to say about how we understand that the ontological status of the individual underpins core assumptions in economics. This point opens up some fertile dialogical space, particularly in light of recent calls for a reconceptualisation of economic theory's view of the subject (Davis, 2003; Fullbrook, 2002). Buddhism's distinctive concept of the human person stands in contrast to historical western presuppositions about the self; I will argue later that it also adds an important perspective to the debate. In particular, Buddhism adds a dimension of subjective praxis to what is a largely abstract social and philosophical debate. Several Buddhist-inspired scholars have begun to explicate these connections (Loy, 2000, 2002, 2003a; Crook & Fontana, 1990; Bubna-Litic, 2004).

The centrality of ontology to Buddhism brings it into debates around whether there is an enduring experience which transcends the specifics of historical and cultural location and may be understood as the enduring essential truth of Buddhism. Such a view is reflected in the claim by the Dalai Lama (Goldstein, 2002: ix) that 'Buddhism has evolved differently in different times and places and yet the essential dharma remains the same'. Most traditions honour the enduring belief in a concordance of the dharma throughout the history of Buddhism. For example, in the Hsin-hsin Ming Sutra ('Verses on faith in the mind', trans. Clarke, 1996) written in the 8th century, but attributed to the 6th-century third patriarch of Zen Seng Ts'an, there is a line which has been translated

as: ‘There is one Dharma, not many. Distinctions arise from the needs of the ignorant.’ The view that dharma reflects a reality which is beyond any individual doctrine is widely held by Buddhist practitioners; for example, Goldstein (2002: 193) suggests, ‘The essence of the Dharma is wisdom [which] brings the understanding that nonclinging is the essential unifying experience of freedom’. The one-dharma view has predominantly been a Mahāyāna stance, usually accompanied with a qualification regarding the veracity of alternative schools’ practices in the achievement of this understanding; and has found less favour among Theravadin practitioners, who have seen their own tradition as the original and pure one. Western scholars struggle to recognise how a plethora of different schools are all supposed to express the ‘one dharma’ when their teachings are not homogenous, and frequently appear incommensurate.

This conundrum not only applies to Buddhism but to wider conceptions of religious experience – that is, presenting different facets of the same perennial sacredness, as discussed earlier. For example, it is a recurring idea in Ken Wilbur’s works, in which the conception of the perennial philosophy becomes the essence of all religions. Ken Wilber (1997) draws from the phenomenology of the various mystical experiences of different traditions to set out a series of categorisations which form a developmental model of consciousness he calls the ‘spectrum of consciousness’. For Wilber (1997), each stage of development encompasses the previous stage and, while being a whole in one context and thus a *holon*, it is a complete or whole part of a wider whole. The next stage is another holon, but includes the previous, and so on, so that in one specific sense each more encompassing holon be said to be ‘higher’ or ‘wider’.

Buddhism does not fit comfortably with the universalist idea; there is an argument that the perennial reality that underlies Buddhism is that the self has no enduring existence beyond its historical and specific conditions. While interpretations may vary, the experiences would persist across cultures and time because it arises from the same existential fact. William James (1902/1985) defined the four qualities of mystical experiences as: *ineffability*, in that they cannot be described in words; a *noetic quality*, in that they induce knowledge, insight or illumination; *transience*, in that they are non-enduring; and *passivity*, in that the person finds the experience beyond their active imagination, as something that is given. The nature of the not-self experience would

also fit with this description, because it manifests as oneness with the universe, which, after all, is about as close as we can get to anything having the attributes of an omnipotent God. The Buddhist view, however, provides some important advantages in terms of a natural explanation. Pickering (1999) suggests that the view of the self as a process is more amenable to the accumulating evidence of cognitive science, in particular to what selves naturally do and how they change. This processual view allows us to generate new capacities, meanings and identities. The key point is that, while the content of the process may change, the process persists; for example, just as the flame in a fire is actually the result of a constantly dynamic series of chemical reactions, we see it as a constant flame. In this way a process may be both enduring *and* ephemeral, and thus the persistent 'truth' of Buddhism may be that the self is a process which has both these characteristics. The view that the self is a process, however, has major ontological implications, and implies a new direction for economic thinking.

3.1.3 Western Buddhists' pragmatic solutions

The debate on essences is by no means new, as historical precedent can be found in the work of William James (1902/1985), who was aware of the difficulties in defining essences. He recognised the dangers of 'a one-sided view of our subject', that in reality 'we may very likely find no one essence', and takes a pragmatic view (1902: 39):

> If we should inquire for the essence of 'government,' for example, one man might tell us it was authority, another submission, another police, another an army, another an assembly, another a system of laws; yet all the while it would be true that no concrete government can exist without all these things, one of which is more important at one moment and others at another. The man who knows governments most completely is he who troubles himself least about a definition which shall give their essence. Enjoying an intimate acquaintance with all their particularities in turn, he would naturally regard an abstract conception in which these were unified as a thing more misleading than enlightening. And why may not religion be a conception equally complex?

Non-essentialist approaches identify a common core in Buddhism as folly. Some Buddhist practitioners have opted for a pragmatic solution; for example, Goldstein (2002: 1-2) suggests: 'an allegiance to a very simple question: "What works?" What works to free the mind from suffering? What works to engender a heart of compassion? What works to awaken?' This pragmatic emphasis on investigation rather than belief, according to Goldstein (2002: 2), 'resonates strongly with the scientific and psychological paradigms that inform *our* [italics added] culture'. Zen teacher Robert

Aitken (2003) argues that, even though Buddhist scholars have shown the lack of authenticity and historical inaccuracy of many key Buddhist texts, their content is enduring because it not only enriches practice but in some cases is invaluable. According to Scott (1995: 148), 'Functionalism seems an appropriate key for better understanding the operational dynamics, existentialist goal and epistemological criteria through which Buddhism mostly operates'. The value of taking such an instrumental perspective might have a modernist ring, but in light of the scepticism towards Buddhism in western discourse it does not answer recurring and unresolved questions like 'Do Buddhist practices have an effect?' or 'Is insight a myth or a reality?'

A purely pragmatic focus, such as Goldstein's above, negates any epistemological mediation in self-reflection and leaves us open to what Borup (2004) calls 'inverting orientalism', in which elements from a particular cultural or subcultural context of the Asian tradition and its own hagiographies are uncritically transferred to the West. While the pragmatic solution remains appealing, there is a need for informed reflection.

3.1.4 Establishing authority in Buddhism

One concern expressed in the literature is the potential danger that such a pragmatic approach involves a selective appropriation, and as such begins to subvert the tradition that it purports to represent, by mirroring the values and culture of the appropriator. For example, Sharf (1995b) found that one of the most influential trends among western students of Zen has been towards the style of the *Sanbōkyōdan* (Three Treasures Association), which is a relatively new and heterodox movement founded by Yasutani Hakuun (1885–1973) in 1954 and brought into prominence by Phillip Kapleau in *The Three Pillars of Zen* (1967). Sharf (1995b) argues that Sanbōkyōdan displays many characteristic traits of the so-called 'New Religions' and is a radical departure from the image of Zen that his 'own historical and ethnographic investigations yielded … of traditional Zen monastic life' – a key divergence being the adaptation of 'what was essentially a monastic tradition to the needs of lay practitioners, many of whom are non-Japanese' (Sharf, 1995b: 426).

Others might see 'selective' appropriation as desirable, particularly when Sharf (1995b) critiques the Sanbōkyōdan for its engagement with modernity manifested by its efforts to 'democratise' Buddhism, empower the laity and 'reform and liberalize the Buddhist

institution' (Sharf, 1995b: 434). Sharf (1995b) judges Sanbōkyōdan as inauthentic for its departure from orthodox monastic models, and sides with the traditional monastic establishment. Any reform movement would naturally draw a degree of consternation by its departure from the orthodoxy, and bringing the Sanbōkyōdan closer to western values obviously aroused a critical reaction. Sharf (1995b: 440) points out that the Sanbōkyōdan reflects a distinctly modern orientation and thus reflects a marked discontinuity both 'from its classical Buddhist soteriological context and ... ceremonial, liturgical, and intellectual culture of the monastery'.

Sharf (1995b) seems to uncritically represent the established Zen orthodoxy and conveys a potpourri of concerns which challenge the legitimacy of the Sanbōkyōdan to transmit 'the dharma'. It is impossible to discern how much of these concerns reflect simply rivalry, or the resistance of conservatives to a new style. In this regard, Borup (2000) criticises Sharf (1995b) as giving an inaccurate reflection of the perception of Sanbōkyōdan in Japan, suggesting that, although the group's founders were not without controversy, they were widely respected as 'genuine masters'. The question of authenticity is a sticky one, which Garfield (2006: 21) provocatively suggests, 'is nothing more than an attempt to superimpose clarity where there is none, and hence just one more symptom of primal ignorance'.

The final words of the Buddha in the Kalama Sutta take up the question regarding the authoritative basis by which competing claims can be judged in Buddhism:

> Come, Kalamas. Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing, nor upon tradition, nor upon rumor, nor upon scripture, nor upon surmise, nor upon axiom, nor upon specious reasoning, nor upon bias towards a notion pondered over, nor upon another's seeming ability, nor upon the consideration 'The monk is our teacher.' When you yourselves know: 'These things are bad, blamable, censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill,' abandon them ... When you yourselves know: 'These things are good, blameless, praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness,' enter on and abide in them. (Bodhi, 1988)

Bhikkhu Bodhi (1988) cautions that this section should not be taken as a 'charter for free inquiry', but that it does set out a position on how to resolve problems of authority. The western encounter with Buddhism brings a number of epistemological questions which are difficult to resolve: Who defines what awakening is and what it is not? Do we privilege an established orthodoxy over reform movements? What status do we give the

texts attributed to its leaders or the founder of the tradition? What status can we give to western experiences of Buddhism? These epistemological questions share common epistemological concerns with contemporary economic theory, in which the old neoclassical 'orthodoxy' is being challenged. In examining these fundamental issues it soon becomes clear that the dialogical space between Buddhism and economics has to be capacious.

Rather than throw up our hands, there may be value in persisting in the discussion, recognising that, at the level of assumptions, the dialogue may be inconclusive. Certainly, the encounter between Buddhism and western thinking must include a re-evaluation of the basis by which authority is established. This necessity works both ways, as Buddhism challenges the legacies of old power struggles that took place during the European Enlightenment period, ones which continue to dominate economic thinking. The authority of experience is a pivotal issue in the study of religion, and has implications for the broader fabric of western academic discourse. The place of experience in Buddhism may suggest reopening these questions.

3.1.5 Suspicion of authority in late modernity

These questions also draw us into another arena of debate in western discourse – the contestation of modern assumptions about epistemology and what constitutes knowledge. Recently, critiques of claims to absolute 'knowledge' as being something separate from its constituting structures and power relations have gained currency. These critiques have their parallels in economic theory (see section 4.3, page 115) and have sparked a new wave of reinterpretations of Buddhist historical texts, ones which examine ideological and rhetorical dimensions, along with their truth claims. The recent work of Faure (1991, 1993, 1998) establishes the centrality of these aspects. When we stop to examine the role of the power structures that constitute authority and what passes for 'taken for granted' or 'true' in Buddhism, we are confronted with competing claims for legitimacy.[14] The basis for recognising legitimacy in monastic Buddhism has

[14] Foucault elucidates the relationship between power and knowledge and legitimacy, namely that 'power and knowledge directly imply one another … there is no power relation without the correlative

involved the role of credentials, institutional sanctions, or traditional authority. Sharf (1994: 43) notes that:

> many of those responsible for popularizing Zen in the twentieth century lacked formal institutional sanction themselves. D. T. Suzuki, Nishitani Keiji, and Abe Masao, to name but a few, all lacked formal transmission in a Zen lineage, and their intellectualized Zen is often held in suspicion by Zen traditionalists.

Sharf's (1995b) argument imputes opportunism to a lack of orthodox legitimacy, which is one interpretation of why Zen popularisers sought another kind of legitimacy in terms of western modern values. On the other hand, the new current in Zen came from a reciprocal or dialogical interaction with key western thinkers, through reformers deliberately engaging in a process of reworking Zen using newly encountered epistemologies. These new epistemologies posited different structures of authority and different agendas. Yet, while the accommodation of western concepts gave legitimacy to such Japanese apologists as D. T. Suzuki, it was not simply serving western agendas, but also had a subversive intention. As Foucault (1980: 100-101) explains:

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the concept's complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.

While the reformulation of Zen criticised the conservatism of the orthodoxy and highlighted its deficiencies, it also provided, as Sharf (1995b) acknowledges, a means to subvert modern critiques and implicitly western imperial power. The development of 'new religions' may have been the result of openness to dialogue with the West rather than simply the opportunistic creation of a 'lite' version which circumscribed the rigours of the orthodox culture of Zen to gain western patronage. Rather, its innovations may simply have reflected the growing concern among many Japanese intellectuals to accommodate modern ideas, particularly if Japan wished to remain free of colonial

---

constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (Foucault 1997: 27).

influence. A similar modernisation process can be found in other Buddhist traditions across Asia (Sharf, 1995a).

In the wake of western cultural domination of Asia, many Asian intellectuals were confronted with unfamiliar forms of Buddhism, as well as other religions, which the West diffused. The conception of a transcultural essence or firmament of truth which distinguished Buddhism from other (primitive) belief systems seemed crucial to a defence against modern critiques, including attacks described in Said's work on orientalism. Essentialism had the added utility of explaining the shortcomings of Buddhism historic institutions, which from a modern point of view were regarded as backward and medieval. On the other hand, modern Buddhist apologists, in seeking legitimacy within the frameworks of a modern epistemology, were confronted with a positivist agenda which weakened their position in general.

It is not surprising that many Asian Buddhists, in dealing with these dilemmas, were attracted to the approach of prominent and sympathetic western religious philosophers such as William James. James (1902/1985: 470) placed religious experience at the top of the agenda, arguing that 'in a world in which no religious feeling has ever existed, I doubt whether any philosophic theology could have ever been framed'. Inspired by James, the interlocutors of Zen and other Buddhist traditions recognised the centrality of religious experience in much of Buddhist discourse and tried to establish the awakening experience as the essential truth that transcended the various historical manifestations of Buddhism.

The centrality of experience also linked Zen with the foundational experience of the Buddha, which, according to Sharf (1995b: 45), was 'the notion of "pure origins" – the supposition that the original expression of a religious teaching most perfectly reflects its unvarying essence'. The importance of claims of a direct relationship to the founder clearly has a legitimating function in East Asian Buddhism, as exemplified by the fictional construction of lineages of direct 'transmission' from the Buddha to present-day teachers by the Chan and Zen sects to bolster their credibility (Faure, 1997). The claim of some form of special access to the original awakening experiences characterises much of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nishida (1921) and D. T. Suzuki (1962) conceived of 'pure experience', which they believed fitted with modern conceptions of a 'truth' as axiomatic and fundamental, like laws of physics that remain true over time

and space. The culture of scientism that accompanied the physical sciences – at a time when the new discoveries of relativity and quantum physics were yet to disturb its horizon – supported the view that the mysteries of the universe ultimately had an explanation. In accommodating this stance, Zen apologists supported the view that the experience achieved by advanced practitioners in most traditions could be traced to the same thing the Buddha purported as the timeless truth of the dharma. This was something that exists regardless of whether individual practitioners discover it or not; thus the ability to realise such a truth becomes a reflection on the adequacy of the seeker and not the 'truth'.

3.1.6 The authority of experience

Positing that Buddhism was founded on an essential experiential truth, however, did not acquit Buddhism or other religions from contradictions inherent in modernity, but arguably created a sort of stalemate. This stalemate reflected already existing latent tensions between philosophy and theology; between essence and existence; between Europe and America; and between the findings of science and theological revelation (Hill, 2005). One fault line that marred the new Buddhist position arose from the split between religious claims and scientific views. The central place of religious belief and subjectivity in western culture meant that, despite the intentions of the European Enlightenment, they could not altogether be dismissed, and thus, arguably, what emerged from the social upheaval of this period was a form of a détente. This détente was manifest in the agenda of liberalism, which sought to exclude religious traditions from the public sphere, advocating a separation of church and state and advocating religion to be a question of personal choice. Its offspring, modernity, carries assumptions that produced 'multiple and bewildering' tensions. These created fissures in the modern epistemological tradition which, according to Latour (1993), erect sharp and false distinctions between individual and society and between knowledge and the cognising subject, and thereby marginalise religion.

Sharf (1995a: 267) argues that a side effect of making religious experience the foundation was to 'thwart *the authority* [italics added] of the "objective" or the "empirical," and to valorize instead the subjective, the personal, the private'. In their attempts to accommodate modern thinking, Zen proponents, as Sharf (1994) suggests, no doubt saw an opportunity to present Buddhist practices (particularly meditation) as a

distinctive and highly developed technology for accessing the perennial fountain of all religious experience – practices in which Zen was superior. This view merged with an idealised oriental mystique to become attractive to an increasing number of westerners as a means of discovering a purported perennial truth in all religions. The western divide over objective and subjective epistemology placed Buddhism in an invidious position. In having an experiential foundation, Buddhism avoided dismissal as a primitive superstition founded on belief, only to find that religious experience itself had little currency in the West. Sharf (1994: 45) argues that modern Zen rhetoric based on identifying a type of 'experience' as its essence shifted away from traditional ethical principles, practices and doctrinal teachings to:

> a private, veridical, often momentary 'state of consciousness.' ... [This is a view which] can be traced directly back to Western writings on religion and psychology, notably the works of William James. In privileging experience the Japanese, like their Western mentors, sought to naturalize the category 'religion' – if religious traditions were predicated upon an ineffable, noetic, mystical state of consciousness, then they could not be rejected as mere superstition, infantile wish-fulfilment, or collective hysteria.

Sharf (2000: 267) sets out the problematic status of religious 'experience', which he sceptically regards as resistant to definition 'by design' and its use having come to 'play a pivotal role in the study of religion'. The dilemma that Sharf (2000: 268) presents is a choice between empiricism – 'the notion that all truth claims must be subject, in theory if not in fact, to empirical or scientific verification' – and the experiential dimension which is 'inaccessible to strictly objective modes of inquiry'.

Sharf (2000) questions the veracity of experiential accounts, drawing on Dennett's (1991) discussion of the acquired taste of beer, which centres around a conundrum: for those who persist to acquire a liking for beer, their experience of its taste is far more satisfactory than that of their first taste. According to Dennett (1991), there is a dynamic quality of experience or phenomenon, and, although this observation would surprise no practising Buddhist, it has become an area of renewed debate in psychology. These debates have significance for Buddhism, for the reasons discussed above, but they also have powerful implications for economics, which has been built on a largely empiricist foundation.

The major concern is largely methodological, and historically behaviourism regarded the use of self-report methods and introspection as scientifically dubious. Nisbett and Wilson (1977) have argued that close scrutiny of self-reports suggest that people are not able to accurately remember and report their cognitive and emotional states. The significance of this, according to Sharf (2000: 283), is 'that it is ill conceived to construe the object of the study of religion to be the inner experience of religious practitioners'.

Sharf (2000) sets out the problems of the introspective method as a means for knowledge of private experiences, noting that such inner experiences cannot be presented but can only be representations through texts, narratives, performances and so on. This does not mean that the only way of knowing is purely a narrative mode, but that the description of phenomena becomes a narrative description, so that, even if the rhetorical position of the text is that it presents a phenomenological description, we must be, according to Sharf (2000: 283), 'alert to the ideological implications of such a stance'. This critique is not entirely exclusive of understanding experience, and Sharf (2000: 284), not wanting to exclude its possibility, suggests that the issue concerns hermeneutics, which is ultimately 'how are we to understand people very different from ourselves without somehow effacing the very differences that separate us'. Sharf's critique appears to present insurmountable problems for the understanding of Buddhism fundamentally founded on the experiences of people separated by time and culture.

There is, however, a growing dissatisfaction with Sharf's view and the modern empiricist stance, which ultimately denigrates consciousness in all its many forms. Increasingly there is recognition that a phenomenology of consciousness is critical to a complete understanding of mind. Baars (1996: 211) suggests that hard questions about subjectivity may be made harder because 'we adopt an implausible, perfectionistic standard'. There is a common view that first-person reports are 'subjective' and therefore deficient in comparison to objective methods. Velmans (2000) argues that this reflects confusion over the meaning of objectivity in the scientific method. After all, we experience the everyday concrete physical world as contents of consciousness and the senses, and the observations and experiences that form the evidence in physics, chemistry and all sciences rely on consciousness. Similarly, a growing number of cognitive scientists (Depraz, Varela & Vermersch, 2000: 122) are arguing that it is

essential to 'actually engage directly in the description of phenomena'. In science, replication requires well-specified, repeatable procedures; similarly, observations can be 'objective' in the sense of intersubjective confirmation only. The scientific method can also be 'objective' in the sense that it takes into account 'observer effects', an approach requiring an appreciation of the ways in which the observer and observed interact. Since no observations are objective in the sense of being observer-free, it is possible to enable subjective methods to also be empirical, with careful consideration of the methodological problems that are peculiar to it. Our inability to directly access each other's experience may continue to present problems about how to validate such reports, but, given that we share common biological sensory and neural mechanisms, there is a fairly strong case to be made for a commonality of experience. It seems obvious that, in a range of cultural and social events, we share and reach agreement about private experiences, which then become public. Velmans (2000: 343) concludes: 'To the extent that an experience or observation can be generally shared (by a community of observers), it can form part of the data-base of a communal science'.

Thus, while we will never be able to replicate *exactly* what the Buddha experienced, it seems premature on the part of religious scholars to dismiss paying closer attention to experience without engaging in a search for more sophisticated methodologies. In the case of Buddhism, an experiential understanding of the mind is arguably central to the process of achieving 'awakening', and this is evident across most varieties of Buddhism. Sharf's (2000: 270) argument that 'we do not have access to mystical experiences *per se*, but only to texts that purport to describe them' ignores the plethora of anecdotal evidence of Buddhist practitioners to the contrary, and also assumes that these old texts reflect something that is incomprehensibly alien to contemporary experiences, which may not be the case.

Happiness, for instance, is recognisable across cultures. And while the orgasm, to take another example, might be rare in some cultures, we do not doubt its existence or potential existence. But whether each account reflects *exactly* the same experience is doubtful, and probably impossible. The key issue is not whether such reports are wholly defined by the influences of 'cultural environment, personal history, doctrinal commitments, religious training, expectations, aspirations and so on', as Sharf (2000: 271) contends, but whether, despite these influences, they are comparable. Furthermore,

as Charlene Spretnak (1991: 235) suggests, 'We realise that we approximate such experiences with language, in our interior monologue and elsewhere, but we know that those experiences are other than language can relate'. Human experiences, such as happiness and orgasms, are impossible to convey except through metaphor, as we cannot really know what an experience is like for another, but language can be used to find common metaphors (Mah & Binik, 2002). Language is an imperfect tool for communication, and Sharf (2000: 286) places too much weight on the ambiguity of religious experience when he pessimistically concludes that introspective accounts are destined to remain 'well meaning squirms that get us nowhere'.

While this last assertion may have become increasingly contested, it is an old debate and represents just another volley across a chasm in modern consciousness that divides subjective knowledge, which has its roots in romanticism, from objective knowledge, which has become the catch cry of proponents of modernity. When we discern how beholden economic theory is to the assumptions of modernity, we find ourselves confronted by a series of unexamined presuppositions about the human person and his or her wants and needs. This schism can be traced to before the European Enlightenment, but came to prominence in economic thinking with the confluence of social, economic and political events described by Polanyi (1944) as the 'great transformation' which accompanied the industrial revolution. It was in part a social experiment; nevertheless what began as a set of recommendations about public policy transformed into widespread acceptance as laws of the natural order.

Crucial to the dialogue between Buddhism and economics is what we make of Buddhism's experience of insight. Subjectivity and experience have been marginalised in modern science and its associated epistemological standpoint. The above discussion, however, points to major tensions within the culture of modernity today. These tensions reflect a turn away from the old subjective/objective epistemological dichotomies as postmodernism proposes different ways of framing subjectivity, discourse and its truth claims. This innovation opens up new possibilities for the dialogue between economic theory and Buddhism.

Latour (1993: 35) argues that the nub of the modernising agenda of the 19th and 20th centuries was 'Sorting out the kernels of science from the chaff of ideology', in particular the dogma of religion and the false assertions of tyranny. However, this

agenda had the unintended consequence of creating oppositions out of inextricably linked phenomena in both nature and society. Modernity, he argues, never achieves its conceptual goals, and perhaps it falls into what Ricoeur (1970/1965) calls a 'secondary naïveté' which simply exchanges one faith (in God) for another (in reason). Latour's sense that the non-human world of microbes, fish, rocks and boats is inextricably linked to the human world of science, fishing, mining and war seeks to redefine the epistemological and ontological relationship between people and nature. A similar split, which runs through western intellectual history and forms two distinct perspectives, also runs through Buddhist literature, as Wright (1998: ix) observes:

> English-language books on Buddhism have increased in numbers almost exponentially since they began to appear in the nineteenth century. Until very recently virtually all of them have taken one of two distinct modern forms: either they position themselves within the modern scientific tradition to analyse the history and sociology of Buddhism, or romantically they attempt to transmit the truth and transformative power of this tradition to the West.

Wright's (1998) observations go beyond how Buddhism has been understood in the West to evoke the wider opposition in western thought between science and romanticism, which itself is an expression of 'modernity', a split worldview which these two different epistemological approaches to Buddhism manifest. It is also present in the way economics has regarded questions of interiority. On the ethical and political level, romanticism represents a major source of resistance to the dehumanising aspects of industrialism, and a strong objection to the view that humans and nature are resources to be exploited or conquered.

3.2 Buddhism and romantic tensions in modernity

These tensions in western intellectual development relegated Buddhist philosophy, along with the theology of all other religions, to the periphery, removed from the concerns of mainstream economic thinking. When the first Buddhist traditions became known to European cultures in the 13th century, they were interpreted from a hermeneutic perspective dominated by premodern orthodox Christian thinking, and until the end of the 18th century were characterised largely by self-righteous rejection. The legacy of this continued to mould western perceptions of Buddhism and, as Clarke (1997: 190) notes, 'In the nineteenth century two major interpretative perspectives

became dominant, the one seeing Buddhism in deeply pessimistic terms, the other in terms of scientific rationalism'.

Not everyone in the 19th century, however, interpreted Buddhism negatively, and a significant number of westerners saw Buddhism as an exotic and enchanting alterity and a potential source of new wisdom, a view which Clarke (1997: 19) argued could 'be summed up in the word romanticisation'. Romanticism is a difficult categorisation; clearly it cannot be said to define anything like a coherent set of views, and there seems to be a degree of confusion which Berlin (2000) suggests may never be fully 'resolved'. Michael Scrivener (2004) points out the encompassing and enduring nature of romanticism, observing: 'Little can be taken for granted in romantic studies'. Buddhist writing, which falls within what Wright (1998) categorises as a romantic genre, are generally accounts of Buddhism that aspire to transmit a perennial 'truth'. These Buddhist doctrinal accounts are intended to be read in a certain way, implicitly, as transmissions of the Buddha's teachings.

Wright (1998) is cautious about romantic perspectives on Buddhism which seductively present Buddhist insight as being transcendent, in the sense that there is something to be discovered as an aspect of one's interiority. There is an important distinction between insights as something that you have, and what you are. This ontological dimension of Buddhist subjectivity is distinctive and is inconsistent with many other types of religious experience. Buddhism is not simply a form of experiential inquiry but is, rather, an existential inquiry which culminates in the recognition of an ontological error. As Norman Fischer (1991: 66) explains:

> Somewhere we've developed the misconception that poetry is self-expression, and that meditation is going inward. Actually, poetry has nothing to do with self-expression, it is the way to be free, finally, of self-expression, to go much deeper than that. And meditation is not a form of thought or reflection, it is a looking at or an awareness of what is there, equally inside and outside, and then it doesn't make sense anymore to mention inside or outside.

Fischer's sense of neither inside nor outside sets out a Zen perspective of subjectivity in which one finds the ordinary everyday self to be an illusion, one which Buddhist practice eventually resolves simply by drawing attention to what is there. From this perspective, poetry is not self-expression but something that arises. How this fits within the romantic discourse is not particularly important here, but there is some value in an

exploration of the overlap between Buddhism and romantic notions, while acknowledging their differences. The importance of romanticism, even its critics concede, underlies many assumptions that continue to shape our world, as Derrida (1980: 57-8) suggests, '[W]e have not yet been delivered from the Romantic heritage …'

Ideas that would eventually underpin romanticism as a source of higher knowledge have a long history in the West; for example, Aristotle (384-322 BCE) argued in *Poetics*: 'Poetry ... is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular'. The romantic privileging of subjective inquiry as the path to the highest truth has a parallel in modernity, as it regards this 'truth' as 'natural' to be found and thus open to all people regardless of time and place. The romantic view of Buddhism regards it as a set of universal philosophical ideas available to all and which, as Kalupahana (1992) suggests, are a far richer alternative to working with 'the scanty references to historical events'. This view does not regard the rational comprehension of a philosophy as the focus of Buddhism; rather, the focus is experiential and pivots on reality as directly experienced, starting with the Buddha's awakening.

Wright's (1998) recognition of a split between romantic and rational approaches to Buddhism is, in many ways, a mirror of western intellectual history. Modern economic thought arising out of the diverging cultures of the secular and Christian traditions is itself a reflection of this split. Romanticism can be recognised not only in its opposition to the growing rise of industrial capitalism, but also as a partisan in favour of organic (as opposed to mechanical) theories of mind, and of poetry against science. Charlene Spretnak (1999: 133) notes the resilience of romanticism over time and how its pejorative usage hides an 'entire lineage of substantive resistance to modernity'. For Spretnak, the central bias of modernity is towards *economism*, which is the tendency in modern societies to privilege economic values as 'the fundamental determinant of everything else'. While romanticism has had a significant impact on western thinking, particularly in the arts, it is in the environmental movement that its offspring are re-emerging as a significant counter-movement. We find this familiar split between romantic and scientistic assumptions in most economic theories, and, as such, the

dialogue between Buddhism and economics parallels this split that characterises modernity.

Romanticism contrasts with the central promise of European Enlightenment, that conflicts between knowledge and power can be overcome by grounding claims to the exercise of authority in reason. Reason both represents and embodies truth. The modern scientific tradition seeks to gather information through detailed research, creating models of understanding in ways that fit the 'facts' and explain those which do not. Comte's positivism sought to challenge hypocrisy and oppression by the force of demonstration.

Perhaps because of this struggle, mainstream western thought has shown very little interest in demonstrating the efficacy of Buddhist teachings. Curiously, Buddhism fell into the ambit of a range of disciplinary perspectives which, as Sharf (2000: 268) points out, are 'not necessarily invested in the truth claims of any particular religious tradition'. Scientific inquiry into Buddhism lapsed, particularly in psychology, following John B. Watson's (1928) manifesto on behaviourism, which denigrated the subjective completely. Moreover, there seems to be no evidence until the 1970s of any systematic research program which sought to scientifically establish the veracity of any Buddhist claims.

Until the late 1960s, most western research seems to have focused on establishing the factuality of historical events in the doctrine, establishing the relationship of Buddhism to the context in which it emerged and developed, and exploring the social and political conditions it engendered. Within this genre, scientific scholarship added an important perspective through detailed analyses of the social context in which traditional accounts were conceived. The scientific approach developed simultaneously using the tools of the social sciences to analyse the history and sociology of Buddhism, which, as David Loy (1999) notes, was 'more academically respectable' and has perhaps dominated approaches to the study of religion. These approaches subsume Buddhism into broader disciplinary narratives, thus tending to explain it 'away'. As De Man (1983: 148) suggests:

> [m]odernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at last a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin

> that marks a new departure. This combined interplay of deliberate forgetting with action that is also a new origin reaches the full power of the idea of modernity.

It was thought that Buddhism could simply be explained away as an alien superstitious belief system with similar sociopsychological functions to those of other religions.

The importance of experience in literature evokes its role in religion, and the schism between science and religion resonates with the two separate cultures described by C. P. Snow (1959), who contrasted the culture of science to that of the literary world. The depth of this divide, revealed by F. R. Leavis's critique of Snow's work, appears to have shifted in the last two decades and there is a growing sense of convergence. Nearly four decades since Snow announced the 'two cultures', the belief that the gap between them denotes some intrinsic difference in the kind of knowledge and truth that they produced has eroded. This shift arises largely from the fragmentation of the dominant position of modern science in defining which conception of knowledge and truth is deemed legitimate. There has been a growing accumulation of writings that challenge the prevailing view, and the 'purity' of science as a mode of pursuing truth in isolation from its social and intellectual milieu has been powerfully questioned (Rorty, 1979). Some symbolic battles have been won in the defence of this privileged view of science,[15] but, in spite of them, there is a growing acknowledgement that scientific knowledge is more like its apparent 'other' than was previously thought and reflects a distinctly human construction. As Bourdieu (1990/1980: 25) puts it, 'Of all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism'.

Whether this convergence produces a third culture, as Snow suggested, or the separation of the two positions was always illusory, remains to be seen. The crucial nexus between these two cultures is the fundamental question of the nature of human subjective experience. Most of the humanities (not only literature and art, but also psychology and phenomenology) have deeply touched on questions of human experience, but new

---

[15] Including a clever, but fatuous, attempt to discredit this process by Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont (1998): 'Fashionable nonsense postmodern intellectuals'.

developments are now providing insights into the very foundations of the human experience that Buddhist practices illuminate.

In the last few decades, a growing counter-culture from *within* science has begun to generate new methods of exploring experience. This multilayered resurgence of interest in experience converges with the romantic agenda, with its inclusion of sensuality, bodily experience and the subjective, into acts of recovering some sense of truth. As the appeal of modernity wanes, there seems to be a return to 'romantic' questions after years in the wilderness. This new romanticism may also be seen as the product of the abandonment of the hubris and certainty that characterised 'modern' science. These new excursions into feeling and experience are not a simple return to past ways of thinking.

David Abram (1997), for example, explores how language is related to the sensuous, embodied self, and reveals deep interconnections with nature in a way that touches the cryptoromantic sensibility and interconnectivity of Buddhism. Abram (1997: 67) draws on Merleau-Ponty in acknowledging that subjectivity does not:

> preclude my visible, tactile, objective existence for others, I find myself forced to acknowledge that any visible, tangible form that meets my gaze may also be an experiencing subject, sensitive and responsive to the beings around it, and to me.

These new explorations reflect a real and positive change, and, although Baudelaire (1846/1992) may find them too systematic to be romantic, they highlight a new epistemological perspective on the subjective. There are important consequences from opening up of the scientific perspective to include this new perspective into one worldview which, as Dale Wright (2000: x) suggests, can be seen as 'no longer completely within either one of them and therefore is in some sense "*post*" both of them'.

It is perhaps too early to precisely demarcate what is 'post'. However, its emergence seems to depend on a growing dialogue. While Dawkins (1998) argues that 'science never detracts, but only adds', the romantic objection has it that such additions destroy the natural beauty of the moment; like the nerd who nervously chatters when he should be silent, intimacy is lost and the feminine beauty of life retreats.

It is at this point that the possibility of a new sensibility seems to lie close to Buddhist thinking. In light of these blurred boundaries, the question 'What is Buddhism?' opens

up the possibility of postmodern understanding. If we understand that Buddhism emerges from an encounter with the very anti-essentialist nature of the human subject, one that experientially and linguistically may be endlessly deconstructed; then we might see that Buddhism provides an important missing experiential dimension to what has emerged as a highly philosophical and abstract debate.

3.3 Buddhism as a postmodern sensibility

Since the European Enlightenment, the growing commitment to secular rationality as an ideal within western culture has produced a concurrent marginalisation of the 'mystical' and 'poetic', and the projection of these qualities onto Buddhism. The reign of secular rationality now faces a growing tide of discontent which includes a re-evaluation of the legacy of the European Enlightenment culture of modernity based on it. Buddhism stands to gain from a range of interesting developments, including a renewed questioning of a theme found in Marx, Freud and Nietzsche that holds to the view that modernity is intrinsically and irreversibly antagonistic to religion. Loy (1994) explores the critique by Max Weber (1864-1920) of rationalisation process and its 'disenchantment' of the modern world. For Weber, 'formal rationality', which has become the dominant mode of management, limits thinking to a functional and instrumental perspective and lacks the capacity to answer deeper questions regarding purpose and values. Loy (1994:48) points out that:

> Weber's study of the origins of capitalism suggests not only that it had religious roots but that it may still retain a religious character. Then must any 'solution' to the rationalization and disenchantment of the world also have something of a religious character?

This critique also challenges the objective and the subjective demarcation. David Ray Griffin criticises the effects of secular modernity, arguing that the denial of all subjectivity, all experience, all feeling disqualifies nature, which is only accessible to us through experience. Nature reduced to mechanistic laws loses its 'magic', and is disenchanted in the sense of being meaningless with 'no role for purposes, values, ideals possibilities, and qualities, and there is no freedom, creativity, temporality, or divinity'(1988: 667).

Resistance is coalescing on several fronts. One is the exploration of how power relations have a significant bearing on the social construction of what constitutes 'the truth'. As

discussed earlier, the basis of authority has major ramifications for understanding Buddhism. As King (1999) argues:

> both philosophy and the history of ideas should take more seriously not only the social location of the concepts under examination but also their involvement in a wider cultural field of power relations, or what has become known as 'the politics of knowledge'. In particular, I wish to argue for an awareness of the mutual imbrication of religion, culture and power as categories. This is not to say that religion and culture can be reduced to a set of power relations but rather that religion and culture are the field in which power relations operate.

On this front, there is a growing recognition that contemporary religious studies reflect their Eurocentric, Christian provenance. This bias has manifested in the studies of Buddhism which overemphasise scriptures. Christians privilege the Bible, and this habit has been brought to bear on the study of Buddhism. While the study of texts has some value, it also contains significant cultural and historical biases.

Dale Wright (2000: viii) shows how uncritical reading of Buddhist texts is open to a range of misinterpretations, due to assumptions about authorship, language, and historical, cultural and political context. Many of the original voices of history have been silenced or erased by the Asian tradition of changing and rewriting texts. Wright (2000) observes, however, that such interventions may not necessarily result in a distortion of the text; rather, this practice needs to be understood through a critically reflective process that is cautious about taking the texts on face value. The tangle of historicism and cultural bias can never be transcended and we will always be limited by our reconstruction of its social epistemology. On one hand, rational scientific approaches focusing purely on behavioural characteristics of Buddhist practice fail to acknowledge a form of evidence by which most human beings navigate their everyday lives, one which is learnt from subjective experience. On the other, subjective experience fails to acknowledge the factors that underlie its construction.

Emerging new fronts of research have reopened the question of subjectivity, challenging traditional notions of the subject and its relationship to the self. The assumption of the centrality of subjective experience as some ultimate and non-reducible characteristic of being human and conscious has become the topic of inquiry both in cognitive science and in social theory. These new developments are significant to the dialogue between Buddhism and economic thought because of their proximity to alternative and 'weaker'

ontological notions (White, 2000). Many postmodern thinkers move in the direction of Zen Buddhism, but, as Olson (2000: 22) suggests, 'they do not make the final leap or transition to the Zen philosophical position or something akin to it, even though both parties perceive shortcomings in the representational mode of thinking'. It is outside the ambit of this thesis to account for the kaleidoscope of contemporary postmodern theorising along these lines. However, the not-self view of Buddhism is an experiential manifestation *in vivo* of basic ontological challenges which not only problematise the substantive foundation of Cartesian self but can be used to challenge conventional notions of life itself. Thus 'the final leap' suggested by Olson is the one that actualises what in contemporary philosophy is largely abstract speculation.

3.4 Liberating experiences: 'real'-ising not-self

Until recently, the Cartesian sense of the self, as a unique subjective entity corresponding to the everyday usage of the reflexive 'I', dominated the social sciences. As witnesses to cultural diversity, anthropologists have observed that the notion of the self was constructed, at least partially, through culture, language and other such elements extrinsic to the internal processes of cognition. Different people linguistically constructed differing notions of the self, and this alteration affected how they acted in the world. George Herbert Mead, according to Odin (1996: 198), viewed the self as 'neither a substantial self nor an absolute self but a relational, interactional, and dialogical self, or what he otherwise terms the social self'. This rejection of the Cartesian idea of a substantive entity which could exist separate and independent of its social context maintains that the self is always social and intersubjectively constituted.

Over the last four decades, western thought has increasingly acknowledged that subjective experience is open to a range of physical, chemical, biological, psychological and cultural factors. These diverse elements constitute the self through a process of mutual interaction with the world. Derrida (1974) argues that the relationship of 'self' and 'other' extends to the social-symbolic order. Accordingly, every subject contains something of its other and every object is always a subject. This perspective challenges the notion that our subjective reality is fundamentally private, bounded and 'owned'. If the self can be understood as co-constructed, then there is no 'one' dimension, but several which make up an 'intersubjectivity'. This insight presents a major challenge to economic assumptions about the self.

An important aspect of this recent trend is how narrative or discursive practices act as the foundation of personal identity, culture and the historical world of the narrator. For example, Davies and Harre (1990: 46) argue that '[a]n individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate'. Hermeneutics has long problematised the interpretation and meaning of text, and arguably a narrative self continues to be elusive, whether based on experience or identity.

Ricoeur (1992/1990: 42) suggests that the problem of narrative identity pertains to central questions in narratives which involve 'who?', including 'who acted?', 'who intervened?', 'what was done to whom?', 'on whose behalf was the action taken?' and 'who is to blame?'. In accounting for such questions, the narrative view recognises that the meaning of words does not simply arise inside our heads, but is largely given, implying an 'externalized view of the self'. The 'teflon' view of the human subject – upon which modernity projects a cool rational disposition, reinforced by certainty, as a neutral observer of the world, and is untouched by its vicissitudes – begins to be a very much less autonomous figure, after this 'linguistic turn'. The human being implied by this view seems unable to escape from a network of linguistic significations and historical projections.

Wright (1998: 71) presents an innovative explanation, based on the Buddhist notion of dependent arising. He contends that a post-romantic view of narrative recognises that subjective feelings and thoughts 'co-arise'. This view resonates with the work of cognitive scientists such as Damasio (1994: xv), who challenges Descartes' conception of the human mind as separate from bodily processes and argues that 'feelings are just as cognitive as other percepts. They are the result of a most curious physiological arrangement that has turned the brain into the body's captive audience.' Wright's sense of language and experience as dependently arising is an underrated contribution to a debate around the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which holds that there is a systematic relationship between the structure of the language a person speaks, how they perceive the world and how they behave in it. This linguistic determinist view, which implies that language is effectively hardwired into cognition, has more recently been questioned. Words do not account for everything. Carruthers (2002) argues for

synchronic cognitive functions of language which open up a range of other forms of cognition, of which language is only one. This fits with Wright's hypothesis that the two 'co-arise', and cautions against a purely narrative approach.

Others writers are also sceptical of narrative determinacy. Spretnak (1999) points out that many narrative perspectives fail 'to recognise that all human thought, social or individual, is situated in the processes of body, nature, and place'. The understanding of the self from the point of view of language finds itself on fragile territory, as Wittgenstein (2001/1922) realised. In his examination of the relation between the nature of the self and the linguistic phenomena of self-reference, such as the use of the first-person pronoun 'I', he noted that the self cannot be its own subject, for as soon as we externalise it and part make it of 'our' world it is objectified – so what can we say about the self? Later, however, Wittgenstein (2002/1953) seemed to be saying we speak of what we really don't know (with certainty), famously suggesting, 'What we cannot speak of we must pass over in silence'. Both views shed some light on Buddhist philosophy.

The use of silence is a common theme in Buddhism, exemplified by the story of Vimalakirti, who, when Manjusri asked him 'what is a *Bodhisattva's* entry into the dharma gate of nonduality?' responded with silence.[16] Wright's (1992: 129) comments on silence are illuminating:

> [W]hatever connections East Asians have or have not been able to make between language and silence, our Western interpretations have been naive in taking their antilanguage rhetoric literally and have failed to appreciate the ironic fact that this was their most powerful religious language.

This failure, Wright (1992) argues, leads to fundamental misinterpretations of Zen, because the refusal to acknowledge experiential differences between cultures ultimately results in a lack of understanding. It is the result of attempting to understand in our own language something that may not be a universal experience. Wright acknowledges

---

[16] In Mahāyāna Buddhism, Vimalakirti is a mythical awakened layperson of social and economic substance. Manjusri is the Buddhist personification of wisdom, symbolising mastery of the dharma in all respects (Watson, 1997).

Alasdair MacIntyre's (1988: 344) notion of the impossibility of 'tradition-free individuals' as the source of this confusion. Wright (1998: 210) makes the point that without practising and learning Zen we can never understand it, as 'Zen theory is a form of Zen practice', and Zen practice is cultivating 'greater and greater awareness'.

One of the most important philosophers to struggle with the ontological question of self was Heidegger. Heidegger (1962), in *Being and Time*, suggests that we must reflect first on the question of being, which is literally: 'what *is*?' This question, Heidegger argues, was passed over by the Greeks, including Plato, and has never been resolved. Heidegger takes it up to develop a view of being, which Neil Evernden (1986) explains using the metaphor of a magnetic field. Being, in Heidegger's conception, is a sense of presence or *Dasein* ('being there' in German), which is present, yet nothing is tangible. Heidegger says that Dasein has a 'tendency' to interpret itself in terms of 'world'. According to Heidegger (1962), being there is understanding – in an existential sense (as opposed to discursive explanation). Picking up on this point, Michael Zimmerman (1981) notes that we are so entrenched in the *contents* of awareness that we fail to notice awareness or openness itself. As Nietzsche (1887/1989: 15) reminds us, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 'Present experience has, I am afraid, always found us "absent-minded".' This awareness, obviously, is not a thing, but an openness in which things can be revealed, including narrative and the ego. Accordingly, the conscious human subject is something that reveals a unique mode of being, one in which a phenomenological description is most appropriate. Evernden (1986: 65) extends the notion of Dasein,as field of concern which is 'made visible as care'. What is interesting is that this 'field of care' does not finish at the epidermis, but 'is a gradient of involvement in the world' through which we *identify*. We hear our own name being called whenever we hear from any region of our being which we identify with.

This sense of the self as having 'fuzzy' boundaries has powerful ontological implications; if 'being' is not the same as identity, there is a deeper level of analysis which is concerned beyond Ricoeur's (1992/1990) questions regarding who we think we are, to what is – or just *is!* This sense of being is something that is phenomenologically distinct from language. Heidegger challenges the dichotomous assumptions which interpret human '*being*' as something self-contained, detached and separate from the 'given' world – it is being-in-the-world. This is a difficult concept –

the sense that one is always a person in context, that there is always some kind of involvement with the realm beyond one's epidermis. Thus, as the author of this text, 'I' extends to the computer, a lover, friends, the University, music, nature, the nation, the planet and even the universe. These are given. The body is subject to change over time, yet 'being' remains as the empty space in which 'I' happens. This is a substantial shift which sets out self as a provisional self, and transcends what we identify with as 'presence'.

Abram (1997) suggests that our experience is not simply 'being' but 'interbeing', and that non-human nature holds a presence that is 'given' to our sense of being:

> Our most immediate experience of things, according to Merleau Ponty, is necessarily an experience of reciprocal encounter – of tension, communication and commingling. From with the depths of the encounter, we know the thing or phenomenon only as our interlocutor – as a dynamic presence that confronts us and draws us into relation. (Abram, 1997: 56)

The idea of deep ecology is largely based on this wider sense of interbeing. Deep ecologists suggest a more ecocentric sense of self, so that:

> we gradually discover our sensory perceptions to be simply our part of a vast, interpenetrating web-work of perceptions and sensations borne by countless other bodies – supported, that is, not just by ourselves, but by icy streams tumbling down granitic slopes, by owl wings and lichens, and by the unseen, imperturbable wind. (Abram, 1997: 65)

From this perspective Abram recognises a perspicacity in which a bird's call echoes in his own being. This view is consonant with a self that dependently arises and is not something that can be separated from a wider state of being which, like Heidegger's field of care, is interconnected with the world in circularity – between human and non-human. Heidegger (1991) shows us an important link with sensibility to suggest how to approach art. He points out that an artist creates the work that defines the artist; neither exists without the other. Heidegger points out that if we try to derive art from some higher concept, such as aesthetic or beautiful, we fail, because to do so we must already know that art is beautiful and aesthetic.

This sense of being transcends the body; according to Evernden (1986: 65), 'it means being-in-the-world, and it implies a different sense of the environment'. It is a more participative sense, and a sense which links with Abram's deep overlap between the

human and non-human worlds. Encountering a work of art, according to Heidegger (1991), is parallel to this being-in-the-world. Just as we are unable to establish the 'thingly' character of art, we are unable to locate a self. The self, like art, is essentially an 'opening' to be in. If we hold only to the contents of our mind, or simply the object in front of us, as Heidegger finds with a work of art, this approach is inadequate to describe our essence.[17]

Ultimately, according to Heidegger, we must let go of our concepts and allow a thing just to be what it is. This process of allowing a thing 'to be' as it is, which Heidegger calls *Gelassenheit* (also translated as 'release'), can prove to be one of the most difficult of tasks. This term has a mystical meaning. According to Lanzetta (1992: 252), the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart used it term to depict a:

> consciousness that 'lets be' arises ... not from the self and human effort, but precisely from the gift of radical detachment in which the Godhead reveals itself as the source and ground of the ultimate Gelassenheit – 'that' which draws the soul into its own indistinction and nothingness.

Heidegger, however, used the term to depict a way of 'thinking' about the object of attention without any categorisation, elaboration, or adumbration of the mind. It is a process recognisably similar to meditation. As with meditation, Heidegger stipulates that it is not a passive abdication of responsibility: art is 'never gathered from objects that are present and ordinary … in the midst of what is art breaks open an open place, in whose openness everything is other than usual' (Heidegger, 1991: 71).[18] In this sense, by being able to let go of preconditioned ways of seeing the world, we can see it as it is and apprehend something new.

---

[17] The following extract from an interview with artist Howie Bagley seems to capture Heidegger's sense of presence: 'I once went to the San Francisco Modern Museum of Art and saw an Yves Klein painting that was just blue. I decided to stare at it for a while. I began to see subtle variations in the paint, so what once looked like just a flat surface now came to life. I began to notice the people in the museum and their reaction to the painting. They became part of the painting's performance too. Some were amused by the gall of painting in just one colour, some were irritated, some were interested. Most just ignored it and looked at more traditional paintings. I sat there for a long time. My eyes began to notice the trails that people would leave as they walked in front of the painting (no, I wasn't on drugs). I don't think I've ever enjoyed a piece of art that much in my entire life' (Rasmussen, 2003).

[18] Particularly the overlap with Norman Fischer's comments on mindfulness and poetry (see page 65).

Glass (1995: 17) explains that Heidegger (1966) distinguishes this meditative type of thinking from calculative thinking. In *Discourse on Thinking*, Heidegger (1996: 46) sets out the distinction:

> It computes ever new, ever more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is.

Heidegger concludes that we can only understand the meaning which reigns in everything that is, in a phenomenological sense, as pure experience and presence. Instead of things being solid objects that enter into relation with us by chance, a thing is an entity in its reality determined by a dynamic and complex panoply of references and assignments in which it is enveloped. This interconnectedness is what makes it unique. Likewise a 'self' arises in relation, not just to our social and genetic history, but to what is not known about that history; as so much is not known, we can say that mystery in life is part of who we are. We cannot understand the mystery through calculative thinking, but rather by pausing to see what is manifest.

The affinity between Heidegger's thought and Buddhism is no accident. As May (1996: 107) points out, 'Heidegger was less that generous in acknowledging how much he learned from the East Asian tradition'. This is not the place for a thorough evaluation of Heidegger's thinking, and while Glass (1995) is suspicious of his sense of presence and perhaps its degree of abstraction, we can see how this suspicion is overcome in Abram's interbeing. Clearly Heidegger prefigured the postmodern reaction against modern discourse itself – against the logocentrism of the calculative mind, a state of being which is 'stuck in the head', just like the reviled 'nerd' or 'geek'.

Glass (1995) contrasts Heidegger's notion of presence to the work of Mark C. Taylor, which is closely aligned to Derrida's writing. Taylor (1997) shows how one meaning always 'hides' another, and in this way language always has an uncertain and 'slippery' quality, in that what appears on the surface (or a hide) in effect hides something else. Derrida's exploitation of the instability of language has similar disorienting effects: it subverts the rational foundations of modernity because it engenders a sense of fragmentation along the lines that once safely demarcated such things as science, religion and art. Derrida's deconstruction also highlights how things, the self and other

representations are constructed meanings. Our conceptual vocabulary is a collection of convenient fictions which are attempts to deal with the overwhelming complexity of life. The provisional nature of sense-making is motivated by a sense of the ungraspable nature of reality, upon which rational analysis and understanding are founded and are thus fraught. Derrida (1974) pushes critical deconstruction to a point where it undermines all notions of self-identity through the logic of 'différance'.

Différance operates though the demonstration that any category of presence, being or identity can be deconstructed into a 'play of differences'. Since no sign can be itself, it is split off from what it represents through différance, which is a combination of two French verbs meaning 'to differ' and 'to defer'. This split reveals the impossibility of conceptual closure necessary for a universal meaning, or what is called the 'transcendental signified', since the 'signified' is revealed to be the play of floating signifiers. Foucault (1983: 29) explores representation in *This is not a pipe*, finding that 'Nowhere is there a pipe'. Deconstruction highlights the tendency to semantically create the illusion of certainty by ignoring categories that subvert it.

If we understand our identity to be linguistically constructed, then deconstruction has powerful implications for who we are, and deconstruction is also instructive in how these ontological categories can be challenged. One category that is crucial to not only scientific reason but also ethics is the category of life itself. Buddhism claims to transcend the cycle of life and death. Rationally, this may seem impossible. However, if we examine the modern notion of life through postmodern lenses, we find that the distinction between life and death is not as robust as it appears. The following analysis shows, using Maturana and Varela's (1998) construction as an example, how scientific definitions of life are open to deconstruction.

Maturana and Varela (1998: 41) begin by considering whether a fossil is living. This is not a trivial question, because a fossil, particularly of a simple life-form, is morphologically virtually the identical of its living counterpart; hence, on the basis of its structure, it is difficult to specify what about it is not alive. Maturana and Varela confront the problematic nature of determining whether a being is living or dead, as some things, such as zombies (Collins, 1996), are indeterminate. The question of life is particularly poignant because this is exactly the claim made by Buddhism, which is that we also make an unfounded distinction between our life, as a self, and what we consider

not-self. Maturana and Varela (1998) trace the history of approaches used to define life on the basis of reproduction and reject them, because a machine can be built capable of reproducing itself. They propose instead that 'living beings are characterised in that, literally, they are continually self-producing'. This self-producing process overcomes the problem of the machine version of life, and they label the process *autopoietic organisation*. Crucially, however, Maturana and Varela (1998: 43) concede that, while 'It is easy to point to a certain organisation by naming the objects that make up a class, it can be complex and hard to describe exactly and explicitly the relations that make up that organisation'. In other words, it is easy to name certain forms of things as life, by naming them as objects that make up what is life. We can name animals, insects and plants as alive, and rocks, clouds and lakes as not. Using the example of a chair, like Wittgenstein (2002/1953), they conclude that even something as simple as a chair can be difficult to define. In contrast to Wittgenstein, Maturana and Varela (1998: 43), do not fully recognise the contingent basis of such claims, and state: 'as regards "chairs" as a class, it may be easy to describe the organisation of a "chair", however it is not so with the class of good deeds, unless there is a considerable amount of cultural agreement'.

This cultural contingency forces them to pre-empt their conclusion: 'When we speak of living beings, we *presuppose* [italics added] something in common between them; otherwise we wouldn't put them in the same class we designate with the name "living"' (1998: 43). Based on this presumption, they then develop several morphological constraints at a cellular level of analysis which effectively eschew any other conceptions of life than the culturally familiar ones.

Maturana and Varela's definition, however, encounters 'undecidability' with the case of viruses, which they recognise could be classed as living organisms by virtue of their prodigious reproductive capabilities; but they draw the line by arguing that they could be seen as not living, because of their inability to self-produce without material from other living organisms. This interdependence is not unique to viruses, and, although sustenance is not part of the classification, most life is dependent on other life forms for survival. Since the virus needs other organisms to reproduce they deemed it not to be alive. The distinction is tenuous. Derrida's (1981a: 42-43) non-binary logic focuses on such 'undecidables', that is:

> unities of simulacrum, 'false' verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, *without ever* constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics (the *pharmakon* [in Plato] is neither remedy nor poison, neither good nor evil neither the inside nor the outside neither speech nor writing; the *supplement* is neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc.; the *hymen* is neither confusion nor distinction, neither identity nor difference, neither consummation nor virginity, neither the veil nor the unveiling, neither the inside nor the outside, etc.; ... Neither/nor, that is *simultaneously* either*/or* the mark is also the *marginal* limit, the *march*, etc.).

The undecidability of viruses presents a problem of classification, and, according to the National Research Council (NRC) of Canada (2004), some have speculated that viruses started as rogue segments of genetic code that evolved to a parasitic existence. As such, a virus sits in an undecidable position: to accept it as living would shift the whole issue of what is life to a new dimension. If life is a code, or a biological meme, then this assumption opens up to a wider category of codes which would give 'life' to things that were once considered non-living, such as computer viruses. In this way, deconstruction seeks to disrupt oppositional logic, such as that based on life and death, by acknowledging undecidables which resist definition.

What lies behind the desire to set up binary oppositions and to cut through the complexity and indeterminacy of reality? In this example, breaking down binary oppositions brings into question any clarity around the distinction between life and non-life. An example of a different view of this binary opposition is Lovelock's (2000) Gaia hypothesis, which postulates that Earth is more than just a home; it's a living system, as its climate and the composition are always close to an optimum for whatever life inhabits it, from bacteria to whales. Lovelock's view challenges widely held western cultural conceptions of what is alive and what is not. Derrida's attack on the quest for certainty highlights how Maturana and Varela (1998) eventually grasp their *a priori* assumptions about life, and defer further questioning. Once deconstructed, life and death become uncertain, a mystery; furthermore, the process forces us to rethink the very question of what is life and death. Perhaps life is just one sort of manifestation of the universe, and the distinction is simply pragmatic.

Deconstructive critiques focus on the tentative and uncertain nature of narrative reality, and suggest that the self is far from contained and monolithic, but rather a fuzzy,

unstable concept. From a deconstructive point of view, however, to say that the self is completely 'empty' is to fall into the other polar opposite, emptiness. Kostera and Kociatkiewicz (1999: 49) point out that:

> It is an anti-frame of reference, becoming pertinent only in some scientific theories, such as the theory of black holes, or in some legends, such as the story about the Bermuda Triangle. In philosophy and theology it symbolizes the speculation about what happens when the subject is no more ... Emptiness is generally associated with death or non-existence … It is everywhere and nowhere.

This is an important objection, and Derrida (1981b: 325) is aware of it, as we see in this passage:

> Who is it that is addressing you? Since it is not an 'author,' a 'narrator,' or a 'deus ex machina,' it is an 'I' that is both part of the spectacle and part of the audience, an 'I' that, a bit like 'you,' attends (undergoes) its own incessant, violent reinscription within the arithmetical machinery; an 'I' that, functioning as a pure passageway for operations of substitution, is not some singular and irreplaceable existence, some subject or 'life,' but only, moving between life and death, between reality and fiction, etc., a mere function or phantom.

Here Derrida recognises the emptiness of self-identity, but resists the temptation to choose one side or the other, leaving it undecidable, as a phantom rather than as non-existence. A phantom is like a cloud, which has strong significance in Zen Buddhism, as monks are known as *Unsuii* or clouds. It is an undecidable being existing, but yet a phantom is empty of existence – neither alive nor dead. This metaphor lies at the heart of the critical deconstruction which Derrida calls the 'decentred self'. Any sign which has been give the absolute status of having self-identity is a 'centre'. Since this centre can be fractured into différance, so too can historically significant terms which define centres, such as essence, the conscious subject, substance or God. The logic of this is recognisably consistent with the Buddhist concept of not-self and dependent arising.

There are two levels of understanding of this point in Buddhism. The first is at the epistemological level. What might be essential to Buddhism seems to involve an undecidable: the core experience defines the variety of practices, but these cannot be regarded as separate from defining that experience. The second level is ontological; it concerns the nature of self. The object of Buddhist practice is the realisation that any centre or essential self is phantom-like in nature, both existing and yet empty of existence.

In Zen Buddhism, the practice of the koan *Mu* starts out as a phenomenological search for a centre; Zen students are often given the question: what is Mu?[19] As the student begins to develop and become intimate with Mu, he or she finds that this one word appears as identical to their phenomenological sense of a core and quintessential self. Over time, as clarity develops and when the nature of Mu is finally encountered, according to the tradition, it 'breaks open'. If the practice is thorough, the experience is fundamental and the very certainty of this taken-for-granted foundation of the self-identification is shaken. The original Zen text poetically describes this experience:

> The heavens are astonished, the earth is shaken.
> It is as though you have snatched the great sword of General Kuan.
> When you meet the Buddha, you kill the Buddha.
> When you meet BodhiDharma, you kill BodhiDharma.[20]

This realisation makes sense as the phenomenological experience of the decentred self. It is the recognition, through trained attention, that the core existential reality of human consciousness is that ultimately the self is ephemeral or phantom-like. This experience is not necessarily limited only to Zen practice, and accounts of such an experience also occur in literature and other religions. It is profound in the sense that one is suddenly confronted experientially with different view of one's self – that the self is not what 'you' assumed, but something else, an undecidable. Such a state is depicted in Buddhist art as the almost completed circle; it is not an experience *of* emptiness, but, as the famous Zen poem by Keizan Zenji suggests, it is a hazy experience:

> Though you find clear waters ranging to the vast blue skies of autumn,
> How can that compare with the hazy moon on a spring night?
> Some people want it pure white but sweep as you will you cannot empty the mind. (Cleary, 1990)[21]

---

[19] This practice consists of inquiry into the single word 'Mu' and forms the basis of one of the primary koans or shifting questions in traditional Zen practice. After some preliminary practice a Zen student is told to sit with 'Mu', and is exhorted to 'dig into it day and night'. The student is then questioned by a teacher to make a presentation of 'Mu' (see Aitken, 1990); with practice the student becomes clear.
[20] General Kuan was a famous Tang dynasty general associated with the Daoist god of war and later wealth. Bodhidharma was a mythical Buddhist master, said to have brought Buddhism to China.
[21] The imagery in this verse alludes to clarity of mind through meditation practice; the moon is the symbol of awakening.

The image of the hazy moon accords with an understanding that arises through close introspection of the self; ultimately the self, like Derrida's undecidable phantom, remains ungraspable. Buddhism here makes an incisive contribution. How Derrida understands this dualism, however, does not evade logocentric or even phallocentric reasoning. Derrida, following Heidegger, understood Gelassenheit as a way of *thinking*, and did not recognise the full significance of Meister Eckhart's releasement, which is described as accomplished through the development of radical non-attachment. Derrida's way of understanding being remains limited, like the modern epistemology that characterises so much of western thinking (and also economics) that he tries to escape. David Loy (1992b) also recognises that Derrida is still stuck in logocentric thinking, and while the Derrida understands that there are only 'phantoms', he himself does not fully inhabit this decentred perspective. Bourdieu (1986: 495) also observes of Derrida: 'the philosophical way of talking about philosophy de-realises everything that can be said about philosophy'. Buddhist insight, on the other hand, offers the view of the lived experience of '*real*-ising' this phantom is *who we are*!

When Derrida speaks of being a phantom, 'he' talks about it using reason and abstraction, which is only one sort of 'knowing' experience. This contrast resembles the one between being in love and talking about love. There is a subtle distinction evident between Derrida's saying 'it is an "I" ... who is a phantom' and the Buddhist claim of '*just this*' phantom. For an 'I' is not an embodied experience of the self, even as a phantom, as there remains an observer. Thus a suspicion remains that there is something yet to be deconstructed – the observer who is looking at a deconstructed self, not *being* a deconstructed self. According to Loy (1992b), linguistic deconstruction must go beyond itself. While semiology and cognitive science both point to a lack of an essential, abiding self, it requires another step to realise such a state. The phantom self, according to Varela (1996: 209), continuously emerges in the process of living, and yet is:

> something so productive that it doesn't cease creating entirely new realms: life, mind, and societies. Yet these emergent selves are based on processes so shifty, so ungrounded, that we have an apparent paradox between the solidity of what appears to show up and its groundlessness.

This is the achievement of Buddhism, according to Epstein (1995: 83): 'The Buddha's realization of nirvana was actually a discovery of that which had been present all the

time ... What was extinguished was only the *false view* of self.' The false view that Epstein refers to is the bounded self in which 'We reduce, concretize, or substantialize experiences or feelings, which are in their very nature fleeting or evanescent' (1995: 67). Such a view of the self has found powerful support in an unexpected area: cognitive science has recently exploded with research into the nature of consciousness (Blackmore, 2003), much of which challenges the traditional notions of the self which economic thinking is based.

3.5 The changing view of self in cognitive science

Dan Zahavi (2005) explains that there have always been challenges to the notion of self throughout the history of philosophy. Classical figures such as Hume and Nietzsche have critiqued the simple acceptance of the conscious subject. In his own close introspection, Hume (1992/1888: 252) observes the following:

> [f]or my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception.

For Hume, the stream of images and feelings are conflated into an illusionary continuity, and we imaginatively attribute a personal identity to them. We do this, according to Hume (1992/1888: 256), because 'the passage of thought from the object before the change to the object after it, is so smooth and easy, that we scarcely perceive the transition, and are apt to imagine, that 'tis nothing but a continu'd survey of the same object'. The self that Hume finds is a fictional construction, one that we mistake for who we are. A range of recent developments adds significantly to Hume's challenge to the self as derived from phenomenological experience. Thomas Metzinger (2003: 1) exemplifies these claims:

> no such things as selves exist in the world: Nobody ever was or had a self. All that ever existed were conscious self-models that could not be recognised as models. The phenomenal self is not a thing, but a process – and the subjective experience of being someone emerges if a conscious information-processing system operates under a transparent self-model.

Metzinger's (2003) argument begins with the phenomenal first-person perspective, which, he claims, has three properties crucial to the notion of self. The first is what he

calls ‘mineness’, which is the higher-order categorisation of perceptions, such as my arm or head, but continues beyond the body to include personal objects of ownership. The second is selfhood, or what Metzinger calls ‘prereflexive self-intimacy’, which matches the sense of coherence that Hume described above, and constitutes the normal sense of identity. The third property is the perceptual sense called ‘perspectivalness’: the viewpoint that we have seems to have a consistent centre and a ‘global, structural property of phenomenal space as a whole’. These three properties, Metzinger argues, are just the representations of lower-level functions, and thus what is phenomenologically understood as ‘the’ self is not a substance, constant essence or thing, but rather a special kind of representational content.

Because what we call ‘the’ self is effectively a representational model, Metzinger (2003) reasons that it can be subverted, resulting in the illusionary or fictitious recognition of ‘the’ self, as for example in the ‘rubber-hand illusion’, where people can experience the illusion that a rubber hand is their own (Ehrsson, Spence & Passingham, 2004). The crucial point is that most of the content of the self-modelling process is to us largely transparent, and we are not aware of it. From a cognitive perspective, ‘I’ am not able to recognise that there is a transparent layer of processes which underlie my experience and so ‘I’ do not have any sense of it as being a model used by the system to constitutes an ‘I’. So people normally understand the content of this process as the conscious self through bodily sensations, emotions and so on. Metzinger contends, however, that it remains a modelling system only, and, though we may identify with its contents, such self-models certainly are not selves, only complex brain states.

Metzinger’s conclusions are contested; Zahavi (2005: 16) asks why Metzinger concludes that there is no self, when others, such as Damasio, whose notion of a core self is comparable to Metzinger’s description, concludes that a subjective sense of self is an indispensable part of the conscious mind. Damasio (1999: 308) is clear: ‘the conscious mind and its constituent properties are real entities, not illusions, and must be investigated as the personal, private, subjective experiences that they are’.

Zahavi (2005: 16) contends that: ‘Metzinger’s account is not that there is no self, but that the self is not what some took it to be’. In other words, the unequivocal view that no self exists depends on what we take the self to be. For Zahavi (2005), Metzinger only demolishes a particular view of the self, one which sees it through certain metaphysical

assumptions as a substantial and reified concept. Yet this view is precisely the one that underpins economic theory. So while Zahavi (2005) contends that the no-self view no longer holds a great deal of sway, and harkens to the eliminative position of the early behavioural psychology, he would agree with Metzinger's (2003) contention, which undoubtedly disturbs the horizon of economic thinking. It seems that the old notion of the self as an autonomous and bounded individual is under considerable challenge by more sophisticated understandings of the self now emerging in cognitive science. These developments suggest a number of interesting implications which throw doubt on the entire disciplinary endeavour of economics.

Cognitive science has attracted a growing constituency among Buddhist-oriented scholars who are, in their own way, pursuing a similar dialogue with foundational assumptions about consciousness. For example, Thompson (2001) argues that we need to understand individual human consciousness differently, recognising that it develops in dynamic interrelation to others, and is therefore inherently intersubjective. This dynamic interrelationship would not work unless we had the capacity for empathy, or 'a unique and irreducible kind of intentionality'. Given these two preconditions, according to Thompson (2001), empathy is inherently developmental, and few people have fully developed this capacity. This proposition, he contends, opens pathways to non-egocentric or self-transcending modes of intersubjectivity which the Vietnamese Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh (1987) calls 'interbeing'. Thompson (2001) calls for a new '*"science of interbeing" (Varela, 2000) that integrates the methods and findings of cognitive science, phenomenology, and the contemplative and meditative psychologies of the world's wisdom traditions* [italics in original]'.

3.6 The dialogical space

Dialogue occurs with an implicit assumption that an oppositional stance between worldviews can be 'resolved' through a cyclical process of listening and communication. When we seek to explore a set of ideas that sets out a fundamentally divergent view of the world, we are confronted with the fact that most social science disciplines are built upon taken-for-granted philosophical assumptions. There is an old Indian story of an Englishman who, engaging in a conversation with an old Indian pundit, is told that the world rests on a platform, which rests on the back of an elephant, which rests in turn on the back of a turtle. Upon hearing this, the Englishman, grinning,

asks: ‘What does the turtle rest on?’ ‘Another turtle.’ ‘And that turtle?’ To which his counterpart wryly responds: ‘Ah, Sahib, after that it is turtles all the way down’ (adapted from Geertz, 1973).

At the heart of this story is the need to recognise how knowledge, particularly cultural knowledge, ultimately rests on assumptions. The process of resolving one assumption ultimately leads to the uncovering of others, and so on. This has led some to argue that paradigmatic differences are incommensurable (Jackson & Carter, 1991). On the other hand, to eschew dialogue between different worldviews because their assumptions are different would have dangerous consequences. As Žižek (1997) contends, acceptance of irreconcilable differences may lead to passivity and exploitation. Hattam (2004) argues that awakening and struggle are intertwined, and implicit in the *Bodhisattva* vow to ‘save all beings’.

If a discipline is to sustain itself, it must be capable of change at the level of assumptions; otherwise it becomes rigid ideology. There has been a global resurgence of classical liberal thinking in the past few decades, which some observers have suggested constitutes a new political orthodoxy (Mendes, 2003). Economics has been subject to an ongoing critique since the 1850s, starting with Marx. Its resistance to change and its reluctance to address its liberal assumptions is so entrenched that Loy (1997) argues that it has become a ‘religion of the marketplace’. There is a new and growing constituency of critics of the dominant school of neoclassical economics, however, who challenge its claims to scientific rigour, internal consistency and foundation on evidence, as well as its inability to deal with ecological consequences of economic activity (Davies, 2004). Neoclassical economics and liberalism are intertwined; as Macpherson (1962) argues, the assumptions of liberalism subtend both political and economic views. Macpherson (1962: 3) identified the possessive individualist as the core of liberalism, being ‘the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor a part of a larger social whole, but an owner of himself.’ The consequence of this view is an ethos which embodies norms, values and identities based on implicit ontological positions about human nature. It is an ethos which, Lakoff (2002) suggests, is reinforced by a particular ideal of the nuclear family and its consequent parenting style – that of the self-reliant ‘strict patriarch’. Lakoff (2002) sees

the converse of this view as being the ‘nurturant parent’. Yet both these views are blind to a deeper western cultural assumption about the nature of human being.

In letting Buddhism speak first, I have taken the first steps to bridging this culture divide. The construction of a dialogical space engages with such cultural assumptions that might not otherwise be encountered, so that a meaningful discussion can take place. The range and diversity of Buddhist practices and traditions presents an obstacle. We must continue to keep and open mind about what ‘Buddhism’ is. Buddhism cannot simply be viewed as a meta-narrative that encompasses its many traditions; nor can we assume that the various traditions can continuously trace themselves to the original teachings of the Buddha. Furthermore, the idea that these traditions are ‘untainted’ by western influence is also false, as most contemporary forms have been influenced by the colonial legacy or its consequences. Sharf (1995a) shows how modernist movements within Buddhist traditions have created changes in how Buddhism is practised today.

Western attempts to distil Buddhism to the original teachings of the Buddha are also subject to qualification, as there is significant evidence of doctrinal change. Gombrich (1996: 96) notes: ‘it is clear that not every text that has come down to us in the Sutta Pitaka can have been recited by Ānanda at the First Communal Recitation’. While Gombrich (1996) is keen to redeem Buddhism from its ‘sometimes discrepant accounts’, he highlights the hermeneutic difficulties of this project and how inadvertent changes occur over time as the result of shifting meaning. There is also a growing sense among western scholars that traditional Buddhist hagiography does not simply contain inadvertent errors, but rather deliberate distortions and confabulations designed to bolster the legitimacy and authority of a particular sect and of men over women and celibate monastics over laity. For example, Faure (1991: 18) argues that Chan masters became ‘pawns on a given ideological chessboard’. It is important therefore to be suspicious of any truth claims without inquiring into the importance of their rhetoric in the maintenance and legitimatisation of the tradition in the context of competing religious discourses that they may have contended with over time.

Historians are reconstructing traditions on a genealogical basis, which Bové (1981: 367) describes as an approach which:

> re-reads the surface of cultural activity to find a meaning in it different from that which it seems, itself, to offer and approve. Realignment of cultural phenomena

> available publicly discloses the lines of force in a culture organised towards certain ends and proceeding through certain transformations. And genealogical redistribution of surface fragments, not only demystifies the veiling, legitimating ideologies of a system, but produces a new reading which is a more convincing asymptotic approximation of the truth of the matter.

Genealogical approaches have highlighted the potential for new critical readings of traditional historical accounts. For example, Faure (1997) and others have shown how significant distortions, including selective appropriation of alternative religious discourse, enabled Buddhism to survive in often hostile environments. In this regard, Buddhist scholarship engages in a hermeneutic cycle, as recent western scholarship has begun to highlight such distortions. The field of Buddhist studies is developing in several new and important directions. Firstly, the target of its endeavours has shifted over time from seeking the original source to understanding evolving traditions. Secondly, it challenges the traditional claims by recognising that the originality of Buddhist texts is uncertain. Finally, it recognises that many scholarly accounts of Buddhism have been powerfully influenced by Eurocentric and modern biases.

These criticisms do not stop at mere conservation of the 'original' in some form, but can be recognised in a more general tendency in all religions to create, as Bourdieu (1986: 496) puts it, 'a sort of autonomous world' in which the initiated have 'have a life-or-death interest ... in the existence of this repository of consecrated texts, a mastery of which constitutes the core of their specific capital'. The growing recognition of the social construction of aspects of Buddhist traditions presents some difficulties in determining whether there is anything that can be authoratitively said about what constitutes the core of Buddhism outside of a particular context.

It may be that we can trace a 'genealogy' of Buddhism, in the sense of Foucault's (1990) term, which shows that a system of thought is the result of an emergent history, rather than the result of rationally moderated trends. The ideals of the modernising enterprise, which drove much of Buddhist scholarship, sought to clarify Buddhist concepts in terms of authenticity.

Garfield (2006) argues that this process is a fraught one. He suggests that '[t]here is one common Mahāyāna criterion for a doctrine elsewhere in Buddhism counting as Buddhist. A doctrine is Buddhist just to the extent that it is marked by the four seals of doctrine.' This Tibetan doctrine sets out four distinctive tenets, corresponding to the

four noble truths, which exemplify Buddhism's core project (discussed in section 2.4). Garfield (2006) argues, however, that the superimposition of an inherent existence or essence onto Buddhism must be a non-Buddhist view, because Buddhism presents all phenomena as dependently arising and thus without essence.

However, Garfield's (2006) is a modern reading of dependent arising because it reflects tendancy of religious studies to interpret the Buddha's words as universalising (applying to every instance). This extension of Buddhist notions to a universalising logic implies some transcendent and greater-than-human knowledge, which seems more at home with the putatively divine origins of biblical authority. What might have originally been an observation about nature, or even the nature of the mind, may not have been intended to be a law of nature. There is a clearly pragmatic orientation in early Buddhism, which has been discussed earlier (see page 34). In fact the idea that Buddhist prescriptions are universal is contested, a matter that lies at the heart of Stephen Batchelor's (1997) critique, which is founded on the view that there is no evidence that the Buddha claimed to be anything but human. Wright (2000: 204) also reads in a universalising claim when he reflects on the question: 'if all things are empty, what does the application of this concept to enlightenment mean?' While his explanation is very interesting, did the Buddha really mean everything. The western it may take us 'beyond' the tradition, betraying questions more consistent with sophisticated contemporary western scholarship than the pragmatic views of someone trying to deal with the suffering of life.

The question of essentialism, however, is an important one for understanding the dialogical space. Buddhism contains many voices that argue that it is founded on an essential experience, known as insight, awakening or realisation. If this is not the case, then addressing each of the many variants of Buddhism in regard to economics seems an impossibly large task. While the diversity rests on real constituencies for whom their own version of Buddhism is paramount, the priority here is to facilitate common ground that both supports this diversity and is regarded as legitimate outside of Buddhist circles.

It is thus crucial to explore the dialogical space between Buddhism and economics by finding points where these very different genealogies can share an understanding. To achieve a common understanding, this chapter has examined assumptions which

underpin Buddhism. I have focused on two areas which are likely to yield the greatest overlap. The first is ontological assumptions, in which Buddhism makes an important and often misunderstood contribution. This contribution is counter-intuitive and has long been dismissed by the majority of western thinkers, largely out of ignorance. I have argued that recent shifts in contemporary strands of philosophy and cognitive sciences have revealed a significant convergence in their problematisation of modern conceptions of the self to what the experiences of Buddhism suggest. I am not suggesting that Buddhism is science, but I believe that it is based on phenomena that are not supernatural, but are explicable through science. Secondly, I have argued that Buddhism continues to offer an explicitly different epistemology, one which is not unknown to the West and which can be found in romanticism and the writings of religious mystics, but is neglected. Both these contributions have significant implications for economic thinking. It has been further argued that an essential view of Buddhism is possible because Buddhism is founded on a natural phenomenon, and that our ordinary, everyday sense of self, which economics assumes, is essentially an illusion. Our experience, when reflected upon using the disciplined training available in most Buddhist traditions, is open to an insight which is experienced as liberating.

Buddhist thinking has been only of peripheral interest to economic thought, and its claims have largely been ignored. The primary reason for this rests with the rise of scientism, which views science as the evolutionary successor to religion. Scientism sets out science and religion as two incompatible worldviews. It presents Christianity as a doctrine of rigid beliefs, exemplified by the view that the universe had a fixed structure with three levels of existence: heaven was God's abode, earth was in the middle where humans sought redemption, and below was the infernal realms of hell for sinners. Scientism makes heroes of scientists who persevered with their quest for truth using measurement and mathematical calculation. Exemplars, such as Copernicus and Galileo, were thus able to falsify the view that the earth was the centre of the universe, against the will of the religious authorities of the time. According to the story, these authorities were eventually forced to capitulate in the face of irrefutable scientific evidence, and science won the day. The story also has as an underlying theme the duplicity of religion, which preached compassion and yet persecuted good people for choosing 'truth' over blind adherence to religious doctrine. This and similar stories construct a negative view of religion as being tyrannical and misguided, in contrast to science as being courageous

and truthful. These stories, however, omit many crucial facts that would give rise to very different readings of this history, such as that Galileo was a man of religion as well as of science, that he had supporters in the Church as well as enemies, and that his trial was over a legal technicality and not the truth of Copernican theories. Moreover, the geocentric view found in the Bible was derived not from God but from the work of the Greek astrologer Ptolemy. There are also many references that predate Copernicus that challenge whether this centre of universe view was ever dominant during the Middle Ages.

Stories such as these have helped create the myth that science will always trump religion. Nelson (2004b) argues that in economic thought this myth has been used to trump philosophical and religious ethicists in a way that works by false analogy. Economic theory does not derive from observation, but with assumptions. These assumptions, according to Nelson (2004: 383), determine 'the subject matter of economics ... about what it means to be human, and … about methodology [and] arguably do not accord well with observation and experience at all'. It seems that finding a meeting point may require re-examining a decisive turn in history. The relationship of economics to Buddhism is deeply entwined with ideological struggles in which power was wrested from the Christian establishment during the European Enlightenment period.

The scientific emphasis on objectivity in Buddhist studies has also been strongly influenced by these myths, manifesting in its focus on the verification of historical fact and context of textual materials rather than a serious effort towards the testing of Buddhist doctrinal claims. Scientific approaches have included archaeological, anthropological, sociological and psychological studies which in the main have focused on observable aspects of religious practices. There are a significant number of studies on religious experience in general. However, these have been limited by methodological problems, as Yamane (2000: 175) points out: 'we cannot study "experiencing" – religious experience in real time and its physical, mental, and emotional constituents – and therefore must study retrospective accounts – linguistic representations – of religious experiences'. Much effort has gone into measuring the correlates of meditation, and this has opened up some important developments in psychology. Little scientific research has engaged with the qualitative explorations of the truth claims of

Buddhist practices. While there was some research by Roger Walsh and others in the 1970s, only two prior studies, Ling (1981) and Fulton (1986), were found to directly explore retrospective accounts of experience. More recently, Kennedy (2004) studied a mixed sample of practitioners in Leeds. Other studies that have explored the experience of advanced Buddhist practitioners have tended to have either very small samples or be idiographic accounts.

For the dialogue between economics and Buddhism to proceed, there is a need for a two-way shift: the study of Buddhism needs to slough off its legacy of religious studies, and serious efforts need to be made towards testing its truth claims. The latter has already begun, as there are a growing number of Buddhist practitioners who are testing the veracity of Buddhist practices for themselves. Many western Buddhists have progressed to the point where they have some authority based on experience. This authority, as Pickering (1997) suggests, is 'the power to convince and the power to compel', but it also comes from their own confidence in what they have found. Buddhist teachers are particularly interesting in this regard, because they are people who have sufficiently progressed down the Buddhist path to be able to teach it to others, and say with confidence and conviction 'I have seen it with my own eyes'. This confidence comes about presumably from direct experience of the truth of Buddhist practice.

In the dialogical space, Buddhism offers an entirely different set of claims, based on human experience. These are sufficient to build its own theories, based on different assumptions about the ontological status of the self and different prescriptions for action, all of which are open to verification and falsification. The most potent source of verification is the recent experience of westerners who have ventured into Buddhist practices to investigate its truth claims for themselves. Obviously there are likely to be failures, but the successes may have something important to report. The successes usually become teachers, and the voices of western Buddhist teachers have been overlooked perhaps because Christian clergy make no claim to knowledge outside the teachings of the Bible or because, up until recently, there have been so few.

There is a lack of any systematic investigation of contemporary Buddhist teachers' experience. Exhaustive searches have failed to find any significant references to first-hand accounts outside of idiographic studies (Engler & Brown, 1986; Shapiro & Walsh, 1984) and Asian teachers' talking about Buddhist experience in general (Kornfield,

1997). Moreover, few studies show comparisons between the experiences of teachers in different Buddhist religious traditions. To clarify some of the questions raised above, it would be helpful to present data on what Buddhist teachers have actually experienced. What have they experienced and can they describe it? Did they have any new insights, and if so did these change them in any significant way? Rather than engage in speculation about karma and rebirth, it would be very interesting to know what advanced practitioners have experienced and have learnt about this. These questions form the foundation of this research and are addressed in detail in chapter 5.

Economics needs to recognise that its own horizon has been shaped by its interaction with religion, and that elements of its foundational thinking were significantly influenced by a hegemonic strategy of legitimising a new worldview at a time in which Christianity held power. The next chapter will explore three aspects of economics which have been shaped by this worldview, which has also shaped much of modernity. It will then explore Latour's view of how tensions in these assumptions have created substantial splits. Finally, it will explore earlier attempts to create a dialogue with economics under the rubric of Buddhist economics.

CHAPTER 4

ENCOUNTERING ECONOMICS

In the final analysis conceptions of self, reason and society and visions of ethics and politics are inseparable.

Seyla Benhabib (1992)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter does not intend to set out an alternative to the orthodoxy of economics, but rather is a dialogue. The idea of supplanting one 'truth' (economics) with another (Buddhist economics) seems a tenuous enterprise. It is hoped that such a dialogue can contribute, as Langer (1942) suggests, by engaging in what underlies the contribution of a particular discipline of thought (economics), not in its solutions or the data that accretes around it, but in the formulation of its problems. This is because the problems held out as important by the scholars of a discipline implicitly invoke commitments to some particular form of analytic process, define what is taken for granted, and set out what needs to be researched. The merit in a dialogical approach lies primarily in its ability to work with pluralistic perspectives; it allows contributions to be made from a range of intellectual positions, some of which may fall outside the normal parameters of thinking in a particular discipline. Even when two approaches diverge, as is the case between Buddhism and economics, consideration of contrasting assumptions may be a particularly valuable enterprise. Unexamined assumptions often only become conspicuous in the light of a contrasting view. As to the potential for transformation which derives from contrasting the assumptions of differing views, Langer (1942: 4) concurs with Whitehead:

> When you are criticising the philosophy of an epoch do not chiefly direct your attention to those intellectual positions which its exponents feel it necessary explicitly to defend. There will be some fundamental assumptions which adherents of all the variant systems within the epoch unconsciously presuppose. Such assumptions appear so obvious that people do not know what they are assuming because no other way of putting things has ever occurred to them. With these assumptions a certain limited number of types of philosophic systems are possible, and this group of systems constitutes the philosophy of the epoch. (1926: 61)

Whitehead recognises the process by which so many assumptions either derive from or simply become absorbed into the broader social discourse as taken-for-granted cultural assumptions. This situation arguably characterises economics (Keen, 2001). Moreover, according to Fabrizio, Pfeffer and Sutton (2005: 8), 'Social science theories may be self-fulfilling by shaping institutional designs and management practices, as well as social norms and expectations about behavior, thereby creating the behavior they predict'.

To meet in a dialogical space is to explore the differences between Buddhism and economics, as well their commonalities. The plan of this chapter is to follow a thread along intersecting areas of mutual interest to Buddhism and economics. Starting the dialogue by focusing on those assumptions identified in chapters 2 and 3, in which Buddhist thinking has a distinctive viewpoint, it will then engage with how these assumptions relate to economic theory. As already noted, I recognise at the outset that contemporary economics is not a monolith and so will not attempt an overarching critique of economics. Despite the diversity of economic theorising over the past century, it is assumed that the discourse of economics necessarily reflected the broader historical and philosophical currents of that period. This assumption is supported by the existence of relatively consistent paradigmatic assumptions, which were commonly taken-for-granted during this period, and underlie its theorising generally. These foundational assumptions characterise the epoch of economic thinking generally described as modernity. This thesis argues that Buddhist thinking sets out an entirely different worldview from the Christian sensibility out of which modernity arose, and as such, opens up an interesting dialogue regarding how its different foundational assumptions might apply to those of economics. In this way, Buddhist thinking raises questions that effectively criticise the philosophy of this epoch because, as Langer (1942) suggests, the assumptions of Buddhist thinking lie beyond the ordinary discourse of western thinking. What is interesting about Buddhism is that it makes extra-ordinary claims about the nature of the self. If taken seriously, these would imply an entirely new set of assumptions about how we see the world and consequently new ways of thinking about economics. In this chapter, I will limit my discussion to the foundational economic assumptions to which the many schools of Buddhism present contrasting views. In particular, I will examine the differences in teleological assumptions,

methodological assumptions and the theory of the individual in economics with those of Buddhism.

4.2 Engaging with mainstream economics

It is widely thought that the current paradigm, which has dominated economics for most of the last century, can trace its roots to ideas that arose during the European Enlightenment period. These ideas have, of course, been modified over time, as Henry Spiegel (1996: xiv) observes: 'What is probably true for all time is that those who generated economic thought did so in order to cope with the central economic problem of scarcity as it appeared to them, embedded as it was in the historical conditions of their time and place'. However, despite the numerous modifications which have followed the intellectual and social shifts of the 17th and 18th centuries, it is evident that this period has played a significant role – firstly, in setting up many of the primary political, economic and social institutions that have continued into the present era, and, secondly, in marking out a new epoch by virtue of their magnitude and distinctiveness from what preceded them. The way economics has developed over the last two centuries, however, has not been characterised by consensus, but deep schisms reflecting strong differences among economists over its philosophical and methodological foundations.

It is thus difficult to precisely define economics, although many mainstream economic theorists would still agree with Alfred Marshall (1961/1890: 1), who defined economics as 'a study of mankind in the ordinary business of life; it examines that part of individual and social action which is most closely connected with the attainment and with the use of the material requisites of well-being.'[22] If we understand economic action as broadly as Marshall, it could mean those actions undertaken in the ordinary business of life. The definition may seem too broad, as other disciplines frequently study the same phenomena; however, the origins of the word 'economics' relate to management of the household, with an implied sense of the ways in which we manage

[22] For example, Heilbroner (1972: 14) defined 'the' economic problem as 'simply *the process of providing for the material well-being of society*'.

our relationships in the world or, as Moore (1992: 189) suggests, how we get along in relationship with the world. Over time, the word has become more and more associated with the material aspect of these matters, as reflected in Marshall's definition.

While such definitions are helpful, they tend towards a totalising logic that has come to be regarded with suspicion; rarely do they accommodate the polyvocality of a discipline. I will argue that mainstream economics developed in a culture of modernity, both as a reflexive knowledge of the human world and as a historical condition. This culture is manifested in three interrelated dimensions of mainstream economic theorising which are important to this dialogue. These are the distinctive purpose of material progress, the methodology of positivism, and individualism.

4.2.1 The distinctive purpose of material progress

Economic notions are intimately tied to questions of purpose. There is a teleological sense in the literature which suggests that economics has evolved for some kind of end, and functions in the broad interests of humanity. According to Cullenberg, Amariglio and Ruccio (2002: 39), 'It seems that there must be thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) of easily accessible statements by economists in which optimism is a necessary component'. This optimism can be found in Marshall's definition above, which reflects the general interest of economic theory, from its inception to current times, with progress through knowledge and material wealth. Optimism underscores the position of economics in the order of disciplines, which maintains a belief in its position as the king of social sciences, despite the ordinary and material nature of its scope. The preoccupation with progress also characterised the modern stream of intellectual culture that was predominant in the 20th century, and economics has a prominent place in the culture of modernity, as the growth of the economy counts among one of its great achievements and a major source of 'progress'. This same forward-looking worldview discounted Buddhism (and religion in general) as backward, irrational and superstitious, and therefore irrelevant. Recently, this genesis has become an object of attention; for example, Kanth (1997) highlights its Eurocentric bias and calls for a critical examination of the broader cultural context in which economics developed.

Nelson (2001) hails economics as supplanting religion in providing 'promises of the true path to salvation in this world'. If this is so, we might ask: what form will this

salvation take? If there is a sense of salvation in modernity, it might be traced from Smith's Christian sensibility, which fitted with an essentially organic view of the universe. For Adam Smith, the answers to economic questions could be found as in natural science, and his interest centred on how intentional individual action in pursuit of selfish interest leads to positive macro-level outcomes. Smith (2002/1759: 102), however, maintained Christian notions of final cause:

> In every part of the universe we observe means adjusted with the nicest artifice to the ends which they are intended to produce; and in the mechanism of a plant, or animal body, admire how every thing is contrived for advancing the two great purposes of nature, the support of the individual, and the propagation of the species. But in these, and in all such objects, we still distinguish the efficient from the final cause of their several motions and organizations ... When by natural principles we are led to advance those ends, which a refined and enlightened reason would recommend to us, we are very apt to impute to that reason, as to their efficient cause, the sentiments and actions by which we advance those ends, and to imagine that to be the wisdom of man, which in reality is the wisdom of God.

It seemed to Smith that the Christian notion of the 'natural' order of things also made sense of political and economic systems. This view fitted with the Christian belief in the chain of being which defined the place of humanity in the cosmos and its relationship to divine purpose. This belief saw God as the creator of a natural order and thus 'His laws' could be found in nature. Smith (2000/1776: 14) believed that 'private interests and prejudices of particular orders of men, without any regard to, or foresight of, their consequences upon the general welfare of the society' could work towards the common good. This view became known as the 'invisible hand'. The idea that there existed a 'pre-established harmony' in the world, derived from its creator, extended from Leibniz, who argued that this world is 'the best of all possible worlds'. Ironically, as Blaug (1997: 3) points out, this view presumed 'an efficient allocation of resources in which no one can be made better off without making someone else worse off'.

The Christian source of Smith's invisible hand was largely forgotten over time, and the question of final causes (design) has very slowly shifted from being ultimately mysterious – as God's will – to efficient causes, the result of reason. There is a strong case to suggest that the strength of liberalism is that it was compatible with either view. Some rejected Christian teleology. For example, Hobbes (1994: 117) believed that the state was a product of human reasoning and argued that, '[a] final cause has no place but in such things as have sense and will; and this also I shall prove hereafter to be an

efficient cause.' The issue, however, could be bypassed since liberalism regarded individual liberty as paramount, and allowed individuals the freedom of belief and to make private choices. Thus 'methodological individualism', which explains social phenomena as the result of individual actions, derived from the individual's intentional states, could accommodate more than one final-cause explanation. Weber (1958) explores the interaction between various religious ideas and economic behaviour, showing the social phenomenon of capitalism related to the Protestant work ethic.

The emphasis on the individual in neoclassical economics could thus gain impetus from religious doctrine, despite its secular application. Utopian visions of a heaven on earth have continued to motivate economists; however, since the focus of economics became the individual, visions of a social good were displaced by the focus on objective knowledge and individualism, which became the hallmarks of modern economics.

Samuelson and Nordhaus (2004: 3) state that, 'Economics is the study of how societies use scarce resources to produce valuable commodities and distribute them among different people'.[23] The influence of Samuelson's definition springs from his success as the author of the discipline's largest-selling textbook. Its language evokes a modern mechanistic worldview in which people and things are 'resources', the existence of 'wants' is treated as axiomatic, and thus the language itself contains assumptions about human nature. Samuelson and Nordhaus (2004: 4) do not engage with how wants arise or could be satisfied without goods; for them the internal process is not at issue. What counts is external to the psyche, and their teleological vision is simple:

> In ... an Eden of affluence, all goods would be free, like sand in the desert or seawater at the beach. All prices would be zero, and markets would be unnecessary. Indeed, economics would no longer be a useful subject.

This impossible dream connects Eden with affluence, although recent evidence (Hamilton & Denniss, 2005) suggests that people are never satisfied nor happier as consumption increases with ever-rising levels of affluence. Since this Eden is

---

[23] This definition has changed little over decades, and a nearly identical definition appeared in my undergraduate textbook – Samuelson, Hancock and Wallace (1973).

unachievable, perhaps this view may just be a reflection of a lack of a vision in economic thinking.

A discipline's vision inspires its theories and moulds its dominant mode of analysis. A vision is not simply an explicit goal, but far more encompassing and includes, as Heilbroner and Milberg (1995: 4) explain:

> the political hopes and fears, social stereotypes, and value judgments, – all unarticulated – that infuse all social thought, not through their illegal entry into an otherwise pristine realm, but as psychological, perhaps existential, necessities. Together vision and analysis form the basis of everything we believe we know, above all in that restricted but extremely important area of knowledge in which we seek to understand, and where possible to change, the terms and conditions of our collective lives.

They argue that the history of economic thinking has been punctuated by marked shifts in vision, each reflecting significant social changes, and identify three major eras in the history of economic thinking. Beginning with the classical period of Smith, Ricardo and Marx, economics reflected issues associated with the end of the feudal system and the rise of industrialisation. The classical period was regarded as the accomplishment of reason, which spawned a range of new visions of society, eschewed religion, and proclaimed human progress through economic development. Classical economics underpinned both the rising political agenda of liberalism, with its pursuit of liberty and maintenance of private property, and socialism, with its pursuit of collective ownership and control of the means of wealth-creation. Liberalism was closely tied to market capitalism. Its theorists regarded the market as a harbinger of freedom where people were free to choose what and how they exchanged in the form of commodified labour and goods, and free to save and spend as they saw fit. The second era reflected methodological developments, along with the further development of notions of individualism and rationality which provided the foundations of the 'marginal revolution', exemplified by Marshall. This development later became the basis of neoclassical economics. This was followed by a third era which reflected the crisis in economic thinking presented by the depression and vicissitudes of war which plagued the early and mid-20th century. The highly influential work of Keynes sought to develop theory that could explain what determined the output of the entire economy and employment which, in the context of the dislocations of the depression, was of great political importance.

Heilbroner and Milberg (1995) believe that the crisis of vision that has developed in the latter half of the 20th century is due to the influence on economics of positivism and 'the inability of modern economics to come to terms with, or even to speak of, capitalism' (p. 103). These two factors are interrelated. Positivist economics advocates a value-free epistemology, akin to the natural sciences. Positivism holds that all sciences are reducible to positive evidence, as a basis for systematic knowledge with predictive power. The result, according to Amartya Sen (1987: 7), was that:

> The methodology of so-called 'positive economics' has not only shunned normative analysis in economics, it has also had the effect of ignoring a variety of complex ethical considerations which affect actual human behaviour and which, from the point of view of the economists studying such behaviour, are primarily matters of fact rather than of normative judgement.

Positive economics privileged knowledge through empirically testable propositions developed through 'disinterested' and 'value-free' inquiry. This did not rule out normative analysis, but relegated teleological questions, which related to the end purpose of economic theory, as outside its immediate concerns. Many terms in their working vocabulary reflected this silence by avoiding teleological questions altogether. Mainstream economics thus became the study of the process by which 'resources' are transformed into valuable 'commodities' and distributed to 'consumers'. The visionary dimension inherent in the purpose of an economic system became secondary to the purpose of economics as a discipline. Block (2005) reflects this view:

> strictly speaking, economics is not the sort of enterprise that by its very nature can have goals. Only human beings can be motivated by ends; only they can engage in human action, the attempt to substitute a less satisfactory present state of affairs for a better one that would otherwise occur in the future. Economics, whatever it is, cannot properly be anthropomorphized in such a manner.

Colander (2000: 137) suggests the central attribute of modern economics is methodological, and puts forth an alternative definition: 'The study of the economy and economic policies through empirically testable models'. The suggestion that human inquiry can be detached from ethical considerations is the subject of a wide debate. The wedding of economic theorising to science does not make it simply an instrument disconnected from ethical responsibilities. It has in practice, however, encouraged the avoidance of ethical questions by suggesting that these are already accommodated by

the democratic and liberal context of most western economies. Amartya Sen (1987) regards this as an 'engineering' approach:

> The 'engineering' approach is characterized by being concerned with primarily logistic issues rather than with ultimate ends and such questions as what may foster 'the good of man' or 'how should one live'. The ends are taken as fairly straightforwardly given, and the object of the exercise is to find the appropriate means to serve them.

White (2003: 223) explains that this engineering analogy is often used to 'describe the economists' typical role: the economist can find the optimal way to achieve an end given her, by a policymaker for instance, but the economist has no role in determining that ultimate end'. Given this separation of means from ends, according to White (2003: 223), '*homo economicus'* simple preference – satisfaction, when interpreted ethically, usually leads to some form of hedonism or utilitarianism'. This is a modern assumption of disembodied knowledge which is supposedly independent from social constructions and power, and derives from the scientific stance towards teleology: science investigates natural laws and phenomena which neither confirm nor deny final causes. For Charles Taylor (1991: 5), this 'primacy of instrumental reason' has led to a disenchantment of the world in which the 'independent ends that ought to be guiding our lives will be eclipsed by the demand to maximize output'. The result is a commodification of the world, in which we live in fetishistic illusion (Žižek, 1989).

The problem is that the focus of economics on observable phenomena, which are used to constitute the elements of a model in economic theory, does not provide any insight into the basic problem concerning the nature of what is valued as an outcome. This sets up a major obstacle to any value theory, as objective methods are unable to expound any more than the practical contextual facts regarding the process and consequences of choices, but do not provide any notion of how value is determined, what it is exactly, and so ultimately the criteria for 'a good life to live'. For such questions, models and instruments are useless.

If there is a crisis of vision, then 'the question of capitalism' may appear redundant to many economists, confronted as they are with the complexity and ubiquity of the modern capitalist economy. Normative analysis in economics gestures towards two possible models – a socialist command economy and a market economy based on private capitalism. This has contributed to the pragmatic outlook of mainstream

economics, which is dedicated to the proposition that the only successful contemporary political and economic institutions are liberal democracies and free-market economies (Fukuyama, 1992). These old debates continue, as if these two models exhaust the possibilities for orchestrating economic action. Ironically, these two models implicitly envision themselves as a means to a particular end state, as they are both arguably committed to material progress and universal solutions to political problems. This common teleology is an expression of the overarching cultural movement of modernity and the shared ideals of the 'Enlightenment project' (Sim, 2000).

A further reason for this lack of interest in teleological matters might lie in the fact that the economics profession emerged and still functions dependently on the capitalist system, and institutional mechanisms align it with the interests of capital. Blaug (1998: 11) observes: 'Success in the economics profession, they shrewdly perceived, came principally to those with a knowledge of mathematical economics and econometrics'. The implications of this is that the 'success' of these skills comes from their usefulness to corporations which operate within the established system and influence the research priorities of academics, which, unlike individual agents (people), have little cause to change the system that defines for them 'the common good' as profit.

According to Cullenberg et al. (2001: 3), modernity is the cultural characteristic reflected in 'the discourses and practices associated with such ideas as "progress" and "knowledge" arguably throughout much of the post-Enlightenment period in the West'. A careful analysis of the Samuelson and Nordhaus (2004) definition (above) also reveals a subtle teleological dimension of modernity in which uncommodified 'resources' are transformed into what are valuable 'commodities'. The implication of the absence of the word 'valuable' before 'resources' is that resources become valuable only when they become commodities. This material understanding of value-creation ties in with Marshall's notion of material requisites for well-being. Economics concerns itself with well-being, primarily in contrast to the suffering caused by poverty or the material conditions of ordinary life. Progress in this sense revolves around assumptions about the relationship between the material conditions of life and well-being, which Spiegel (1991) traces back to the Greeks in the works of Diogenes, Epicurus and others. Early Christians also shared a similar interest in this question, but discounted the importance of material goods, and instead valorised poverty and asceticism. For

substantial periods of history, the Christian position was relatively hostile towards commerce, reflected in Biblical statements such as 'As a nail sticks between the joinings of the stones, so does sin stick also between buying and selling' (Ecclesiasticus, 27: 2). Industrialisation made a modern agenda possible, and challenged the broader historical context of scarcity, suggesting that individuals en masse could obtain well-being through progress and its transformation of the material conditions of life.

This simple assumption belies debates about the intrinsic value of nature and commodification, and notions of how value is 'added' to resources through the application of human labour to change their form. These debates touch on important issues for Buddhism; however, for our purposes, it is enough to recognise that the process of transforming resources is akin to cultivation: we can see that ultimately all forms of economic activity are connected with some form of cultivation of nature (often many times removed). This key relationship to nature has led ecological economists to highlight the interdependent elements necessary to sustain the biosphere.

In the past three decades there has been a growing appreciation that many of the taken-for-granted assumptions which have subtended the key projects of modernity, including modern mainstream economics, are in need of critical re-examination. The full weight of the new assessments has yet to impact on the mainstream literature of economics; however, according to Lawson (2001: 155), '[t]here is little doubt that the modern discipline of economics is in a state of some disarray'. While there seems to be strong reasons for a substantial rethinking of its project, it seems too early to tell whether contemporary critiques, which can be broadly categorised by the prefix 'post', will live up to their promise of a new epoch. They have stimulated debate on a range of issues and this has at least begun to influence contemporary thinking in economics.

Mainstream modern economics nevertheless remains largely untouched by these currents (Blaug, 1998); its instrumental reasoning continues to simply seek the most effective means of satisfying a particular given material end (or interest). It refuses to open up to question the 'givenness' of its modern vision based on the material ends, and continues to ignore its ecological impacts.

4.2.2 Methodology of positivism

A second key dimension of mainstream economic theorising was the embrace of scientific methodologies. Methodology, according to Blaug (1992: xii), 'is not just a fancy name for "methods of investigation" but a study of the relationship between theoretical concepts and warranted conclusions about the real world'. Early in its history, like other social sciences, economics came under the sway of the successful natural sciences. Their transformative achievements encouraged dreams of technological utopias, including the belief in the inevitability of progress driven by technology.

Among the social sciences, economics distinguished itself through its relationship to money. Money seemed eminently amenable to quantification, and a general orientation towards quantification emerged which can be traced to its founders. According to Dopfer (1986: 510), 'Its founding fathers W. S. Jevons, L. Walras, H. H. Gossen, V. Pareto or J. B. Clark believed firmly in the laws of classical mechanics, and ... frequently made analogies between mechanics and economics'. Economics, more than the other social sciences, has remained faithful to the methods and achievements of the natural sciences. The strength of this infatuation is so great that, according to Daly and Cobb (1989: 25), '[o]utside of the physical sciences no field of study has more fully achieved the ideal form of academic discipline than economics', and this form of organising knowledge as a discipline necessitates a 'high level of abstraction'. But abstraction in economics, according to Daly and Cobb (1989), is a two-edged sword, with both strengths and weaknesses. The primary weakness consists of the ease with which theoretical abstractions may take on a seemingly concrete existence.

Recently, doubt has arisen about the relevance of such abstract constructs to practice. As Lawson (1997: 3) argues, '[c]ontemporary academic economics is not in a healthy state', later adding that the discipline is still dominated by 'a mainstream tradition or orthodoxy, the essence of which is an insistence on methods of mathematical-deductivist modelling' (Lawson, 2003: 3). These problems become more salient where the subject area of economics overlaps with other disciplines which do not share the views of its orthodoxy, and are generally critical of its assumptions. For example, Beckert (2003: 769) states that, 'One of the most persistent themes within economic sociology has been the critical assessment of economics'. Similar critical views can be

found in related subdisciplinary areas that have emerged with the rise of business schools. The ubiquity of orthodox neoclassical views stems from their almost exclusive propagation in high school and undergraduate programs (Thompson, 1997; Keen, 2001) and business schools (Bubna-Litic & Benn, 2003).

The orthodoxy is questioned in the economic literature, but such debates hardly ever rate a mention in introductory courses or even in many advanced courses (Keen, 2001). And, as Richard Lipsey (2001: 184) observes:

> to get an article published in most of today's top rank economic journals, you must provide a mathematical model, even if it adds nothing to your verbal analysis. I have been at seminars where the presenter was asked after a few minutes, 'Where is your model?'. When he answered 'I have not got one as I do not need one, or cannot yet develop one, to consider my problem' the response was to turn off and figuratively, if not literally, to walk out.

The role of social and economic factors in the construction and maintenance of certain economic ideas seems to be an important consideration. What has by now become 'a well-established professional culture that values technical facility above all', according to Blaug (1997: 7), seems to defy change.

The formal splitting of political economy into separate disciplines of political science and economics in the 19th century has been a source of continuing controversy. This split may have had advantages in terms of certain scientific developments, but it also imposed constraints on the way both economists and political scientists address many vital issues, such as economists ignoring the obvious political dimensions of economic theory. For example, Neville (1998: 178) argues that 'Economic rationalism is the result of economics being taken over – hijacked one might say – by a particular social ideology'. Frequently economists blur the distinction between economic policy and the study of economics, as policy prescriptions rest on values as much as on any theories that economists might use to justify them. This intertwining of values and theory highlights rhetorical dimensions in economic discourse.

McCloskey (1985) sparked a new round of questioning of economic discourse. She called for a greater acknowledgement of the political dimensions of economic theorising, particularly its rhetorical dimension. She also questioned the 'scientism, behaviorism, operationalism, positive economics, and other quantifying enthusiasms of

the 1930's' (1985: 4). Blaug (1992: xviii) summarises McCloskey's argument as follows: 'economics pays obeisance to an outmoded philosophy of science, which he [*sic*] labels "modernity", although it is usually labeled as "logical positivism".' Blaug's (1992) defensive rebuttal of McCloskey, however, fails to acknowledge the force behind such critiques of 'modernity', even though he concurs that 'Modern economics is sick' (1997: 3). I argue below that modernity is not reducible to logical positivism, but refers to a cultural movement characterised by meta-narratives of progress and a worldview that extols the capacity of humans to capture reality by means of formal and reductionist reasoning.

Critiques of modernity problematise discrepancies between abstract prescriptions and social realities. The shift in focus towards discourse analysis may reflect a period of transition in economics. According to Colander (2000), this transition marks the end of decades of frustration with the disciplinary literature, such as Galbraith's (1971: 59) bitter description of economics as a 'not a science, but a conservatively useful system of belief, defending that belief as science'. The issues of scientism, behaviourism, operationalism and positivism are not debates exclusive to economics, but are part of wider epistemological, ontological debates in philosophy and the social sciences. This questioning of wider philosophical issues is shifting the attention in economics and other disciplines back towards the taken-for-granted assumptions that originally framed them.

4.2.3 The question of individualism

Individualism is one subject on which Buddhism may have something to contribute in its dialogue with economics. Individualism posits that human beings are separate and autonomous entities, distinct from each other and from nature. In the economic system it has been assumed that the locus of action lies at the level of the individual and that individuals are able to make decisions on the basis of reason. In Buddhism, individualism is approached from a radically different perspective. Its conceptual framework is based on phenomenological explorations of the mind which revealed to the Buddha (and to many subsequent adepts) a surprising paradox: the individual self that people identify with is not their true nature, but rather can be understood as an epiphenomenon or psychosocially constructed entity.

Buddhism's existential pointers may seem otherworldly to present-day economists. However, the Newtonian world in which the foundations of economic thinking were established has gone, and in its place quantum physics describes a far more mysterious reality. The very science which economics so proudly emulates may be pointing it in an entirely different direction. Moreover, Buddhism's notions of the self may be consistent with new directions in cognitive science, and, if so, may provide the basis of a radical renewal of mainstream economic theory, with the unfolding of a new notion of the individual.

'The idea of a self-contained unity or limited whole is a fundamental instinctive concept', according to Iris Murdoch (1992: 1), to which, she suggests, '[W]e grasp ourselves as unities, continuous bodies and continuous minds'. Assumptions regarding the nature of the individual go to the very foundation of economic discourse; how the individual is conceived has profound implications for how economic action is understood. According to Foster (1998: 147), there has been a sustained criticism of *homo oeconomicus* – 'the individualistic, utility-maximising, information-rich, equilibrium characterisation of the economic agent' – from both inside and outside the economics discipline. The neoclassical conception of the individual prevails in the mainstream literature. It is not the only conception of the individual, and Davis (2003) suggests that two generic conceptions of the individual dominate economics as a whole: *homo oeconomicus*, and conceptions associated with dissident traditions in heterodox economics. *Homo oeconomicus* in mainstream economics is generally treates individuals as 'relatively autonomous or even atomistic beings' (Davis 2003: 16).

Heterodox economic theory seeks to recognise the individual as more embedded in a system of relationships which blur the locus of control. Davis (2003) uses the terms 'internalist' and 'externalist' to contrast these two perspectives of an individual. The first, endogenous view, defines individuals in terms of their internal states, which can only be accessed through subjective methodologies. The second defines individuals in terms of external (or exogenous) relations to one another, which, according to Davis, is more 'socially embedded'. As Davis (2003: 17) suggests, 'the differences between the two main approaches reflect their opposed attachments to two long-established, competing methodological traditions in economics, namely, methodological individualism and methodological holism'.

These strategies of explanation are ways of making sense of socioeconomic processes, but they also have ontological implications in that they purport to explain being or existence. Methodological individualism conceives of individuals as separate entities; methodological holism understands an individual as a component which can only be fully understood in relationship to the whole. The two methodologies address the nature of agency in economic life, but, as Bouvier (2005) points out, they are a means of explanation, and as such represent perspectives rather than theories. The level of abstraction at which the individual is treated in economic theory makes it a slippery concept. It becomes problematic when explanations try to concretise it, as Daly and Cobb (1989) contend, and the economist fails to discern the difference between the abstract entity and that which it represents.

Granovetter (1985) has also explored and elaborated on this classic distinction in social theory. He believes that this approach has tended to over-socialise people, in contrast to neoclassical models (as described above), which tend to under-socialise them. It is not simply that neoclassical economics dumbs down the interactive aspects of human agency in its models, but rather that it operates with atomised, asocial and partial constructs of human agency in order to simulate market behaviour. The notion that economics is a 'dismal' science which assumes 'man to be selfish and money-grubbing' is countered by Friedman (1953) in responding to the famous quote by Veblen (1898: 389) that:

> The hedonistic conception of man is that of a lightning calculator of pleasures and pains, who oscillates like a homogeneous globule of desire of happiness under the impulse of stimuli that shift him about the area, but leave him intact. He has neither antecedent nor consequent. He is an isolated, definitive human datum, in stable equilibrium except for the buffets of the impinging forces that displace him in one direction or another. Self-imposed in elemental space, he spins symmetrically about his own spiritual axis … The hedonistic man is not a prime mover. He is not the seat of a process of living.

Friedman (1953: 31) acknowledges this criticism, but contends that it is 'largely beside the point unless supplemented by evidence that a hypothesis differing in one or another of these respects from the theory being criticised yields better predictions for as wide a range of phenomena'. Moss (1999: 505) observes: 'there is no reason to expect that conventional economists will be fazed by the claim that their agents are unrealistic'.

The work of Kahneman and Tversky (1979) sets out systematic biases in human decision-making, adding to earlier work of Simon (1959) on bounded rationality. The treatment of organisations as individuals writ large is also suspect. Given the significance of economic decisions made in organisations, it is interesting that a generation of theorists (Mintzberg, 1975, 1994, to Whittington, 2004) have questioned the rationality of organisation processes, suggesting that strategic change is best accounted for by emergent and sociocultural explanations of organised action rather than rational logic. Each of these findings has implications for economic theory, not the least being a powerful questioning of core assumptions about rational agency and the individual in economics.

Many economic forms of calculation have heuristic utility which has led to their widespread use in practice, particularly in finance. But, as many have pointed out, there are very real limitations in the accurate simulation of a complex phenomenon such as business organisation, let alone a human society. While the use of these tools has elicited some interesting propositions, several writers suspect the nature of such tools as being tautological (Priem & Butler, 2001a & b), which suggests symbolic reasons for their usage. Moreover, it appears that cultures of practice define even the types of tools on which managers in organisations base their strategic decisions (Whittington, 2004). Flyvbjerg, Skamris Holm and Buhl (2005) find that complex political factors in organisations create significant limitations to the application of economic rationality. This finding is further supported by the observation that the use of analytic tools reflects a disciplinary divide; for example, rational models dominate financial economics, while complex psychological models are used in marketing. These limitations have led to doubts whether mainstream assumptions about the rationality of actors are the only valid basis for the scientific study of economic behaviour. Zafirovski (2003) argues that we need to recognise that there are also non-economic bases for rationality. Mintzberg (1994) challenges the assumption that managers are rational and pro-organisational decision-makers who use economic tools in ways that facilitate prediction and planning.

Economists, on the other hand, are sceptical of the power that sociologists grant to ‘social influences’ as though individuals are compelled to conform to a culture, irrespective of their own reason. Sociologists would argue that all human action is

necessarily social, as human action is socialised from birth. There is a vital underlying assumption here, which Granovetter (1985) identifies:

> But despite the apparent contrast between under- and oversocialized views, we should note an irony of great theoretical importance: both have in common a conception of action and decision carried out by atomized actors. In the undersocialized account, atomization results from narrow utilitarian pursuit of self-interest; in the oversocialized one, from the fact that behavioral patterns have been internalized and ongoing social relations thus have only peripheral effects on behavior. That the internalized rules of behavior are social in origin does not differentiate this argument decisively from a utilitarian one, in which the source of utility functions is left open, leaving room for behavior guided entirely by consensually determined norms and values – as in the oversocialized view. (1985: 485)

This debate is ultimately concerned with the locus of action, and with what sort of rationality impinges and where and how it does so. There seems to be a growing consensus that moves away from the either/or positions on individualism. Margaret Archer (2002: 11) identifies the issue as 'how to conceptualise the human agent as someone who is both partly formed by their sociality, but also has the capacity partly to transform their society'. The tendency to undersocialise economic action leads to an over-emphasis on individual rationality; however as Davis (2003: 17) argues, 'neoclassical and mainstream economics, which make the individual central to their analysis, lack an adequate conception of the individual'. Granovetter (1985: 506) suggests that an improved approach might include a more deliberative rationality, one in which social embeddedness is recognised and includes 'not only ... economic goals but also … sociability, approval, status, and power'.

While these views complement mainstream economic theory, in a recent review Udehn (2002) concluded that the 'never-ending debates' are marred by oversimplification. As he observed, the intensity of this debate can be attributed to the fact that it 'touches upon our most deep-seated beliefs about the nature of the individual and of society, our knowledge about these, and no doubt, also our ideals of the good society [and] involve questions not amenable to direct empirical testing that yields a clear-cut answer' (2002: 479).

These methodological issues converge with the critique of modernity for having privileged a certain sensibility, one which in many ways resided upon a long-standing myth about what constitutes knowledge, and a particular view of the world. In this

regard, Foster (1998: 146) argues 'that the development of an alternative behavioural abstraction constitutes an important goal, both in terms of clarifying the limitations of *homo oeconomicus* and providing an analytical basis on which investigations of economic behaviour in historical time can be built'. Yet this does not address the issue of the inability of such models to achieve their nomothetic potential without becoming equally oversimplified.

Arnsperger (1999: 139) adds that 'economics has become increasingly blind to the philosophical roots of its most fundamental views on individual decision and on social order'. This view is echoed by Davis (2003: 2), who notes: 'the modern concept of the individual has its origins in the Cartesian–Newtonian dualism of human subjectivity and objective nature associated with Enlightenment conceptions of science and society'. It is at this philosophical level that Buddhism presents an alternative view on the self.

This alternative directly contests the assumptions inherent in economics about the nature of self, and avoids the pitfalls found in approaches which simply critique the vision human nature inherent in *homo oeconomicus*, by pointing directly to its impact on culture, and the ethics and values it engenders. Such approaches prescribe an alternative system of values, often religious ones, which, as Foster (1998) suggests, derive from a different belief system, including enlightened Christianity (Schumacher, 1973), aesthetics (Pirsig, 1974) and humanism (Fromm, 1978). Foster (1998) observes that '[o]rthodox economists, when faced with such prescriptions, tend to argue that they are "normative" and therefore, beyond the scope of economic analysis. In a sense, this orthodox position is correct, but not because economics is positive but because the economistic belief system is a strand of scientific materialism and the others are not.'

The predisposition towards assumptions of scientific materialism encounters at least two problems. The first is consciousness, which Block (1995) calls 'a mongrel concept' because it includes phenomenal consciousness, which is subjective experience, and access-consciousness, which is accessed through reasoning, speech and action. The second is the intentionality of thought, which is the conception of mind events being related to something beyond themselves. According to Robinson (1998), intentionality seems not to be a physical relation in the ordinary sense. The issue of consciousness is yet to be resolved, and how conscious qualitative states can occur in physical systems remains the hard question posed by David Chalmers (1996). Since we cannot settle the

question of consciousness, it is difficult to say whether or not individuals are autonomous. Davis (2003: 11) argues that:

> The social science critique gives us reason to think that individuals are subsumed within groups. The postmodernist critique eliminates individuals altogether. If we are to think that individuals are nonetheless important in economics, we need to produce arguments that somehow demonstrate that they retain some form of integrity as individual agents in spite of those forces operating upon them that either collapse them into groups or remove them from the scene altogether. That is, we need arguments that might justify our thinking that individuals possess at least a relatively independent identity.

Charles Taylor (1989) argues that the notion of consciousness should be central to moral theory and that consciousness is inseparable from some idea of the good. Taylor (1989) points out that selfhood and moral action are 'inextricably intertwined themes.' He develops a critique of modernity and the disengaged and instrumental modes of reason that steadily gained prominence following the revolutionary changes brought about by scientific developments in the 17th century. The epistemological tradition that developed out of modernity has brought about a stong consensual agreement about core moral notions which speak to directly to economic action. According to Taylor (1989: 495), 'We as inheritors of this development feel particularly strongly the demand for universal justice and beneficence, are peculiarly sensitive to the claims of equality, feel the demands to freedom and self-rule as axiomatically justified, and put a very high priority on the avoidance of death and suffering'.

4.3 Fault lines in the culture of modernity

Many of these taken-for-granted assumptions can be identified with the powerful influence on thinking that developed in the period following the European Enlightenment; for instance, the language used in definitions of economics betrays a largely modernist worldview. Language is important as it constitutes how people communicate to each other their understanding of the world and thus how they act in it (Eccles & Nohria, 1992). While modernity is a particularly broad categorisation, it is useful for describing the culture of economics, including what Lyotard (1984) describes as 'metanarratives of progress'. The roots of modernity can be traced back to the European Enlightenment period, which championed a belief in the capacity of humankind to capture the structure of reality by means of formal and reductionist reasoning. Modernity is still a relevant project and may, as Latour (1993) suggests, only

be in need of a new constitution. His characterisation of modernity is a useful starting point for highlighting important aspects of economics in its entry into the dialogical space. Latour's contribution stems from recognising that modernity is an incomplete and fragmented project, one founded upon ignorance of science's origins in human culture. Latour (1993: 13) describes this ignorance as a failure to recognise the 'conjoined creation of ... three entities': the other-than-human world; the 'crossed-out God, relegated to the sidelines'; and 'humanism' in the sense of the autonomous 'free agents', identified by Descartes as the 'cogito'.

Latour (1993) contends that these three have been treated as though they are not connected, resulting in façades of separation between the secular and the sacred, humanities and science, and knowledge and power. Latour (1993) argues for the notion of hybridity, which suggests a mixing of difference within the same species. The incorporation of the cultural dimension into science constitutes a significant epistemic break; it weakens the narrative of progress, as the latter becomes culturally relative. Truth, which Sokal (1997) regards as a property of scientific theories, then becomes contextual. Yet Sokal fails to recognise that, while there is wide agreement regarding things like water freezing at a certain temperature under standard conditions, questions such as 'what is water?' or 'what binds it together to freeze?' seem less and less matters of truth and more acts of the imagination, that is, theories – and theories that are affected by social systems, which grant such acts legitimacy.

In the complex open systems of life, there are limitations to the usefulness of scientific knowledge. Charlene Spretnak (1999) argues that we have become inured to the narrowness of the modern sensibility, something which only people who have made a transition from non-modern cultures recognise. Spretnak (1999: 2) observes that 'To such newcomers, it is painfully obvious that modern thinking emphasises certain things but forcibly ignores or devalues others, including quite basic elements of life'. These basic elements derive from a different modality of knowing through a felt and sensual connection: to the body, to place, and to the cosmos. Spretnak (1999) can be understood as highlighting our sense of dislocation, and the sense that something is missing from the modern sensibility. This sense of a divide is found in C.P. Snow's two cultures, which Spretnak (1999) seeks to reconcile, and corresponds to Latour's (1993) first distinction between the secular and the sacred.

4.3.1 The split between the secular and sacred

The modern distinction between the secular and the sacred has its roots in a strand of Christian thought which regarded the secular world as impure and distinct from the divine. The conception of human nature as ruthlessly self-interested, found in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, was not inconsistent with aspects of Christianity's sharp hierarchical view of life. Medieval Christian thought discriminated between body, mind and soul in the individual, and proposed a 'great chain of being', a hierarchy in which God stood at the apex, followed by angels, men, women and children, and then animals, plants and the inanimate realm. This worldview legitimated the reigning social order and posited a complex relationship between theology and the principles of statecraft. In the hierarchy, purity was maintained through sharply delimiting the areas of life in which tensions could give rise to evil. Conflict and corruption tend to occur around objects of desire, and these were removed from spheres of religious practice.

For these reasons, people who engaged in commerce in particular were considered unlikely to be virtuous, and it was commonly believed that, if commerce itself was not immoral, then it was an activity that was conducive to immorality. Remnants of this attitude persisted well into the 19th century, and remain a taint which continues to haunt contemporary commerce. Latour identifies this secular divide as a pervasive dimension of modernity that influenced the formation of the secular state.

The sense of dislocation, which Latour suggests is a façade, manifests in the very structure of economics, with its tendency to discriminate between various aspects of life in its focus on the ordinary and material. Latour (1993) goes further to reopen the question of God, which he observes as simultaneously present in modernity, through individual spirituality, but absent in the disenchantment of social and natural realms. According to David Berreby (1994), Latour is arguing for a position of radical humility, where we resist closure on metaphysics and resist a return to the premodern (where the God of the Christians has been thought to have prevailed).

This sharp distinction between spiritual and ordinary life becomes the key to modern conceptions of sovereignty and freedom of the individual, and, in the context of the expanding secular sphere, it effectively relegated religion to the margins of economic thinking. In dealing with issues related to religion, neoclassical economic theories drew

upon the conceptions of individual autonomy and freedom in liberalism to reconcile the vicissitudes of life, individual differences, and inequality. The role of God was relegated to the supernatural, and for the individual it was firstly a matter of belief, and a private and personal relationship of individual consequence only.

The modernist assumptions of the primacy of reason over belief informed that theoretical abstraction *homo oeconomicus*, or the economically rational man for whom morality could be achieved through adherence to the law and the pursuit of self-interest. This imaginary individual only makes decisions by rationally evaluating the consequences of different alternatives, even in complex situations where the outcome is difficult to predict. What motivates these decisions is assumed to be natural desire.

The modern abstraction of *homo oeconomicus* brought across a particular set of assumptions about human nature. These stand in stark contrast to the Buddhist understanding of self discussed in chapter 2.

a) Separation of humanity from nature

As mentioned above, underpinning these conceptions of the individual is a sharp distinction between mind, body and soul, which complements the Christian ethos in which the great chain of being separated God from man and nature. This separation came to all disciplines when philosophy replaced religion at the apex of academic enquiry. The pursuit of truth boiled down to an understanding of philosophical problems of truth and explanation, and religion found itself marginalised by modern notions of value-free science. What was once a project to illuminate God's handiwork in the laws of nature ended in a worldview in which God was simply absent.

A critical factor in this shift was the work of Charles Darwin (1859), whose theory of evolution had a huge impact on the modern view. As Dennett (1995: 21) suggests, 'In a single stroke, the idea of evolution by natural selection unifies the realm of life, meaning, and purpose with the realm of space and time cause and effect, mechanism and physical law'. He regards this as 'a dangerous idea' in which the clash with religiosity, so adroitly avoided by the European Enlightenment scholars, became inevitable. Darwin thus took a further step towards the modern secular sensibility which puts reason before faith. This sensibility sees faith as an aspect of human behaviour –

not as a reasonable basis for getting to the truth, but rather as ‘a way people comfort themselves and each other’ (Dennett 1995: 154). While it created an important point of tension in modernity, one which separated humans from nature, Darwin’s suggested common ancestry was sidestepped by pointing out significant differences between humans and other animals, such as reason, language and ‘civilisation’.

A revision of the distinction between the world of humans and that of other-than-human beings did not follow Darwin’s discoveries. As modernity consolidated its place, nature came to be seen more and more as mechanistic and consisting of undifferentiated resources which exist to be transformed and commodified by human agency. This essentially metaphysical distinction between nature and human nature provides a critical issue in this dialogue. An influential view in the natural sciences was that nature could be reduced to smaller and smaller particles which ultimately demonstrated law-like physical properties of attraction, repulsion and reaction, and from which all action (at least theoretically) could be derived. Latour (1993) argues that the division of the human and non-human realms ignores the obvious interaction between them. Such distinctions are not possible, he claims, as we cannot ignore the social and political dimensions in which the ‘separate’ aspects meld and yet at the same time ignore the non-human dimension of things from which our notions of them are derived. Latour’s (1993) nuanced solution is to posit a new sense of the human, beyond the notion of an essence, beyond the evanescence of the postmodern narrative turn, such as a ‘play of language’: a human ‘is not a thing’ but a mediator who stands where these realms meet.

The discipline of economics formed at a time when the human impact on the biosphere was relatively small. According to George Sessions (1991: 112):

> From the vantage point of the late twentieth century and the deepening environmental crisis, it is now possible to see that the transition from the medieval to the modern world was not as radical as many European Enlightenment-inspired historians have thought. The key was not so much a shift to reason, proper empirical scientific method, or the theories of the new sciences (which in many cases were a rediscovery of the theories of the Presocratics). Rather, the transition amounted to an increasingly unfettered playing out of the full implications of a radical anthropocentrism with roots deep in ancient Western culture: the discovery of new worlds to plunder by a resource-depleted, ecologically damaged Europe; the development of a new science, science-driven technology, and Industrialisation capable of inflicting great damage on the Earth; the exponential growth of human populations; the crowding out and extinction of other species through habitat degradation and loss; but ultimately the desanctification of Nature and the concept of private property giving rise to economic systems designed to treat the Earth

> exclusively as a human resource and as a commodity, together with the reconceptualization and reinforcement of humans as basically Hobbesian, selfish exploiters and consumers. All this was to be the new freedom under democratic regimes for humans.

This notion of freedom is irrevocably bound to the notion of self; the concept of freedom (particularly from suffering) is also central to Buddhist realisation. The assumption in mainstream economics that humans are separate from nature has increasingly come under challenge by biologists, ecologists and even some economists. This challenge has resulted in a new branch of economic thinking called 'ecological economics', which assumes that human beings and their social systems are important subsystems of the larger planetary natural system.

b) Separation of mind from body

Scientists, including Dennett (1995), have recently begun to recognise that human cognition itself is equally a product of evolution, like other natural phenomenon. Even so, the evolution of mind still presents a powerful conundrum: what is the nature of human subjectivity? The property of consciousness which allows phenomenal experiences arises essentially from a physical system, and, as explained by Chalmers (1995), not only presents a particularly 'hard problem' for science but also for modernity. The issue of consciousness leaves what Levine (1983) calls the 'explanatory gap' between what happens on the neural level and how that correlates with consciousness. The implications of the different explanations for this gap support fundamentally different ontologies. Historically, Descartes set the transcendent mind as the point of division between human and non-human, with the property of consciousness combined with the power of reason accounting for humanity's distinctive place in the world. Descartes' view provided a point of connection with God which emphasised the distinction between human beings and other animals.

Recent developments in consciousness studies suggest some significantly new explanations. Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 3) claim that there are 'three major findings of cognitive science': first, 'the mind is inherently embodied'; second, 'thought is mostly unconscious'; and third, 'abstract concepts are largely metaphorical'. These three findings suggest that *homo sapiens* differs in significant respects from what economic theory abstracts as *homo oeconomicus*. The notion of an autonomous, rational agent as

embodied and limited by its evolutionary trajectory, in the sense that its cognitive structures evolved to solve evolutionary challenges, does not rely on the Cartesian subject, with a mind independent of the body, nor on a Kantian autonomous person capable of reason, nor a utilitarian agent. Cognitive science has spawned a new paradigm in economics which Paquet (1998) calls 'Evolutionary Cognitive Economics', in which 'there may not be a need to build our view of the world, as the neoclassical paradigm does, on autonomous individual rational decision-making'. These findings see the mind as embodied, and as such human rationality is bound up with our evolutionary past. This reinforces our commonality with nature and the view that human consciousness is deeply interconnected to our bodies and with nature.

These two tensions highlight fault lines in the paradigmatic foundation of much economic theorising and suggest potential openings in which economics itself is being challenged in ways that move it towards a more open view of the Buddhist paradigm.

4.3.2 The separation of humanities and science

The second split is the artificial separation between humanities and science. The humanities could also be seen to encompass aspects of the romantic agenda that has been discussed at length in chapter 2. Key to Latour's understanding of this split is actor network theory, in particular its view regarding the indeterminacy of the actor. Actor network theory suggests that human culture shapes the non-human, and vice-versa. Latour (1998: 3) explains:

> 'Actor' is not here to play the role of agency and 'network' to play the role of society. Actor and network – if we want to still use the terms – designate two faces of the same phenomenon, like wave and particles.

This indeterminate being bears little resemblance to *homo oeconomicus*, the micro-level atomic self that neoclassical economics nomologically defines as an entity obeying set behavioural rules, and is decoupled from networks which other disciplines take for granted as impacting on it. The theoretical conception of *homo oeconomicus* in economic theory makes a sharp distinction between the subjective aesthetic world of the humanities and the objective 'reality' of science, this split manifests by extension across other important distinctions including: the sacred and secular, and reality and imagination.

This fragmented conception of the world underlies the romantic objections to modernity. Contemporary critics find fault in the demarcation between truth and falsity (Rorty, 1991), but even simple truth claims in western culture are affected by the pervasive assumption of individual autonomy. For example, murder trials are always based on the assumption that a murderer is an independent autonomous actor. When a person is found guilty of murder, there is consideration of mitigating circumstances, and clemency is often granted on the basis of the influence of circumstances, personal or situational. These factors may include whether the perpetrator's behaviour was out of character or whether the crime would have occurred in another context, but ignore the more obvious ones, such as whether the murderer had been loved as a child, what might have happened if the victim had responded differently or if others had intervened to prevent the crime, and so on. Sentencing is directed beyond the individual as a deterrent to others, yet there is no responsibility beyond that individual. This might seem common sense, and external factors are often taken into account in sentencing; however, sociological evidence suggests that there are powerful social causes for all human action, including crimes like murder. Research by Lee, Maume, Ousey and Graham (2003) shows that a significant proportion of the variation in homicide rates across a city can be explained by poverty. By focusing on the individual as the source of rationality and action, the responsibility of a network of factors is ignored. This is not to say others should be punished, but rather recognised as predisposing conditions to be responded to. Similarly, in economics the focus on the individual reveals a very one-sided view of the world.

Our modern concern for rationality also elides the role of myth and fantasy in reality, and how reality and fiction can seamlessly merge. Using fashion as an example, Mark C. Taylor (1997), in *Hidings*, takes the reader through a disorienting journey where the dividing line between reality, fantasy and fiction is never clear. The error of modernity that Latour recognises is its claims to an array of false distinctions, including the distinction between imagination and reality, between consciousness and unconscious, and between self and not-self. Descartes' error, according to Damasio (1994: 128), is that 'Nature appears to have built the apparatus of rationality not just on top of the apparatus of biological regulation, but also from it and with it'. In this sense, Descartes' contribution was perhaps not the revolution it appeared, but conformed to earlier notions about the nature of the individual already established by Aristotelian philosophy

and the Judaeo-Christian tradition, which regarded the individual as consisting of mind, body and soul. In this sense, humans appeared as separate from non-humans, which were considered to lack a soul. Modernity conceded this separation, thus achieving a détente with the remaining vestiges of Christian power and making way for the development of secular liberal society. According to Davis (2003: 4):

> This fundamental division of the world into an inner subjective domain and an outer objective domain was Descartes' great contribution to modern thinking, and it remains the foundation for contemporary thinking about the individual as a disengaged subjectivity and the modern view of nature as a 'spiritless' domain.

In sum, the science that economics has used as a trump card to deflect its critics is increasingly being recognised as imbued with human culture. This suggests that the world of experience which Buddhist traditions built on is not so separate from the foundations of economics, which can be seen to falsely exclude the humanities.

4.3.3 The separation of knowledge and power

The final point that Latour makes following Foucault is that modern knowledge is not separate from the interests that define it over time. There are two important considerations in this regard. The first is that contemporary economic theories cannot be considered in isolation from their modernist roots, and many continue to draw upon a broad base of liberal philosophy which has defined the majority of the institutions of liberal democracies. Manent (1996) explores liberalism as a perspective on life which reflected the political struggles that brought about its birth as a movement. These struggles are plainly evident in the writings of European Enlightenment scholars such as Bentham, Locke, Mill, Montesquieu and Voltaire, from which the doctrine developed. Classical economics was closely aligned with the agenda of liberalism in the maintenance of liberty and private property.

Central to liberalism was the notion of freedom from interference and with this the concept of freedom of exchange, so that people were free to choose what and how they exchanged labour and goods, including the freedom to save and spend as they saw fit. These freedoms by extension included the freedom to create and organise enterprises using accumulated capital and, implicitly, to employ others. A related concern was the question of freedom from tyranny of government by control of resources necessary for free speech, such as the control of the media, places of meeting, and transport.

Liberalism became entwined with economics when it regarded the right of the individual to pursue happiness through freedom of choice.

The concept of freedom, however, is not far removed from notions of power and is intimately tied up with questions of government. The latter clearly constrains freedom; it protects individuals when conflicts of interest arise, and curtails freedom in the interest of the collective. The study of economics in liberal democracies, however, shifted its emphasis from questions of government towards the understanding of markets. As Oliver Williamson (1985) points out, the modern economy is not simply made up of markets, but rather organisations in which there are hierarchies.

Flyvbjerg (1998) considers rationality in its relationship to power. Thus the drivers of economic action may not be rational and derived from 'knowledge as power', but rather derived depending on what 'strategies and tactics' individual actors use to negotiate and make sense of action and its context (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Lindblom (1959) called this process 'Muddling Through'. The distinction between economic theory and what we observe in 'the economy' requires similar reflexivity.

For many critics of economics, however, the issue with *homo oeconomicus* is not how it thinks, but what *homo oeconomicus* really wants. White (2003: 232) observes that the notion of *homo oeconomicus* is 'consequentialist or teleological in his ethics, whether that consequentialism takes the form of egoism (following narrowly defined self-interest), altruism (toward certain persons or groups), or utilitarianism (considering the total or average well-being of all)'. Ethical questions addressed in this way tend to ignore questions of collective teleology, the supposed outcome of individual choices. Recognition that the distinction between power and knowledge is blurred challenges the liberal idea of individual freedom to choose. Liberalism regards individual liberty as based on the freedom to make private choices and participate in public decisions without fear of coercion.

John Stuart Mill (1859: 74-75) saw the role of society as the cultivation of individual desires and impulses:

> A person whose desires and impulses are his own – are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture – is said to have a character. One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam-engine has character.

The assumption that something constitutes individuality separate from a person's socialisation and culture has been central to the nature-nurture debate, which has continued to intrigue social scientists. Roos and Rotkirch (2004) argue that 'if we include nature and culture, body and mind, innate and learned in the same habitus, then we can have a means to develop a dynamic and [generally] open theory of human agency and dispositions'. Bourdieu's conception of habitus allows for a further understanding of Mill's sense of individuality going beyond the mind-matter dualism, such that every difference is at the same time natural and cultural, or material and symbolic. Freedom of choice requires a view that individuals are free from economic and social conditions that might construct the very sense of what is rational and determine the conditions under which such knowledge might be applied. According to Hamilton (2004: 19), we need to have inner freedom, which is:

> the freedom to act according to one's own considered will, by one's reason or lasting conviction, in Hayek's felicitous phrase. It describes the ability to employ one's reason and sense of what is right to stave off influences that would prevent one behaving or, over the longer term, living according to what might be called one's nature ... It is a freedom to liberate ourselves from interference, manipulation, temptation and social pressure.

Power in a liberal market economy does not operate through coercion but mediates the construction of the knowledge upon which so-called rational agents make choices. It does this in two ways: by influencing the conditions of socialisation, and, according to Hamilton (2004), by preying on our moments of moral or intellectual weakness:

> If a person does not succeed in doing what, after sober reflection, he decides to do, if his intentions or strength desert him at the decisive moment and he fails to do what he somehow wishes to do, we may say that he is 'unfree', the 'slave of his passions'. (Hamilton, 2004: 17)

A complication arises from the postulated separation of the individual and the collective. Recent writers have questioned Adam Smith, firstly, by arguing that judgements about whether the market is achieving a common good can be mediated by selective interests, and, secondly, by focusing on the impact that the wider system has on individual aspirations. The critics point to the negative consequences on the individual of the culture of capitalism, resulting in passive submission to a banal existence sedated and seduced by material comforts, as Marcuse (1964) suggests.

To claim that economics does not obtrude into the realm of politics denies this link. After all, economics, as Harold Lasswell (1936) bluntly defines it, is 'who gets what, when, and how'. Whether behind modernist mainstream economics lies a utopian vision which envisages a progression towards a life of ease and abundance, arrival at the American dream, or the best of all possible worlds – there is some sort of vision. The question is what we want, in terms of how we should live, and the answer comes from our sense of who we are. Postmodern critiques suggest that the dream is a fake; films like *American Beauty* identify the modern person as fitting with Riesman's (1950: 25) 'other-directed' character type, who is 'at home every where and nowhere' and who is 'losing it' in a society obsessed with outer appearances. There is a growing sense that this American dream is ephemeral, being eaten away by frustration on the inside, where the cultural imperatives of puritanism, patriotism, empowerment and corporate America conspire to create an illusion of contentment, to cover deep anomie rather than autonomy.

This critique questions the very notions of autonomy and freedom, and the issue becomes something that is no longer simply a problem of locating oneself on the continuum from free market economy to command economy, with various hybrids in between. This is not the old humanitarian criticism of the economic system for its skewed outcomes in income and wealth, but a denunciation of a system which has detrimental effects on its actors – a critique which harkens back to the romantic concern about our loss of humanity in a deeper sense.

4.4 Buddhist economics

Following Schumacher's (1974) popularisation of the term 'Buddhist economics', a literature has emerged exploring what a Buddhist perspective on economics might be. Simon Zadek (1997: 262) suggests that 'We should not underestimate the difficulty of thinking about a modern economy based on Buddhist economics'. There are several reasons behind this statement. Firstly, to contrast 'Buddhist economics' with 'economics' simply ignores the pluralistic natures of both contemporary Buddhist thinking and economics. Such general approaches disregard the deeply divided and contested nature of social/economic discourse in general. Arguably, there has never been a singular master narrative of economic theory, nor of Buddhism, but rather a variety of views. Given this heterogeneity, it would seem foolish to engage in a quixotic

assault on economic theory per se from a 'Buddhist' perspective, as some writers have done, often setting up an overly simplistic views of contemporary economic thinking as something monolithic, uncontested and easily demolished.

In this regard, the difficulties inherent in such a relationship led Zadek (1997: 242) to express his discomfort as to whether the notion of a 'Buddhist economics' can actually live up 'to the real wealth of Buddhism or its meaning for economics' – particularly since, as Zadek points out, Buddhism does not directly address the core economic issues of our time, such as inflation, interest rates or the appropriate rate of technological progress. The contribution of Buddhism lies in the unfolding of its differing assumptions, which Zadek (1995: 1) suggests 'provides a framework for *reconceptualising* key theoretical components of economic theory'.

In taking a dialogical approach, I attempt to open up a dialogue on key theoretical components relevant to both Buddhism *and* economics. Starting with Buddhism, chapter 2 set out some basic elements of Buddhism which are common to virtually all traditions. Chapter 3 engaged with several crucial arenas of debate in Buddhism, including the question of essentialism, which is a complex and largely unresolved debate. Taking the view that Buddhism reflects a variety of cultural interpretive frameworks which have developed around a natural phenomenon, chapter 3 explores how new developments in western philosophy and psychology might shed light on its core assumptions. These assumptions both intersect and contrast with those of economics. Moreover, by engaging with recent critiques which challenge the assumptions of modernity, chapter 3 opened up some potentially overlapping areas of western thinking, in which Buddhist thinking potentially provides new understandings.

In the previous two sections of this chapter, I have explored themes which have emerged from the critiques of modernity that apply to modern economic thinking. This builds a common foundation with contrasting Buddhist assumptions, as an emerging theme in the literature highlights the ways in which economics is steeped in a modern western sensibility. The culture of modernity sets its course through its assumptions about the nature of human well-being, human nature and ontology. These characteristics have so far precluded interest in Buddhist thought and meditative experience. As we have seen, there is now a growing recognition that many of these assumptions in economic thought, forged out of modernity, are subject to revision in light of recent

debates, especially postmodern critiques developed in other disciplines. At the heart of this revision are voices that bring different perspectives to old debates in economic discourse, perspectives that converge with Buddhist ideas.

An important stimulus behind this convergence is the now palpable failure of economic thinking to grapple with the relationship between economic activity and nature, and the imperative to reduce the human impact on the biosphere. Buddhist notions of interconnectedness and oneness with all beings offer valuable ways for reconceptualising our relationship with nature (Batchelor & Brown, 1992; Badiner, 1990; Devall & Sessions, 1985; Grady, 1995; Gross, 1997; Harris, 1995; Tucker & Ryuken Williams, 1997).

As argued in chapter 3, Buddhism can contribute by problematising the modern assumption that humans are separate from nature. As the tradition rapidly grows in acceptance in the West, its ideas are diffusing into the discourse of many disciplines. In psychology, for example, Kabat-Zinn (2003) notes that mindfulness has become an important area of investigation and practice in clinical psychology, but he also recognises that the full historical context of its Buddhist origins is easily forgotten. What emerges from this diffusion is likely to accelerate the acceptance of Buddhist ideas. Buddhism is opening up in unexpected ways; for example, Nakai and Schultz (2000) begin the book *The Mindful Corporation* by quoting Shunryu Suzuki, the founder of San Francisco Zen Centre. The book draws constantly from Buddhist concepts, although without any explicit reference to Buddhism, and, while we might question such lack of attribution, it does expose Buddhism to a readership that otherwise would not engage with it. While Buddhism is opening up new ways of thinking in the West, the dialogue goes both ways; as chapter 2 points out, there is good reason for a reopening the original questions Buddhism sought to answer.

The dialogical space between Buddhism and economics is not simply the application of Buddhist concepts to economic activity; it also invites a speculative process whereby the relationship gains because economic thought and Buddhist practice enrich one another. If this meeting is to have any potency in the world, it must go beyond normative prescriptions and individual cases to influence those engaged in economic activity. This dialogue is only just beginning, and does not always go under its own banner. But it is clear that, as Zadek (1997: 273) concludes, ‘Buddhist Economics is ...

manifested in ways that can effectively confront the mainstream'. It is difficult, if not impossible, to encompass the range of views that make up Buddhism, but there are certain commonalities which can be usefully discussed. The following section provides a critical review of the literature on the different approaches to Buddhist economics that have emerged so far.

These contributions have sought to explicate new perspectives on economics by drawing on Buddhist doctrine and practices. The primary approach has been based on direct reference to traditional sources of Buddhism. It has sought to distil and develop Buddhist principles and ethical values by setting out implicit references in Buddhist doctrine to economic action. Major deficiencies exist in this literature. Firstly, there is a tendency for contributors to uncritically generalise from either Pali texts or Mahāyāna canonical texts to Buddhism as a whole. Secondly, a major deficiency lies in the assumption that Buddhism should be accepted uncritically, either as a cultural norm, or as a value position, free of cultural interpretation. These deficiencies will be discussed in detail below.

The second approach has been to look at the application of Buddhist economic ideas in practice, seeking historical examples and representative projects and case studies. While this literature tends to be idiographic, it does bring some important experiences to light.

The third approach has been to explore a variety of practices and ideas that either incorporate Buddhist notions into contemporary capitalism or are complementary to corporate goals. Many of these contributions fit into the broad category of 'spiritual'. For example, the use of meditation in the workplace is a significant subgroup of this third approach. This third group covers a vast and diffuse literature, and an exhaustive review of its literature is not feasible.

4.4.1 Doctrinal approaches to Buddhist economics

Buddhist economics was relatively unknown in economics before E. F. Schumacher (1973) devoted a chapter to it in *Small is Beautiful*, in which he outlined a fundamental critique of contemporary modern capitalism. For Schumacher (1973), Buddhism simply represented a broader spiritual commonality found in all genuine religious traditions, and thus was a choice that fitted his purposes as 'purely incidental; the teaching of Christianity, Islam or Judaism could have been used just as well as any other of the

great Eastern traditions' (1973: 43). Schumacher's intention was to contrast a more spiritual set of assumptions as the basis of an economic system than those of western materialism, which he believed 'brought forth' modern economics.

Schumacher (1973: 45) summarises the Buddhist point of view to be (at least) threefold:

> to give a man a chance to utilise and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his egocentredness by joining with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence.

Schumacher's primary mission was an ethical one – specifically, to shift the emphasis from maximisation of individual wealth to the maximisation of individual well-being with a minimum of material consumption. Schumacher's sense of well-being was spiritually inspired rather than hedonistic, compatible with the ideal of the *Arahant* and *Bodhisattva* – the awakened archetypes of Theravadin and Mahāyāna Buddhism respectively, which find fulfilment in ways that transcend the ego and its material objects of desire. The assumption underpinning this view was that no amount of material well-being being can satisfy every man's greed, and yet happiness and well-being can be achieved with very little.

This idea is not new and can be traced back to Christian thinking and earlier Greek thinkers, as well as the Buddha. What is interesting is that Schumacher's ideas resonated so strongly with the emerging ideas of the 1960s, which experienced a revival of romantic concerns. Rather than getting 'involved in arguments of methodology' at the heart of which seems to lie the fundamental divergence of thinking, which C.P. Snow called the two cultures, Schumacher focused on specifics.

Firstly, Schumacher set out a model of human labour, not as a commodified resource in the creation of material wealth, but as both a means to wealth and an end in itself. This view sees the labour process as potentially creative and fulfilling. The alienating effect of industrialisation on workers was one thing that powerfully affected Marx. Giddens (1991: 189) develops this notion of alienation as an experience of powerlessness, which is a movement away from that which is originally human, where 'human powers are experienced as forces emanating from an objectified social environment'. While Giddens also highlights the effects of time-space distanciation and deskilling, he reduces alienation to a sense of powerlessness. Schumacher (1973), however, is not

simply concerned with a lack of freedom to make choices. Human labour is something far richer, as Wendel Berry (1990: 10) suggests:

> Good work finds the way between pride and despair. It graces with health. It heals with grace. It preserves the given so that it remains a gift. By it, we lose loneliness: we clasp the hands of those who go before us, and the hands of those who come after us.

Behind these views we can glimpse different assumptions about 'how we should live'.

In a major review of the literature on the psychology of well-being, Ryan and Deci (2001) identify two distinct strands of research: the hedonic approach, which explores well-being in terms of pleasure and pain with a focus on happiness; and the eudaimonic approach, which explores well-being as something separate from happiness per se and focuses on deeper questions of authenticity, meaning and a general holistic sense of human potential. Eudaimonic approaches, according to Norton (1976), have roots in the ethical doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, which were based on the idea that each person has an obligation to know and live in the truth of their 'daemon' or gift of the gods, which manifests itself in abilities as well as good fortune.[24] The current extension of this idea has been to recognise that well-being is related to actualising our potential and opportunities.

Schumacher contrasts the hedonic view of well-being with a eudaimonic view, the focus thus shifting from private satisfaction through material consumption to the practice of virtue and the seeking of wisdom through Buddhist practices with others. There is a growing literature that supports Schumacher's contention regarding the effects of materialism. Kasser (2002: 42) has recently surveyed the damaging personal effects of materialistic values – a vicious cycle which is 'both a symptom of an underlying insecurity and a coping strategy taken on in an attempt to alleviate problems and satisfy needs'.

---

[24] The Romans believed that at birth gods or spirits with the power to affect character and fortune were chosen for every person.

Drawing from 20th-century Buddhist reform movements that swept South-East Asia and strongly influenced Ghandian economics, Schumacher argues for two guiding principles: not-harming and simplicity. Not-harming in this context goes beyond individualism to develop an economic system in which people and the environment are not harmed. Simplicity is to find the optimal pattern of consumption for a high degree of human satisfaction. Self-sufficiency – reliance on local resources – helps reduce environmental impacts, and aids the ability of individuals to have control over the means of production.

Schumacher's message is still influential, particularly, as Pearce (2001) and Schumacher, Robertson and Hawken (1999) concur, in terms of contemporary ecological economics. Today's greater awareness of the need for sustainable economic growth creates an interest in alternative systems based on reduced consumption, such as the one Schumacher proposes. The crucial question for such a system is how people can find fulfilment in other ways than consumption. At the heart of the problem lies the need to create a different sense of what it is good to be. According to Christopher (1999: 141), 'Approaches to psychological well-being are shown to presuppose ontological and liberal individualism as notions of the self and as normative prescriptions for the good or ideal person'. Christopher (1999) argues against the notion that some measure of well-being or a theory can be culture-free. Rather, the debate must begin with the view that 'all understandings of psychological well-being are based on moral visions'. Schumacher (1973: 38) takes up this view and argues that 'the conclusions and prescriptions of economics change as the underlying picture of man and his purpose on earth changes'. Schumacher's vision shifts us towards a subjective view of life; this, and his critique aimed at 'modern materialistic scientism', resonates with a romantic sensibility. Schumacher (1977: 15) recognises something awry in modernity and its metanarratives, quoting Viktor Frankl (1969):

> The present danger does not really lie in the loss of universality on the part of the scientist, but rather then in his pretense and claim of totality ... What we have to deplore therefore is not so much that scientists are specializing, but rather the fact that specialists are generalizing. The true nihilism of today is reductionism ... Contemporary nihilism is camouflaged as nothing-but-ness. Human phenomena are thus turned into epiphenomena.

Schumacher's choice of Buddhism as representative of any spiritual perspective on economics, however, fails to fully acknowledge the uniqueness of Buddhism, according

to Batchelor (1990b). In particular, Schumacher reflects a limited understanding of the distinctive nature of Buddhism's non-dual foundation. Schumacher's differences are made evident in his subsequent book, *A Guide for the Perplexed* (Schumacher 1977), in which he engages in a plainly dualistic perspective that relies on a correspondence theory of truth which distinguishes objects to be known from the mind that knows. Such a Cartesian dualism requires a completely different approach to issues of the nature of mind, which is one of the most distinctive elements of Buddhism. This, Batchelor (1990b) contends, hides the true power of contemporary Buddhist thinking as the basis of an alternative philosophical framework for economics. Non-dualism is also one of the most misunderstood Buddhist concepts and is easily confused because it does not rely on a transcendent belief system. It is this very ability to find spiritual depth outside of a transcendental framework that makes Buddhism a potential solution to the dilemma that Schuon (1990) describes: 'the tragic impasse reached by the modern mind results from the fact that most men are incapable of grasping the *compatibility* between the symbolic expressions of tradition and the material discoveries established by modern science'.

Schumacher's contribution began a series of attempts to define Buddhist economics from Buddhist doctrine. Adapting Marshall's definition of economics, quoted above, Piboolsravut (1997: 95) defined Buddhist economics as 'the study of managing material well-being from the perspective of Buddhist philosophy'. Wellbeing, from this perspective, comes from the cultivation of mind, and thus is limits the material requisites for well-being to what is necessary for Buddhist practice and the gaining of insight. Piboolsravut's (1997) doctoral dissertation represents one of the first detailed analyses of Buddhist economics, but this work is based entirely on an uncritical reading of the Pali canon, which, Piboolsravut (1997: 11) claims, is 'generally recognised as the direct teachings of the Buddha and his disciples at the time'.

Piboolsravut (1997) sets out the traditional framework of Theravadin Buddhism, founded on the four noble truths and the eightfold noble path, and her definition of economics implies a kind of premodern-modern fusion. The purpose of economics, she asserts, is the practice of Buddhism. Her work engages with only one side of the dialogue: what Buddhism has to say to economics. Thus she offers only an alternative set of assumptions to those that inform the mainstream economics. It is questionable

how feasible this strategy is, even in Buddhist countries where the Buddhist religion is dominant and there is some political support for such a strategy, but as a dialogical engagement with economics such attempts are regarded by economists as normative and 'religious'. For example, another Thai writer, Payutto (1993), attracted a dismissive reviewer's comment that his book 'is practical without being preachy' (Jourdan, 1994: 42). In the dialogue with modern economic thought, this approach is not calculated to convince the secularly minded.

There has been a resurgence of interest in Buddhist economics in Thailand, as well as other countries in Asia, following the Asian economic crisis that was triggered by the devaluation of Thailand's baht in mid-1997. The crisis induced scepticism about western-style economic development and its modernisation constituency. In this way, it encouraged the development of a sustained alternative discourse, particularly among the social movements that can be broadly termed the 'Buddhist economic movement' (BEM). Much of the debate on economic issues, however, has arisen out of criticism of the postcolonial Asian way of doing business, which combines corruption, lack of accountability, collusion and cronyism – a combination which its critics have long denounced (Sivaraksa 1990, 1991).

The BEM articulates the difficulties of living and working in a developing country; it points out salient problems that are encountered in the modernisation process. Piboolsravut (1997) argues that, in order to take this discussion further, we need a comprehensive economic theory based on Buddhist ethical foundations. The BEM in Thailand has been described by Sivaraksa (1990) as 'radical conservatism'. Ken Jones (1999: 105) describes it as 'combining the democratic and social justice traditions of modernity with the self reliance and embedded wisdom of indigenous communities and cultures'. This fusion needs, according to Piboolsravut (1997: 8), a common language in which issues can be discussed; otherwise it is difficult to 'evaluate current economic development against Buddhist principles'.

In the Buddhist literature, ethics is generally approached in two ways. The first, *normative*, approach rests on a set of rules or precepts to live by, and to develop good karma, in order to develop insight, by following the prescriptions of Buddhist texts. The second approach is more often associated with Mahāyāna Buddhism and can be called *derivative*. This approach is derived from either rational choices informed by

awakening, or from a spontaneous and intuitive sense of what is right action, even when it does not conform to social or scriptural norms. In China the concept of *Wu Wei*, which Loy (1985) interprets as non-dual action, where there is no residue of self-consciousness remaining to observe an action objectively, remains an ideal.

Piboolsravut (1997) elaborates on the three fundamental Buddhist notions on the nature of the self, which can be derived from the first three noble truths discussed in chapter 2: not-self (anattā), impermanence (anicca) and unsatisfactoriness (dukkha). As discussed, anattā is one of these dimensions that has potential for positive validation, and contemporary cognitive scientists, such as Metzinger, Varela, Thompson and Rosch, have opened up the debate on this question. Piboolsravut (1997) follows a normative approach, however, when she sets out the ethical implications based on the eightfold noble path as given elements in Buddhist thought.

These two approaches are linked, because many normative approaches to Buddhist economic theory develop from the ethical commitments that correspond to the third and fourth noble truths, that is, the goal of awakening and a framework for practice whereby awakening can be achieved. Thus, according to Alexandrin and Alexandrin (1979: 124), the adjective 'Buddhist' in relation to economics suggests 'certain ethical and moral motivating forces which may guide individuals in their behaviour'. In the four noble truths, each step logically builds upon the other; thus the ethical components are ultimately derived from the experience of the Buddha. The relationship between experience and ethics is thus crucial. Alexandrin and Zech (1999: 1351) acknowledge this, and conclude: '[t]he basis for Buddhist economics is based on the psycho-religious discoveries of Gautama Buddha some 2,500 years ago in India'.

In deriving a set of rules or precepts by which to live, the Buddhist economic literature almost invariably draws on canonical texts. Pryor (1990: 339), in a landmark paper, sets out to 'determine whether the most important parts of the Buddhist canon contain a set of doctrines which allow us to gain some coherent ideas about how a modern economic system based upon it should function'. Pryor (1990: 341) extracts three basic aspects of the teachings – not-self, impermanency and unsatisfactoriness – to generate the Buddhist view of the material world and applies them, through a set of ethical teachings, to the economic context. These aspects roughly correspond to the four noble truths, including the fourth truth — the cessation of suffering can be achieved by following the

eightfold noble path. Doctrinal approaches to Buddhist economics are built on similar foundations.

a) Anicca – impermanence

The notion of impermanence (discussed in chapter 2) might simply have been intended as an observation about the world, but, as noted earlier, it has been raised to axiomatic status. Pryor (1990) follows this pattern when he regards impermanence as extending to all phenomena and reflecting the Buddha's view on the nature of the world. It is an observation that has had a counterpart in western thinking since Heraclitus, and, according to Capra (1975), has an affinity with dynamic systems theory.

Piboolsravut (1997) extends her analysis of the four noble truths in the light of impermanence to the economic system. She suggests that the human tendency to cling to stability in this ever-changing world leads to unsatisfactoriness/suffering (dukkha) and arises from the risk of financial loss and through an 'undue attachment to our possessions'. Economic activity, she suggests, is an attempt to eliminate the 'unsatisfactoriness' that results from 'clinging'.

This clinging is a link in the causal chain of dependent arising. At the heart of desire is lack, which, Piboolsravut (1997: 121) suggests, 'is conditioned by the agent's ignorance about the characteristics of non-self (the first axiom) and impermanence (the second axiom)'. Another important link in the chain is ignorance of the nature of consciousness, which manifests itself as identification with a socially constructed persona. This persona is, by the nature of our society, unstable, and this explains why we suffer. David Loy (1990) recognises a similar root cause of suffering, also tracing it to the illusory 'sense of self' that always involves a 'sense of lack'. The instability of identity is a recognised strand of feminist literature (Nelson, 2004a, 2004b), and highlights the dynamic nature of gender-laden categories, and the impossibility of living up to constantly shifting criteria for femininity, one that few women can ever meet.

Piboolsravut (1997) extends economic unsatisfactoriness to a general sense of material well-being, which has two aspects. The first is physical well-being, which, according to Piboolsravut (1997: 123), can be assessed by testing 'whether an agent faces a physical constraint that would deter him/her from conducting mental development activities, if

desired, such as meditating or listening to Dharma teachings'. The second aspect is mental well-being, which varies according to individual differences and cannot be objectively assessed. These two interact and depend on the social conditions in which an individual is embedded. To illustrate, a person after training might be able to experience a high level of mental well-being even under austere conditions, such as those of Buddhist monastic life. Lacking such training, that person may experience the same conditions as gross deprivation. The deciding factor is not the material conditions but the mental ones that create well-being. Thus human well-being, according to a Buddhist perspective, does not rely on material prerequisites, except for the minimal level of physical subsistence and protection necessary to follow the eightfold noble path. A crucial issue in Piboolsravut's (1997) thesis is poverty, because if one does not have the material requisites for the cultivation of mind this situation can lead to 'unwholesome conduct ... [which has] the potential to cause instability in society', (Piboolsravut, 1997: 35). Accordingly, she argues that everyone in a Buddhist society should be guaranteed a minimum level of material existence to follow the eightfold noble path.

Buddhism's distinctive contribution is the principle that the solution does not lie with feeding desire, but rather with dealing with the nature of desire itself. Happiness and well-being arise from insight into one's non-unitary and impermanent self, which gives rise to an understanding that much of what we consider as unsatisfactory is simply our grasping of a misleading narrative about who we are. If we are able to see through this, we can free ourselves from a great deal of the desire that causes suffering.

b) Karma – causation

The second basic aspect of the teachings identified by Pryor (1990) is the nature of causation, and karma, which he refers to as the consequences of individual actions and attitudes 'not only in this life but our succeeding lives as well (this is part of the doctrine of rebirth)' (Pryor, 1990: 341). From a Buddhist perspective, causation is linked to karma. What lies at the heart of the concept of karma is the idea that no action is an isolated event in a dynamic interconnected system, as there are always consequences. All actors are also affected by their experience of an event. The concept of karma has been discussed at length in chapter 2, and points not only to cause and effect as such, but to life's complex networks in which phenomena arise codependently. The Buddhist concept of karma is concerned with two types of consequences: personal (internal) and

social and ecological (external). On the personal side, actions are said to mould character, and this in turn affects later actions. Karma is the fruit of our actions. Bad actions have bad karma and this will result in unpleasant events in this life, or a lower or less fortunate rebirth. Good actions create merit, which, many Buddhists believe, results in improved rebirth.

P. A. Payutto (1994: 34) has elaborated on the two types of karmic motivations: '*tanha* [italics added], the desire for pleasure objects', and '*chanda* [italics added], the desire for well being'. He explains how these two kinds of desire underpin the Buddhist perspective of economic action. Economic behaviour motivated by desire for well-being is preferred to that motivated by greed. He argues that the idea that 'greed is good' is extremely limited, primarily due to its non-spiritual vision of who we are, but also because it ignores the hidden negative karmic consequences of action. According to Payutto, the desire for spiritual well-being points towards the development of wisdom, and, as wisdom increases, desirousness diminishes and becomes the less dominant influence. Thus a society in which Buddhist practices are widespread would result in increased wisdom and well-being. From this point of view, the modern western economy can be seen to be dominated by desire and craving, which leads to negative consequences as economic actions exclusively based on desire and craving undermine well-being. People can develop a sense of karmic consequences, he suggests, which feeds into *paññā* (wisdom, understanding) and so helps people distinguish 'true benefit' from what is 'harmful in life'. The desire for 'what is right' or true well-being is called *dhamma-chanda*, which is complemented by *kusala-chanda*, which is desire for that which is skilful. The agent who has no insight into the true nature of self would thus be likely to follow a path of self-interested pleasure-seeking, with diminishing returns to actual well-being.

Payutto (1993) suggests that the Buddhist point of view on economic activity is that it should be a means to a 'good and noble life', which leads to the development of well-being within the individual, the society and the environment. What is meant by 'a good life' is an emphasis on developing oneself to the highest human potential, which is the state of the *Arahant* or fully awakened person. This ultimate goal is distinctly different from material well-being. In a complex, dynamic and interdependent system, we would expect wisdom (*paññā*) around economic actions to be limited. Piboolsravut (1997:

132-134) sets out a model that predicts the direction of karmic action, which depends on the actor's choice between actions driven by craving and those inspired by a motivation for well-being. Choices that tend towards well-being accordingly lead to a reduction in unsatisfactoriness over time.

There is a point of dialogue here, in part because the basic Buddhist observation of the dynamic nature of life as a cause of suffering has some support in the occupational health and safety literature, in which evidence is growing that people are overly stressed by enduring conditions of uncertainty of employment (Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright, Donald, Taylor & Millet, 2005).

There is no calculus for the law of karma, and from a Buddhist perspective there is not a simple linear relationship between an action and its consequences. References to karma in the canon often present it metaphorically, usually in biological terms, such as a seed planted in a garden, or the ripening of fruit. The nature of a person's actions affect their experience of themselves: harmonious actions create harmonious consequences, and, while one negative action in itself may not have significant negative consequences, over time a habit of repeating negative deeds moulds the actor's character and increases its affect on their lives. The view that the consequences of actions are not simply contingent resonates with complexity theory. This complexity can be seen in the differing accounts of prostitution. Prostitution is not considered to be right livelihood and is regarded as morally unacceptable. It is commonly assumed that this occupation is rarely freely chosen and is universally tainted by negative consequences. Despite this view, some sex workers claim that victim-oriented views of the experiences of sex workers is a misleading generalisation, and argue that they are comfortable with their occupational choice. Complexity theory would suggest that sex workers' experiences are not uniform and are shaped by an interaction of numerous cultural, economic and psychological factors (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994). Similarly, karmic consequences cannot be regarded as axiomatic.

The extension of the idea of karma in the Buddhism canon leads to the idea of right livelihood, the fourth 'fold' of the eightfold noble path. It sets out that any occupation which requires actions that are likely to have harmful consequences either for another being or oneself should be avoided. Right occupation or livelihood is an ethical guide, and arises from the first precept, non-violence, which proscribes causing harm or

injustice to other beings. Occupations that should be avoided include killing animals and trading in intoxicating substances, weapons, people or prostitution. This principle also rules out dealing with commodities that are the result of improper livelihood or deception, and occupations based on superstition (astrology, palmistry and clairvoyance).

The often-paired doctrines of karma and rebirth suggests that human life is subject to innumerable rebirths, across different realms and worlds ranging from hells to heavens. Traditional belief has it that movement between rebirths is subject to the law of karma, and thus the nature and quality of present and past actions determine future rebirths. The notion of karma extending across lives is not without problems in Asian Buddhism. It has been politically manipulated and used to legitimate a particular status quo as pre-ordained according to actions in past lives. This widespread, quiescent attitude was one of the salient features of Asian cultures that Weber highlighted in his famous critique of Buddhism, suggesting that it was 'other-worldly' and world rejecting. Harvey (2000: 23) argues that this attitude confuses karma with a form of fatalism, something the Buddha specifically denied. However, Spiro (1966) found that most lay Buddhists in Burma held to it.

Loy (2003b) points out the political consequences of the 'naturalising' of social hierarchies and elites (including the privileges of the monastic Sangha), and Buddhist equivalents of the notion of the divine right to rule. He explains that this view is not consistent across Buddhist texts, with some texts challenging tyranny and state violence. These contradictions highlight the dangers in uncritically relying on doctrinal accounts, as Loy notes, quoting Collins (1998: 496): 'There is no single and simple "Buddhist" view of society, ideal or actual. Society, one might better say, is a prime site for the work of Buddhist culture, an inexhaustible fund of material on which the antagonistic symbiosis between clerics and kings could draw, to express both sides of the relationship.'

Piboolsravut (1997: 100) argues that 'the main unit of analysis in Buddhist economics is a karmic actor'. Harvey (2000: 8) takes a similar view: 'Fundamental features of Buddhism's world-view relevant to ethics are the framework of karma and rebirth, accepted by all schools of Buddhism, with varying degrees of emphasis'. While the centrality of karma in traditional Buddhist thinking cannot be denied, particularly in

Tibetan and Theravadin Buddhism, a growing number of contemporary western Buddhists are placing far less emphasis on the idea (Batchelor, 1997; Loy, 2003a and b; Nagapriya, 2004). As I hinted in chapter 2, there are good reasons for scepticism, particularly in light of the scientific demystification of many religious assertions. Following the argument developed fully in chapter 2, on the uncritical reliance on traditional doctrine of so many contributions to Buddhist economic theory, it seems far more sensible to bracket the 'magical' elements in establishing a nexus between Buddhism and economics.

c) Anattā – not-self

The third basic aspect of the teachings is anattā, discussed in chapter 2. Pryor (1990: 341) interprets this as meaning that 'the self does not exist; and that which we call "self" is the result of a misunderstanding about our separation from nature'. The view that anattā means that the self is non-existent is mistaken; nonetheless Pryor's (1990, 1991) approach is to demarcate Buddhism into two stands. One is based on the particular focus of the monastic community with its goal of nirvana, which is 'unborn, unageing, undecaying, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled, uttermost security from bondage' (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995: I 163), a state which marks the end of craving and spiritual ignorance. The other strand concerns mainly the lay community and focuses on karma. Pryor's (1990, 1991) analysis of Buddhist economics focuses on 'this-worldly' actions of the laity, describing how key Buddhist social ethics form a normative foundation for economic activity.

This approach, as Zadek (1993) points out, does not start with the 'practice' of the laity, but focuses on the ethics prescribed in canonical texts which apply to the laity. This approach has several limitations, the first being, according to Zadek (1993: 434), that:

> Texts (even 'original' ones) are produced in a particular social, political and economic context. Their interpretation therefore needs to take account of both our understanding of that context, and the context in which we find ourselves today.

Zadek (1993: 434) also argues that 'Buddhism is fundamentally concerned with a set of values realizable only through "practice",' and thus the focus of should be directed at what might be 'the practice of Buddhist economics'. Ultimately this is an essential step, given the discussion in chapter 2 regarding the variety of interpretations of Buddhism.

The choice of any organisation, such as the Sarvodaya, however, presents difficulties of interpretation, as organisational cultures are complex and unique; for example, there are marked differences between Hewlett-Packard and IBM, despite both being US corporations in the same industry.

Moreover, as Ornatowski (1996: 2) argues, sets of values are subject to transformation over time and place; for example, the ideal of nirvana has become, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the *Bodhisattva* ideal. Ideals are not the only common element in the Buddhist economics literature. Equally as important is the understanding of the illusion of an abiding self as a motivating force behind economic action. This opens up an ontological dimension for economic theory. As discussed in section 4.2.3, a growing critique points to a hiatus in the conception of the individual in economic thought. Buddhist questioning of the self, however, takes the issue to a new and existentially profound level. On one the hand, this raises questions about the epistemological choices economic thinkers make, particularly their privileging of supposedly objective knowledge. On the other hand, the conventional dismissal of Buddhism as a purely subjective view is being challenged in consciousness studies. Either way, the literature on Buddhist economics argues that the foundational understanding in economic theory must take into account a non-unitary view of the self and the impermanency of all phenomena.

This model of the economic agent reveals a two-fold approach to economic motivation. The first approach focuses on the ordinary individual who has no insight. For such a person, physical and mental unsatisfactoriness are unavoidable. While basic physical unsatisfactoriness can be addressed relatively easily, mental unsatisfactoriness arises constantly and also can be eliminated, but only temporarily. The approach advocated is to manage craving. Buddhist practices are not forms of repression, but focus on voluntary 'letting go' of attachments through the cultivation of a non-clinging state of mind. The logic behind this is that unsatisfactoriness derives from clinging to a fabricated, illusory self, because of lack of awareness of our natural state of not-self and impermanence. The perception of the self as the independent and differentiated individual is thus an illusion which, having a survival function, can, through certain exercises, can be recognised as such. The resulting understanding does not answer all

questions about our ontological nature, but awakens the beholder to a new understanding of the self.

Echoing mainstream Theravadin Buddhism, Piboolsravut (1997: 135) argues that the goal of economic activities should be the cultivation of practices which lead to the elimination of unsatisfactoriness, and eventually the ultimate goal of nirvana and the realisation of anattā. At the societal level, it is to provide favourable external conditions which can assist its members to reach their individual Buddhist goals. Alexandrin (1993) suggest that the achievement of this ultimate goal manifests itself in behaviour that is consistent with the *paramitas* or virtues, or the eightfold noble path and the experience of bliss and ease in the world. Alexandrin and Zech (1999: 1351) comment on the ideal of the Bodhisattva as follows:

> A person behaves in such a way so as to benefit all present beings, including himself or herself ... In the 1990s we may not find many such people in a traffic jam; but we may find a few at a friendly party. Mother Theresa and the Dalai Lama fly right; they created their own world and with this, the world around them.

Buddhist economics thus sets out a distinctive ethos, based on the ideal of the Arahant or the Bodhisattva – ideals which can be achieved, they contend, through Buddhist practices.

d) The eightfold noble path – Buddhist economic ethics

If the *Bodhisattva* ideal is rarely attained, then for most Buddhists the economic arena of their lives presents the challenge of maintaining in economic action the ethics that are explicitly set out in the eightfold noble path and elsewhere in the sutras, as well as others that are implicit in the doctrine. The source of Buddhist ethics, according to Peter Harvey (2000), derives from three treasures: the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. The first is the presence and actions of the Buddha, and, in the Mahāyāna, the various mythical Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as well. The second is the teachings of the Buddha. The last is the community of practitioners, including exemplars, who embody different levels of attainment. The Buddha as the exemplar of enlightened action is not contested

in Buddhist discourse. However, what has been a source of debates in Buddhism for centuries and a point of divergence between the Mahāyāna and the Theravada is what constitutes the final goal. At the heart of this debate is the distinction between the Arahant and Bodhisattva ideals. Although the distinction is largely a Mahāyāna invention, it sets up different models of ethical action. The Theravadin ideal of the Arahant stands for an awakening that arises from the quest for personal liberation only. By contrast, the Mahāyāna proposes the ideal of the Bodhisattva who altruistically seeks to liberate all sentient beings, constantly working for the benefit of others.

According to Tsong Khapa, the Dalai Lama and Hopkins (1987), Mahāyānan ethics are superior to the Theravadin in three ways: motivation, goal, and level of understanding. Mahāyānists believe that Bodhisattvas are superior to Arahants on all these points. On the final point of difference, the Dalai Lama believes that Arahants do not understand emptiness (or not-self), and that such an understanding is surpassed by that of a Buddha. But prominent western Mahāyāna teacher Robert Aitken (1985) suggests that such distinctions are 'invidious and conceited' and reflect ancient competitive rivalries between cultures who have for a large part of their histories had very little to do with each other.

Modern western scholarship presents a valuable critical perspective, highlighting the rhetorical dimensions to claims of superiority. As Brian Victoria (1997) and others have pointed out, Buddhism is not immune from substantial political interference. While these ideals are difficult to evaluate in terms of authenticity, they fulfil an important function by inspiring emulation. In Buddhism, the numerous archetypes of Arahant, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas represent ideals to be aspired to through practice.[25]

Historical analysis shows that Buddhist ethics are not immutable 'truths', and Ornatowski (1996) describes how they have transformed over time. For example, we see that there was a shift from the Arahant to the Bodhisattva ideal as a guiding archetype for Buddhists as the religion crossed cultural frontiers. Early doctrinal

[25] It is interesting to observe how common it is in the modern economy for these archetypal images, including Buddhist monks, to be appropriated in the promotion of products and services.

exhortations were directed firstly at monastic communities, whereas the lay Buddhist path offered greater leniency towards the accumulation of wealth and livelihood. Ornatowski (1996) found that, historically, Buddhist concepts such as karma, dependent arising and impermanence shaped the nature of Buddhist economic ethics. His analysis of early Buddhist economic ethics suggests that lay economic ethics focused on three areas: right accumulation of wealth, right occupation, and right sharing of wealth.

In a Buddhist context, wealth accumulation was predicated on hard work, restrained consumption and reinvestment of profits for the future. Wealth, once obtained, should not be squandered, and the wealthy should refrain from idleness, bad friends, addiction to intoxicants, roaming the streets at odd hours, frequenting entertainment, and indulging in gambling.

The Mahāyāna tradition, however, travelled across greater cultural divides and as such brought about transformations even in the interpretation of nirvana and its antithesis, *samsara*, which is the Sanskrit term for the endless cycle of birth and death, and the Bodhisattva ideal. Essentially, these changes reflected a shift towards a more positive view of samsara and indeed a narrowing of the gap between awakening and the ordinary everyday consciousness. The Confucian and Daoist concepts of harmony began to find expression in Buddhist doctrine. While there were fundamental shifts, Ornatowski (1996) also points out continuities between the Chinese Mahāyāna and the earlier Indian Theravada in both lay and monastic ethics. The monastic rules set out in the original Vinaya did not apply to economic matters as such, and like all rules were open to interpretation. Chinese monasteries took a pragmatic approach, and Chinese temples engaged in a wide range of commercial activities. Through the practice of usury and generous donations from wealthy clans, Buddhist monasteries in China became extremely wealthy and grew in size and number. This accumulation of wealth and power ultimately led to criticism of Buddhist monks as ‘parasitic’, and in the 5th, 6th, and 9th centuries it led to persecution, forcing many to return to lay life. This had an immense impact on the nature of Chinese Buddhism, and arguably it never regained the popularity it had enjoyed in the Tang dynasty.

Since Buddhist ethics have varied across time and cultures, their lack of universiality raises questions regarding their relevance to modern economics, which presumes to explain the world through axiomatic laws. Historians have recently attempted to track

how cultural mediation occurs and co-constructs such seemingly quinessential aspects of the tradition, such as ethics. They have paid particular attention to the circumstances where a local Buddhist tradition has taken a distinctive stand on ethical issues at a specific historical time. For example, regarding sexuality, Faure (1998) points out that Buddhist traditions, have not always conformed to doctrine and the doctrine itself contains contradictory elements. According to Faure (1998: 279), 'once we reject the notion of a "pure", atemporal, and changeless doctrine, we are able to appreciate as a positive characteristic of Buddhism its flexibility, its singular capacity to adapt to the multiplicity of times and cultures'.

Charles Taylor (1989), in his exploration of 'modern identity', effectively separates out consciousness from behaviour. Behavioural approaches to moral philosophy tend to focus only on 'what it is right to do'. While this focus has pragmatic value, in that all people regardless of ability might follow them, it derives from modern assumptions about human nature based narrowly on behaviour – as if what is observable entirely accounts for who we are. This 'objective' view of human nature ignores interiority. In identifying 'being' as the focus of ethics in his formulation 'what it is good to be', he opens up another epistemological dimension which, as he points out, sets up tensions within the culture of modernity. For Taylor (1989: 498), 'what is implicit but still at work in contemporary life: the romantic themes still alive in modernity', rely on inner experience. The Buddha's articulation of the good life depended on the nature of mind – in other words, interiority. A mind that does not cling is capable of recognising that human *be*-ing is dependent on conditions, and thus dependently arises. This foundation resonates with Taylor's conception of 'what it is good to be', suggesting the further cultivation of the interiority of nirvana.

Buddhist ethics have two aspects, as discussed in chapter 2 – one which relates to practices for opening up, such an understanding, and the other which derives from the awakened understanding itself. If we accept Faure's view, then both of these are subject to cultural influences. However, whether they are completely constituted by culture is not clear and is a view which is questioned in chapter 3. In a contemporary economic context, right action may manifest itself in ways that are new and novel, especially if inspired by an awakened perspective.

4.4.2 Practice-based approaches to Buddhist economics

A Buddhist economic framework needs models and practical examples, though evaluating such projects in the cultural context of modernity is difficult. Organisation theory shows growing sensitivity to the way culture informs organisation action (Smircich, 1983; Alvesson, 1993, 2003). The various attempts to develop organisations on Buddhist economic principles need to be evaluated taking into account the ways in which culture might impact on them, including the way Buddhism is being interpreted in each case. Historical context and culture will always mediate the application of Buddhist theoretical and practical insights. We need to guard against the modernist tendency to generalise organisational principles, especially in an era of standardisation and cultural globalisation (Higgins, 2006).

Asian Buddhism impacts on Buddhist organisational thinking through its significant monastic heritage, and this has traditionally been the main locus of Buddhist practice; the lay path has constituted a secondary one. Melford Spiro (1970) found a strong separation between the type of Buddhism found in lay people's practice as opposed to monastic practice. He suggested this difference could be understood as a parallel idea to that of a 'great tradition' of a civilisation, which is what the intelligentsia understand it to be, as opposed to what could be called the 'little tradition', the one understood at the village level of a culture. In South-East Asia, economic issues were not central concerns to monks as they did not work, nor touch money. Early western writers viewed the privileged position of monasticism in Buddhism largely in terms of Christian practice or as islands of the 'non-secular or other-world' in the secular sea of samsara. Early scholarly studies of Buddhism thus portrayed it as nihilist and life-renouncing. According to Swearer (1997: 87), 'It is largely because of these earlier writers, especially Weber, that the West has acquired a skewed portrait of Buddhism as a world-denying religion'. Queen (1996b: 17) echoes this observation: 'Today, after eighty years of new research, many specialists are inclined to agree with Weber that, in its essence, primitive Buddhism was not based on service to others, but on the question of individual enlightenment'.

Queen and King (1996) and other authors challenge this view. For example, Samuels (1999) argues that the Pali canon contradicts the sharp separation between the monastic order and the laity. According to Yarnall (2000), there are two views on the social

engagement of Buddhism. The first is traditionalist, which, like Samuels (1999), questions whether Buddhists have ever separated the 'spiritual' and 'social' domains. These were, according to Swearer (1997: 81), 'at the heart of many early doctrinal controversies about such matters as the nature of Nirvana, the purpose of monastic life, and the character of the relationship between monks and the laity'. His observation is supported by the numerous references to the incorporation of Buddhist practices into Emperor Ashoka's government.[26]

According to Queen (1996b), the advent of European colonial rule effectively removed Buddhist influence from government, and funding for social and welfare roles was given to the Christian missionaries. In East Asia, the role of Buddhists in state affairs was not always welcomed, and in China a nascent social service was destroyed during the imperial persecution of Buddhism, beginning in 845 CE. Buddhism also ceded political influence in Korea in a neo-Confucian backlash during the Choson Dynasty (1392-1910), which also resulted in the confiscation of many Buddhist temples and monasteries. In Tokugawa Japan (1600-1868), Buddhism lost ground to a movement for the 'purification' of Japanese culture. It is difficult to judge the impact of these circumstances on the degree of social engagement Buddhism might otherwise have manifested.

A second interpretation, according to Yarnall (2000), regards socially engaged Buddhism as a consequence of modernity: social commitments implicit in Buddhist doctrine would have remained latent had not Buddhism encountered modern western influences. 'Modern "engaged Buddhism" may share some essential features with traditional forms of Buddhism', Yarnall (2000, np) comments, 'but it also contains enough substantive differences to warrant calling it a relatively "new" form of Buddhism unique to the modern era'.

---

[26] Emperor Ashoka ruled Magadha from about 273 to 232 BCE and extended his realm to the whole Indian subcontinent. He became Buddhism's most famous royal patron. After embracing Buddhism he generously supported the monastic order and the spread of Buddhism. He became the model of the wise and humane Buddhist ruler, tolerant of other faiths and an advocate of peace.

The advent of modernity in Asia brought radical changes to every social institution, accompanied by an acute and radical challenge to traditional values and ways of life outside the monasteries. According to Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988), these major ructions undermined the social structures that had supported monastic Buddhism, particularly the folk ways which sustained monastic communities and belief in their hierarchy and indispensability. Western-educated laity began to depart from the traditional privileging of patriarchal and monastic practice and asserted the capacity of ordinary individuals, including women, to experience insight into Buddhism without intermediaries and traditional authorities.

Modernisation had a powerful effect on the traditional sensibilities that had developed from Buddhist values; the widespread shift towards western values has had a significant impact on South-East and East Asian Buddhist countries. Western education gave rise to a questioning of beliefs and values that had played a dominant role in Asian society. One challenge was to the Indian concept of karma, especially from the 20th-century leader of the 'untouchables' liberation movement, Dr Ambedkar, who received a western education in the United States and Britain in the 1920s. On his return to India he founded an organisation that was active in promoting reforms of the caste system. He belonged to a caste which was literally treated as impure and untouchable, not permitted to eat, drink or reside in most arenas of Indian life. Ambedkar's influence arose at the same time as Mahatma Ghandi's, and both focused the social unrest of the time. Ambedkar was prominent in the movement towards Indian independence and helped write the new Indian constitution. After independence he realised that liberal Hinduism would never liberate his caste, and, as the leader of the untouchable class, he began to reject Hinduism for its discriminatory views, turning instead to Buddhism (Queen, 1996a; Mishra, 2004). In 1956 hundreds of thousands followed him in formally converting to Buddhism, which had never supported the caste system. So began a small but significant revival of Buddhism in India. An advocate of Buddhist social ethics as a basis for social, economic and political change, Ambedkar was an active and influential member of the wider Buddhist community and a delegate to several world Buddhist conferences.

Ambedkar promoted a new form of socially engaged Buddhism in Asia and exercised great influence, with the very public mass conversions being interpreted as a signal that

Buddhism had a vital contribution to the social and political problems of the region (Benz, 1966). Ambedkar was influenced by Gandhi, who, like many Hindus, was sympathetic to Buddhism and regarded it as originally a Hindu reform movement. Gandhi (1929) claimed that Buddhism was to Hinduism what Protestantism was to Roman Catholicism, 'only in a much stronger light, in a much greater degree'. Separating out popular Buddhism from the galaxy of Hindu beliefs is no small task, particularly given the historical incorporation of so much of Buddhist thought and practices into Hinduism. Gandhi drew freely on Buddhist themes in developing his economic ideas, including *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all) and *Antodaya* (the welfare of the least), which have become important themes of engaged Buddhist economic projects.

The success of Gandhi and the Indian independence movement had a powerful impact on neighbouring countries, encouraging a progressive nationalism which drew on his ideas. Gandhi (1945) thought that many of India's problems were due to foreign influence: 'Much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life', he asserted (Gandhi, 1945: 87).[27] Nationalist movements tend to look back on their nation's past as a source for inspiration and identity. In countries with a predominantly Buddhist history, Bond (1996: 121) notes, 'a series of political variations were spawned which attempted to recover their Buddhist heritage and identity in a post-colonial world and to respond to the challenge of modernity'.

Achieving the integration of old and new required a significant transformation of political and economic institutions and processes. The reformers were critical of the colonial, monarchical and monastic past. Western educated, they extolled a new rational approach to Buddhism, and challenged the superstition and simple faith of ordinary people, whose practice, according to Obeyesekere (2002), was seen as 'religion of the heart'. The reformers shifted the emphasis from personal liberation to social liberation, for lay people as well as monastics.

---

[27] Swadeshi is a Sanskrit word meaning 'own home, place or country', and in that spirit is used to restrict the use and service to that which is natural and native to a country and society.

The reformers were also sceptical of importing, holus bolus, western institutions and processes, particularly in the postcolonial context. Instead they introduced, in the South-East Asian context, alternative concepts such as community, religious communalism and ethnic identity to underpin broader national movements. Buddhism has thus become the basis for innovative socioeconomic thinking and experiments in many countries, bringing it into a practical relationship with economic action.

Projects such as the Sarvodaya Movement (or simply Sarvodaya) in Sri Lanka are contemporary manifestations of these values in economic development. Sarvodaya is a community-based organisation that uses voluntary resources to implement development programs using Buddhist and Gandhian principles in rural villages (Macy, 1985). Zadek and Szabo (1994) have explored the case of the Sarvodaya, noting that the case is difficult to evaluate in the context of the civil war and modernisation. According to Zadek (1997), the tendency to oversimplify either positively or negatively has coloured many attempts to analyse Sarvodaya, and he concludes that a range of cultural, contextual and historical factors muddy what aspects might be Buddhist with those which are due to context and history.

Buddhist principles may impact on the economic behaviour of a community in indirect ways. Crook and Osmaston (1994) studied the economics of Himalayan Buddhist monastic communities and found a complex pattern of reciprocal relationships in which the monasteries played a vital role in maintaining moral order and acting as a countervailing power against corruption. Norberg-Hodge (2002) suggests that traditional Buddhist communities developed a deep appreciation for their place in the natural world. In her 1991 study, she showed how life in Ladakh was difficult, and yet its inhabitants were peaceful and happy, in stark contrast to the miseries of communities that are disrupted by global development. Her experiences of Buddhism in Ladakh and Bhutan reveal how the various effects of globalisation are interrelated, and how the crises facing us are rooted in the ever-expanding scale of economic projects. Her work cuts across mainstream economic thinking, which is built on the notion of material ‘progress’. Echoing Schumacher’s concerns about the economics of scale, Norberg-Hodge (2002) argues that the consequences for individual members of ‘globalising’ such societies are disempowerment, alienation and lack of well-being. Global organisations (particularly corporations) place communities at the whim of distant

‘inflexible bureaucracies and fluctuating markets’ which are unable to respond to the unique needs and circumstances of local communities.

Inoue (1997) sees the values of organisations as being critical to the welfare of others. He identifies Buddhist work ethics as having a strong influence on a number of Japanese Buddhist entrepreneurs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these entrepreneurs have been able to survive in a competitive environment while at the same time pursuing strategies which incorporate social and environmental concerns. He advocates Buddhism as a normative framework for economic thinking, and points out that what distinguishes ‘positive’ from ‘normative’ questions is an ‘is/ought’ dichotomy which denigrates Buddhist economics on ‘scientific’ criteria. But, as he points out, economics itself does not satisfy scientific criteria; it comes closer to the humanities, particularly in highlighting cultural determinants of economic behaviour. Falling short of calling mainstream economics ‘Eurocentric’, he advocates a more ‘international perspective’. Inoue (1997: 126) suggests that a Buddhist approach to economics implies a ‘Middle Path’, pursuing ‘an alternative to the extremes of capitalism and socialism, or pure self-interest and utter self-negation’.

In the West, a variety of Buddhists have explored the idea that Buddhist practices can be applied to work. The ethical dimensions of the eightfold noble path imply an approach to livelihood that promotes the well-being of people and the environment. They argue that work should offer a balanced and healthy life, and that it can become part of a disciplined spiritual practice. According to Whitmeyer (1994), it is not only possible to maintain integrity while making a living, but it is also possible to keep on the Buddhist path of right livelihood. Whitmeyer (1994: 15) challenges the secular divide and suggests that ‘Working together, mindfully and compassionately, we can create a community in which all our livelihoods are “right”.’

In this regard, Zadek (1996) includes the Intermediate Technology Development Group that Schumacher established to demonstrate his economic ideas. He claims that it has succeeded in a number of initiatives which inform the development of Buddhist economics thinking through practice. It is difficult to gauge Schumacher’s influence on the broad environment and alternative economics movement. Clearly, a variety of Buddhist ideas have played a part, and a range of other contributors have professed an interest in Buddhism. Reform movements have increasingly gained influence in

response to intensifying concerns that mainstream economics fails to tackle problems of the environment, global warming and economic sustainability. Schumacher himself persuasively linked the issues of corporate scale, greed, ecological imperatives, social justice, peace and egalitarianism as necessary desiderata for a sustainable economy.

These ideas remain evident in many alternative conceptions of economics which receive inputs from the environment movement and the social action and corporate social responsibility movements. Alternative economics is open to an epistemology in which well-being is measured subjectively, rather than objectively as financial wealth. It proposes a different ontology which regards individuals as interconnected parts of a whole, and thus it promotes environmental sustainability and social justice as the cornerstones of human happiness. For example, the business case for social responsibility highlights intersubjectivity, interconnectedness and the mutuality of stakeholder and customer interests with the long-term interests of the corporation (Pesqueux & Damak-Ayadi, 2005; Weiser & Zadek, 2000).

The influence of Buddhism on contemporary economic policy is difficult to isolate. The notion that a commercial organisation can be 'Buddhist' is problematic enough, given that the question of what is Buddhist and what is not Buddhist can never be defined with precision. Chapters 2 and 3 explored this conundrum, recognising that an essentialist view of Buddhism is problematic. However, it does seem that its various traditions arise from the different historical contexts and cultural perspectives on something that is held in common, even if some variants obscure this commonality with superstitious overlays. At a macroeconomic level, cultural mediation seems to be an even greater factor and it would be hard to imagine a successful economy free from substantial external, non-Buddhist influence.

4.5 Mapping the dialogical space

In mapping out the dialogical space between Buddhism and economics, I have sought to highlight the foundations of each tradition, so as to define the issues that separate them. Hopefully, this exercise will set the scene for a deeper exploration of the issues in question.

In letting Buddhism speak first, I found a multiplicity of voices that differ across time and region. Although many of these voices have been heard in western circles, from their perspective they have often been misunderstood. Many Buddhist perspectives derive from understandings drawn from specific practices, such as meditation and mindfulness. In contrast, western scholarship about Buddhism has not engaged with its spiritual practice and its outcomes. It is only in the last few decades that a sufficient number of westerners have immersed themselves in practice to gain a consensual view of its outcomes. In this way they have gained access to Buddhist concepts, which previously seemed inexplicable to the western sensibility.

On the other hand, economic understanding also needs to be situated. This chapter has shown that the foundations of mainstream economics developed during the period following the European Enlightenment and thus has conveyed a modern perspective on the world. While this perspective has changed over time, its critics express exasperation at its unreflective attachment to the values and compulsions of modernity. Drawing on the work of Latour, I have traced some important themes of the discourse of modernity which constitute bearings in the dialogical space. I have attempted to gain a broad sense of how economics has arrived at its current position, and have highlighted what Latour calls fault lines in its discourse, which splinter the picture of the socioeconomic world and muddle its relationship with other discourses, including Buddhism. Mainstream economic thought thus forecloses on a deep engagement with the other-than-human world, on what Latour coins as the 'crossed-out God, relegated to the sidelines' as well as on humanism. Latour (1993) contends that treating these areas as though they are not connected presents a false sense of separation. Latour here exemplifies those French philosophers who question the fragmentation that underlies the modern worldview.

The notion of an autonomous self constitutes a dominant trope within modernity and for its detractors. 'In the major works of the philosophers of the Enlightenment', according to Lecourt (2004: 11), 'the individual becomes an elementary isolated being joined with others to form the "body politic" according to an interaction of forces favouring equilibrium'. There are historical reasons why this view was predominant. As Daly and Cobb (1989) point out, the Calvinist suspicion of earthly authority in both church and state led to a positive appraisal of personal autonomy, which contributed to an overly atomistic conception of the individual in economic thinking. Lecourt (2004: 11) asks,

'[i]s the analysis and critique of contemporary individualism perhaps a precondition for coming out of the profound malaise that affects our civilisation?' It is a question he answers in the affirmative, arguing that:

> a human individual has never been and will never be identifiable with or reducible to this other type of individual, the billiard ball. We continuously construct ourselves, form, reform and deform ourselves. The individual literally shapes himself, situating himself in relation to the field of forces in which he is placed by his becoming ['devenir'] and that he helps to modify. (2004: 14)

Such views can be traced back to Simondon's (1992) work, which argues that individuation is not constituted by things but by relations. For Ken Wilber (1998), as noted earlier, life is also relational, consisting of holons, which are complete and simultaneously are parts of other wholes in an infinite hierarchy of relations. The concept of a holon, derived from Koestler's term, refers to 'that which, being a whole in one context, is a part of a wider whole in another' (Wilber, 1998: 50). Holons are not defined by the substance of which they are made, but by the *pattern* they exhibit.

The notion of that life is relational and interdependent supports new forms of ecological thinking that, as Capra (1996) suggests, is based on a paradigmatic shift towards a holistic conception of the world. This thinking has much in common with Buddhism, and understands the world less as a mechanism and more like a living system. This new paradigm involves shifting our attention from the parts to the whole, so that the focus is relational rather than resource-based. It subordinates structures to processes, and hierarchies to networks. It harmonises with the Buddhist insight that the world is self (Macy, 1991b).

The view of the world we live in as being a networked whole suggests that economic activity is also connected, and that everything in it is interrelated and interconnected. An example of interconnections in economic thought can be found in Michael Porter's (1985) 'linkages', which are connections between the different aspects of the chain of value-creation activities in the firm. The network structure of these relationships means that activities in industries are not *sui generis* but interdependent. Bubna-Litic (1994), in a review of the literature on cooperation, found that notions of competition ignored other sorts of relationships in industry which are rarely purely competitive and indeed contain significant cooperative elements. For example, even simple transactions are essentially cooperative; as competition occurs largely in vying for cooperative

relationships. In a study of buyer-supplier partnerships, Bubna-Litic (1994) found that numerous efficiencies could be achieved through the recognition of these interconnections or linkages in the value chain, many of which were not evident before a formal cooperative relationship was established.

To regard the self as a relational entity would be a paradigm shift for mainstream economic theory. However, some new economic thinking already recognises the importance of linkages in its social and environmental context. In the past two decades, a number of theorists have suggested that mutual value can be added through investing resources in projects which engage with 'external' stakeholders. Just as in Porter's (1985) primary and secondary value chains, what might be termed a 'tertiary value chain' manifests value-adding linkages of strategic benefit to the firm with a third sector. Stakeholder dialogue activities may be explained by a new economic foundation which Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000) call a relational perspective. This relational perspective is evident in Spretnak (1995: 5): 'One can accurately speak of the "autonomy" of an individual only by incorporating a sense of the dynamic web of relationships that are constitutive for that being at a given moment'.

The multiplicity of Buddhist traditions discussed in chapter 2 could be seen as separate windows onto the one interconnected world. What Buddhism offers to this dialogical space is not so much the realisation that the individual is evanescent and decentred, but rather the means by which we can gain an embodied sense or realisation that the self is deeply interconnected with the world. As a non-European perspective, Buddhism contrasts with modernity. This contrast also highlights the ways in which modernity is a cultural view which emerged in Europe at a time when Christianity was in turmoil, as an attempt to negate religion as 'unscientific'. While this ploy resulted in the banishment of Christian thinking from the secular domain, the questions which generated Christianity have remained, and the new modern ideas were not free of traces of its past. This historical habitus, which both formed and informed the movement of modernity through time, underlies many of the assumptions of modern economics. Economic assumptions, particularly about the nature of the self, the sacred and ethics, reflect this history and the western European trend towards secularisation.

Much of Buddhist economic thinking has been inspired by the ethical prescriptions found in the noble eightfold path, which converge with Aristotelian notions of virtue.

Moreover, their interpretation outside of monastic settings has varied across cultures. Furthermore, an economics based on Buddhist ethics needs to specifically engage with the liberal position that people should enjoy autonomy in managing their own lives.

Buddhism offers a window into the interconnected world that can be lived and realised. Buddhist insight into not-self involves *being it*. This contribution is essentially an epistemological one, but Buddhist doctrine suggests that this knowledge is ontologically transforming. It is an awakening to a not-self view of human existence. While there has been an awareness of holistic alternatives to economic theory in western discourse for at least a century, until recently there has not been a significant number of practitioners with insight gleaned from their own experience.

While mainstream economics has not particularly engaged with this subjective domain of knowledge, it cannot be said to have rejected it. A major step forward in the dialogue between Buddhism and economics would be some form of empirical investigation of this experience which goes beyond the current anecdotal and idiographic accounts which dominate the literature. Several key questions remain unanswered: What do advanced Buddhist practitioners experience? How well do their experiences fit with Buddhist doctrine? In what ways have they found that they have changed over their years of practice?

If we understood the transformational properties of insight in ways that did not draw upon supernatural explanations, we would have taken an important step in the dialogue between Buddhism and economics. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore how this understanding might inform how economic action could be transformed in practice, and inform the economic domain of life in a broad sense.

What advanced Buddhist practitioners actually experience may open up the dialogue in unexpected ways. At the least, it may give some clues to how Buddhist doctrine might be understood from the practice perspective for which it was actually intended. Ultimately, these answers may lead to a new economic project which incorporates a new set of assumptions about the self and well-being. It might also give us a better sense of how economic action may encourage different ways of being in the world, including avoidance of indulging in a hedonistic, anxious state based on a sense of lack.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

To define another being as an inert or passive object is to deny its ability to actively engage us and to provoke our senses; we thus block our perceptual reciprocity with that being.

David Abram (1997)

5.1 Introduction

Buddhism promotes distinctive practices and techniques to nurture experiential insights; its 'philosophy' plays a supportive role only. Up until recently, western scholarship has largely ignored this aspect of Buddhism, and itself bifurcated into two separate cultures, which Wright (2000) describes as 'romantic' and 'disembodied scientific'. Their adherents have begun to recognise some mutual overlap, so creating an opportunity to move forward in the dialogue between Buddhism and economics. Firstly, the bridge between these two cultures might help us to meet basic objections about the claims of experience. If so, a postromantic view might suggest that a form of empirical investigation of experience, which goes beyond the current research hiatus, is possible.

As discussed in the previous chapter, modernity has accommodated religion within the dominant socially constructed reality of secularity by maintaining its legitimacy in circumscribed boundaries outside of political and economic institutions. This split has allowed for the private reaffirmation of the authority of a religious tradition, which in public arenas is regarded as irrational. For example, Marx viewed religion to be an 'opiate of the masses'; Freud (1927: 88) regarded religion as a 'neurosis' and a 'childishness to be overcome'; and more recently Dawkins (2006: 5) referred to 'the god delusion', which he defines as 'a persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence'.

Despite ongoing attempts by many modern thinkers to marginalise religion, religions provide a popular alternative and reassuring worldview. This reassurance is usually constructed deductively from a super-arching order, usually an extension of reality, such as heaven, or rebirth, which Berger (1967) has disparagingly called the 'sacred canopy'. Berger (1979), however, is not a modernist and argues that while such an

accommodation relies on deductive thinking on the part of religion, modernist worldviews err on their reliance of reductive thinking.

As a potential path of change, Berger advocates an inductive approach, which attempts to uncover and recover the original experiences that defined a particular tradition. According to Berger (1979: 53), 'the distinction between religious experience and religious reflection is crucial'. Berger (1979: 54) argues that it is this 'core experience, in its various forms, that must constitute the final objective of any inquiry into the religious phenomenon'. Loy (2003a: 3) also suggests that we let go of 'our collective childhood' and 'learn that this canopy is a fiction we have constructed and then objectified (by "forgetting" that we have made it) in order to dwell comfortably beneath it'.

The fact that the bulk of research on Buddhist economics relies on uncritical interpretations of Buddhist doctrine follows this deductive tendency of religious thinking and presents major barriers for its acceptance by mainstream economists. While there have also been attempts to explore practical examples of Buddhist economics, through individual experiences of engaging with the modern economy while maintaining a Buddhist practice, these are largely anecdotal and idiographic accounts (Whitmeyer, 1994); as such they lack empirical weight, being open to sampling bias and selective interpretation. A similar problem arises in analyses of culturally immersed enterprises, such as the Sarvodaya, which, although based on Buddhist principles, are also immersed in a particular social and cultural milieu which is hard to disentangle.

To convince economic researchers requires, as Berger (1979) has suggested, an understanding of the foundational experiences of Buddhism. This could be achieved through an examination of the experiences of a reasonable sample of advanced Buddhist practitioners, particularly if the consensus verifies Buddhist doctrine. My research aims to take a step forward into experiential material, and to explicate the experience of insight and how it is related to action, worked through in-depth interviews of advanced Buddhist practitioners. The research focuses around the three thematic research questions:

1. What is the nature of the insight gained through the lived experience of Buddhist practice?

2. What changes might a practitioner undergo as a result of gaining insight?

3. How does insight gained through the lived experience of Buddhist practice influence economic action?

The research thus seeks to uncover how contemporary Buddhists experience insight, how they have found it transforms them, and any other consequences for them as economic actors that arise from their spiritual practice.

5.2 The research approach

The approach used for this study is a qualitative investigation of Buddhist insight experience and its implications for economic action. Several pragmatic factors have determined this choice. Buddhist thought is built on the foundation of the experiential understanding which the Buddha called nirvana. Chapter 2 provides a critical review of the literature on Buddhist thought, setting the stage for an investigation of the experiential foundation of contemporary Buddhist practitioners' insight and the logic behind the development of the first and second research themes above. The third theme has been chosen to explore the link with economic questions set out in chapter 4. It is important to stress that insight is not the same thing as enlightenment, but rather a cumulative experience which encompasses the learning, change and transformation that has taken place through years of practice before and after enlightenment experiences. My research does not seek to explore experiences of enlightenment as such, which are notoriously difficulty to verbalise.

Yin (1994) suggests that research has three basic stages: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. In the exploratory stage the investigator faces considerable unknowns about the subject of investigation and generates ideas that may guide the subsequent stages of research and theoretical development. The descriptive stage crystallises patterns that the exploratory research throws up to develop empirical generalisations. Finally, the explanatory research stage draws on these two stages to focus on theoretical development. This is not to suggest that such categories are discrete and exclusive, just that they define basic developmental steps.

This research fits into the exploratory stage, as is perhaps the first to explore its subject area experientially. The area in question has been researched through a wide variety of

other lenses, and Buddhism itself has its own practical understanding, as exemplified in the Zen koan curriculum. Varela et al. (1991) argue for an appreciation of the reflexive nature of Buddhist methodologies of meditation. The application of a disciplined research method may however uncover new material.

As discussed in chapter 2, the research conducted for this thesis has little precedent. There is little research which seeks to elicit accounts of Buddhist experience without recourse to traditional doctrinal accounts and thus, it is unique in its focus on Buddhist teachers. There are only a limited number of empirically based studies on Buddhist insight experience. The results of this study provide evidence in support of doctrine, and shed new light on human potential.

5.2.1 Issues arising from this approach

As Berger (1979) has suggested, one pathway to resolving critical religious issues is to uncover and recover the original experiences of a particular tradition. At first blush this might seem obvious, given the widely held assumption that experience is the foundation of religious philosophy; as William James (1902/1985: np) wrote, 'in a world in which no religious feeling had existed, I doubt whether any philosophic theology could have ever been framed'.

Studies of experience, however, attract an abiding mistrust in western social sciences. This distrust has gained new impetus from postmodern critiques which problematise the authority of experience as a basis of evidence and epistemology. One strand of this critique points out the dangers of generalised characterisations of diverse groups on the basis of reports of individual experiences; for example, the characterisation of 'the experience' of 'women' or 'slaves' (Scott, 1991) is highly suspect. Not every slave feels oppressed, and one woman's meat may be another woman's poison. On the other hand, there is growing scepticism that a complete account of human existence can be achieved without reference to what we experience. Pickering (1997) suggests that scientific accounts also tend to fall into Whitehead's fallacy of misplaced concreteness. The issue of experience is a central debate.

The empirical value of experience has conventionally been questioned on the basis that subjective experience is not open to objective verification. This view has become subject to considerable revision in recent years (Petitot, Varela, Pachoud & Roy, 1999;

Velmans, 2000), particularly with the dramatic increase in interest in consciousness over the last decade or so. A burgeoning debate about the value of qualitative research methods has ensued. Richardson (1999: 469) argues that interest in subjective experiences is warranted by virtue of 'their psychological significance as phenomena of interest in their own right as well as by their importance in understanding other psychological processes'. Chapter 2 has detailed key aspects of this debate in relationship to Buddhism (see section 3.1.6), and concludes that the limitations of introspective research, so widely touted in psychology in the latter half of the last century, were not of such a magnitude that they could not be overcome with better methodologies. Their rejection may have been a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Sharf challenges the validity of experience on the grounds of its cultural plurality, as discussed in chapter 2, and presents several issues which need to be addressed in the research design. The most salient is whether it is possible to separate an immediate experience from a culturally mediated description of that experience. Katz (1978: 26) is adamant that 'neither mystical experience nor more ordinary forms of experience give any indication, or any grounds for believing, that they are unmediated'. Whatever their empirical status, it is well known that many ordinary forms of experience, such as an orgasm, while undoubtedly mediated by culture are also recognisable across cultures. When an experience has a common embodied aspect there are some compelling arguments for empathetic understanding across cultures (Thompson, 2001). These arguments would be valid if the basis of Buddhist experience stems from it being a reflection of our basic human cognitive function and its interface with the world. The problem is that, while no experience may be free from mediation, cultural differences may amplify variations in how they are perceived.

Buddhist practice seeks to replicate the original experiences attributed to the Buddha, and most traditions emphasise practices and techniques that attempt to recreate this experience. Experience itself has proven to be somewhat ephemeral, and much research has focused on extraordinary experiences or alternative states of consciousness, with varying success. The majority of studies exploring 'altered states' of consciousness, as well as numerous studies on meditation, have focused on the relationship between meditation and detectable physiological changes in the cardiovascular system, the

cortical system, blood chemistry, the metabolic and respiratory systems. It is ironic that so much work has been expended exploring the secondary benefits of meditation, including relaxation, stress reduction, control of pain, lower blood pressure and creativity, rather than the primary purpose for which it was developed. The bulk of the research seems to be predicated by discrete experimental methodologies rather than holistic longitudinal research on the assumption that goals of eastern meditative traditions are extremely difficult to achieve and highly unusual. Nagel (2001), for example, observes: 'Advanced meditative states are reported to be characterized by qualities of nonreplicabilty, transience, nondiscursivity, and vulnerability to the effects of experimentation'. Attempts to capture such states in a laboratory context remain problematic for two reasons. Firstly, by using doctrinal accounts as a guide, researchers have uncritically accepted traditional descriptions of peak experiences as accurate descriptions of real states. In the context of competing traditions, known for their tendency to make exaggerated magical claims, often based on hagiographic accounts of non-living masters, there is a danger that such experiences may be mythical. Secondly, like other human experiences, an insight experience may not, in isolation, have a greatly transforming effect on particular individuals, and, as with most experiences, we are prone to forget the details of something without repetition.

In the search for these high states, the lived experience of Buddhism has been taken for granted as accurately depicted by the doctrine, and so overlooked. Rather than focus on the specifics of experience, this research intends to take a different approach. Instead of eliciting the exact real-time content of the experiences themselves, it looks at what is remembered, that is, how people put together these ephemeral elements and make sense of them. Of course, what is remembered is a verbal representation of a non-verbal experience. This opens up a complex debate, as any representation is open to distortion. As Erving Goffman (1974) points out, all experience, whether inner or outer, is framed by a context and history, and how we make sense of an experience is largely dependent on how it is framed. For example, a change of context can suddenly transform our understanding of a situation; thus a situation which is at first perceived as serious can, through a smile or laugh, be changed into a joke. Changes in framing are not limited to the outer events, but also apply to the interior; for example, studies of pain show pain perception to be highly dependent on context. The experience of not-self is also affected by how it is framed. Suzanne Segal, in her book *Collision with the Infinite*, describes

her confusion at not having referents for such an experience: ‘Life became one long, unbroken [question], forever unsolvable, forever mysterious, completely out of reach of the mind’s capacity to comprehend’.

Buddhist practitioners, well acquainted with Buddhist doctrine, are thus predisposed to its viewpoint and to interpreting their experiences in its terms. While this can be considered a source of bias, and is unavoidable, drawing subjects from different Buddhist traditions may provide some interesting overlaps and distinctions. The interpretation of experiences, however, is also likely to be mediated by a range of other cultural factors. As discussed earlier, cultural differences present a range of difficulties, as communication across linguistic and cultural divides raises questions about the ways in which researchers may represent (and misrepresent) the nature of experience in other cultures. In earlier times, westerners have met difficulty exploring eastern religious experience, as very few advanced Asian practitioners spoke a western language fluently. Furthermore, speaking frankly about one’s insight experiences was considered at the very least impolite and carried many cultural sanctions, particularly in countries with a strong monastic tradition. Many monastic codes proscribe making claims about one’s attainments. As a result, qualitative research studies based on first-person accounts of insight gained from Buddhist practice are extremely hard to find.

Recently, however, the growing number of Buddhist teachers working outside of Asian and monastic contexts have created the opportunity for a broad study which can reduce intercultural obstacles, particularly the language barrier. This allows the researcher to ask questions which deal with complex issues regarding the nature of insight and its ramifications for economic action.

5.3 The research design

The initial questions to subjects were designed to open up possibilities. With little prior research to build on, I decided not to specify the nature of any insight he or she attained. The choice of the broad introductory questions was designed to elicit what was most significant to the teachers.

5.3.1 The interview questions

Interview questions were developed from the thematic questions introduced above. They were pre-tested on two local Buddhist teachers, and numerous subsequent adjustments were incorporated. One important methodological concern was that the use of Buddhist terminology might convey different meanings to teachers from different traditions. It was therefore decided to minimise the use of Buddhist terminology in the questions, and where possible substitute a common, everyday term.

The interview questions were arranged in a set format and followed a scripted introduction in which each interviewee was given a brief scripted outline of the research explaining their rights and the nature of the interview process. Buddhist terms, such as 'insight' and 'karma', were deliberately not defined, leaving them open and ambiguous, for three reasons. First, I wanted to allow the habitual speech patterns of the respondents to determine the choice of meaning, as any attempt to define these concepts could elicit some preconceived notion of insight or action rather than the lived experience of them which the research was seeking. Second, there was a need to resist any bias from the interviewer's own preconceived notions of insight. Finally, by casting a broad net the initial questions allowed the responses to reflect what was most salient in the interviewee's world and be receptive to the range of understandings held by the interviewee, thus opening up the research to the possibility of novel responses.

The rationale for each question is set out in Table 2. The structure of the questionnaire was not significantly revised as a result of reflection on the responses made during the course of the research. Question 1 was revised, however, as the initial version was found by participants to be confusing. In the second series of interviews, it was modified to narrow responses by the inclusion of a reference to Buddhism. Care was taken not to follow the structure too rigidly, allowing the interviews to evolve freely around a series of questions designed to progressively elicit detailed information in answer to the general research questions. This approach provided the flexibility needed to allow respondents to reveal additional facets of key issues, particularly when they only provided limited information in the first instance. Answers to initially broad questions were followed by carefully selected phrases to elicit aspects which were the most salient in the eyes of the subjects. Where the interviewer decided that an important

question was not well answered, the question was raised later on in the interview. The interviews ended with a general question:

> In conclusion, I am also very interested in your understanding of the application of insight and Buddhist ethics, especially in the area of money and work. Are there any aspects of this that we've not covered that you might like to comment on before we end?

Brief notes were taken of discussions when they occurred after the interview, and a detailed recollection was recorded as soon as possible.

The interview questions fall under three research themes; the rationale for each question is summarised in Table 2, set out in the following pages.

Table 2: Research themes

RESEARCH THEME ONE *What is the nature of the insight gained through the lived experience of Buddhist practice?* Nature of the insight experience (30 mins)	
This series of questions is designed as an open-ended inquiry into the content and process of the insight experience.	
Research logic	**Interview questions**
Question 1 begins the interview with a broad open-ended enquiry seeking a broad description of insight and some indication of the circumstances in which it occurred.	**1a.** I would like to start by revisiting one or more of your experiences of insight. Could you talk about that/those experience(s)? (Revised in the second series of interviews.) **1b.** What insights have you gained as a result of Buddhist practice? *Probe:* Can you describe that?
Question 2 is designed to explore how insight differs from ordinary everyday consciousness.	**2.** What have you learned about the processes of your ordinary, everyday mind?
Question 3 is designed to elicit a discussion of the process which induced the insight experience. This question is the subject of debate in Buddhist literature.	**3.** Was your gaining of insight a sudden or gradual process? *Probe:* How did it come about for you?
Question 4 is designed to find out how practitioners themselves check the validity of the experience.	**4.** How did you check or validate those experiences? *Probe:* How do you know you're not deluded?

RESEARCH THEME TWO

What changes might a practitioner might undergo as a result of gaining insight?

Personal Transformation (30 mins)

This series of questions is designed to explore the effect of insight on fundamental actions in the world. While these are only personal perceptions of behaviour, they are a first step to understanding.

Research logic	**Interview questions**
Question 5 is an ambiguous question because some interviewees might respond from a transpersonal point of view. This question seeks to identify the salient changes that occur in the interiority of the respondent, as well as outside behaviours.	**5.** What are the most obvious ways in which your insight experiences have changed you?
Question 6 explores the social dimension of these changes with a view to building social theory around the effects of insight.	**6.** How have your insight experiences changed the way you relate to others?
Question 7 explores the ecological dimension of these changes with a view to building socio-ecological theory around the effects of insight.	**7.** How have your insight experiences changed the way you relate to nature?
Question 8 specifically explores what changes have occurred as result of insight in regard to their self concept?	**8.** Has insight changed your image of yourself or sense of who you are?
Question 9 specifically explores the question of karma and rebirth.	**9.** Did you gain any understanding about rebirth and past lives?
Question 10 explores the dimension of shadow (in the psychoanalytic sense) and the role of practice in maintaining these changes.	**10.** Are there some regions of yourself into which your insight doesn't reach?

Additional logic:

Significant experiences are likely to change a person.

What changes, if any, occur as a result of Buddhist insight?

Is there evidence of a new way of being as a result of Buddhist insight?

Check of correspondence with traditional Buddhist discourses.

How complete is the change?

RESEARCH THEME THREE *How does insight gained through the lived experience of Buddhist practice influence economic action?* Relationship of insight experience and the world of daily life (30 mins)	
This series of questions is designed to find correlations in real-life patterns to illustrate actual changes that result from the effect of insight on fundamental actions in the world. The description may give clues to how the respondent actually makes choices in life.	
	Script: In this part of the interview I am interested in how your experience of insight affects how you act in the world.
Question 11 explores how insight has affected the respondent in an actual situation which requires complex decision-making.	**11.** Can you talk about a major event that you have been involved in recently which involved money, work or organising people? *Probe:* Are there any big projects that you have got on at the moment? I am interested how in your experience of insight affected the decisions that you made around this event?
Question 12 is designed to explore how insight relates to ethics, specifically the ethical codes of Buddhism. The phrase 'embody the precepts' is a Zen perspective and has deeper meaning. It was included to check how ethics were acted upon and also whether the phrase had a deeper resonance for the respondent. The probes were used to trigger a wider set of responses. For example, it is possible that a respondent may not discuss killing even though they may have strong values around it.	**12.** How does the experience of insight meet with your attempts to embody the precepts in your daily life experiences around work, organising and community? *Probe topics:* No killing and violence; destruction of human life; no stealing and cheating; regard for consequences of actions; sexual ethics; no lying and harmful speech; speak without regard for facts or feelings; no alcohol and drug abuse, which distort the balance of our minds through intoxicants.
Question 13 explores the relationship of insight to action from another perspective.	**13.** Does your insight experience completely protect you from breaking the precepts?
Question 14 explores the distinction between insight and practice.	**14.** Can you make a distinction between the effects of insight and the accumulated benefits of practice?
Question 15 explores the role of 'the gift', as discussed in chapter 4.	**15.** Can you talk about your experience of giving/dana as compared to commercial transactions as in buying and selling? *Probe:* What are the differences for you?

5.3.2 Selection of participants

Western Buddhist teachers living outside of the monastic context were chosen for interview for several reasons. Firstly, the study is primarily interested in lay practice, and western Buddhism differs from its Asian counterpart in that there is an emphasis on the householder and lay practice, as opposed to the monastic hegemony in Asian settings. Western Buddhist teachers offer a different perspective on Buddhist action which is ostensibly more 'engaged' with socioeconomic processes than that of their Asian monastic counterparts. Buddhist teachers who are themselves monastic or are more closely aligned to a monastic lifestyle, while being valuable sources of information about insight, may be less able to relate their insight to economic action. As this study will directly explore this aspect of Buddhist experience, lay teachers are a better choice. Secondly, the choice of western teachers avoids problems that may arise due to language differences, which could potentially be a substantial barrier to understanding. Furthermore, as noted, there are many cultural barriers to speaking openly about personal insight experiences, particularly among monastic practitioners, but also more widely in Asia. Culturally traditional Buddhists commonly do not answer personal questions directly, and simply cite canonical sources instead.

Mindful of Sharf's (1995a, 1995b) critique of some 'modern' versions of Buddhism, the choice of western Buddhist teachers runs the risk of not representing the true depth of Buddhism. There is a common tendency among some writers to privilege monastic practitioners instead. For example, Houshmand, Harrington, Saron and Davidson (2001) argue that looking to western Buddhist practitioners is problematic because 'the capacities of even the most advanced western practitioners would not afford comparison with those of, say, Tibetan yogis who have spent decades pursuing intensive practice within millennia-old established institutional contexts'. Perhaps, as Sharf (1995a, 1995b) suggests, there are grounds for doubting the depth of insight of these teachers, compared to their Asian monastic counterparts. Nevertheless it would appear from candid accounts in the popular literature that significant shifts in understanding do occur among western teachers and practitioners. From an economic perspective, these insights may be sufficient to get a sense of a significant transformation, and, as Buddhist economics is primarily concerned with the lay context, our interest lies with what is attainable and likely to make a difference. The depth of insight of Buddhist practitioners is not well understood outside of the senior ranks of the Buddhist community, although

there are detailed accounts available in Buddhist texts (Goleman, 1998). It is unlikely that the insight of the teachers interviewed will be homogeneous across the sample, and significant qualitative differences are likely to appear in the data. One solution might have been to get respondents to rate the depth of their own insight, but it was decided that, even were this a valid approach, given the sensitive nature of the material it would be too judgemental and thus inappropriate. For this reason, the sample was chosen from Buddhist teachers rather than practitioners; as such a position in most traditions indicates a certain level of practice and usually a degree of insight. It is expected that some variation in insight will be present, and this could create some problems in the interpretation of the data.

Andrew Rawlinson (1997) has surveyed lineages of western teachers in eastern traditions; while this number is increasing exponentially, the total population of Buddhist teachers is relatively small, perhaps between one and two thousand. At the time of the study, only a handful of Buddhist teachers lived in Australia, and other Buddhist teachers were scattered around the world. This presented a major impediment to study, as seeking them out individually was not feasible. I took advantage of the opportunity to attend scheduled meetings of two major western Buddhist groups which a significant number of their teachers attended. While this strategy required travelling overseas, it provided ready access to a reasonable number of teachers. It also constrained my research in a number of ways. Firstly, data collection had to be by interviews; while survey techniques could have been used, the exploratory nature of the research pointed to a more flexible method of inquiry. The best data collection method for the research, given these constraints, was long in-depth interviews, particularly in view of the need to obtain detailed accounts.

Ideally the study would consist of in-depth interviews of a random sample of western Buddhist teachers, but this was not feasible. Given that few Buddhist teachers resided in Australia (between five and ten), it was decided to use local teachers for pre-testing the interview questions and so the main body of interviews was conducted overseas. There was a total of 34 interviews. Thirty-two were with formally accredited lay Buddhist teachers and the other two were with interviewees who were not formally teachers at the time of interview. One was a Buddhist scholar and calligrapher, the other an artist, but their data was not discarded as they did fulfil the requirement of being advanced

practitioners, and one has subsequently been granted teacher status. The teachers were interviewed in three groups. The first group, of 11 teachers, was selected from attendees of an international conference of Insight Meditation teachers in Totnes, UK, in July 1998. The second group, of 15 teachers, was made up of resident teachers who lived in and around the Bay area of San Francisco, California; they were interviewed in December 1999. Some days later the third group, of eight teachers, was interviewed at a conference of the teachers of the Diamond Sangha of in Hawaii. The names of the teachers interviewed have been withheld as part of the confidentiality agreement, but the sample covered a spectrum from newly appointed teachers to senior members of their Sangha. The interviewees included several internationally prominent teachers.

From the outset, I recognised that the sample contained bias due to the preponderance of two groups of the teachers belonging to a particular school. That is, the sample consisted of thirteen teachers from or related to the Diamond Sangha and thirteen from or related to the Insight Meditation tradition. Of the remaining teachers, seven were Soto Zen teachers from various groups, and one was from the Kagyu Tibetan tradition. Nevertheless, the sample represented quite different traditions, and a significant number of non-affiliated teachers were interviewed in California.

At each conference, the subjects were invited to volunteer to participate in the study by signing up on a list. In such circumstances sample selection was open to further bias, as the participants were self-selecting. A high degree of participation was achieved as the organisers of each conference commended the study. All interviews were one to one and conducted in a quiet, disturbance-free situation. One interview was discarded due to a tape malfunction which made transcription impossible.

5.3.3 Data analysis procedures

Carney, Joiner and Tragou (1997) recommend the use of word processing packages to analyse data, to avoid the risk of the data being upstaged by the supporting software data analysis program. After attempting this, it was found that NVIVO software by QSR International Pty Ltd provided a more powerful tool for managing complex data. It enabled access to data by topic or theme, and at the same time allowed a great deal of flexibility in coding and retrieval, which facilitated the exploration of emerging ideas and the discovery and analysis of patterns. In the first instance, each transcribed

interview was analysed by question, and then by key concepts and categories relating to theory-building. Concept and category codings were mapped using NVIVO mapping tools. As it was a qualitative design, emphasis was placed on making sense of the data rather than seeking to quantify and perhaps fabricate meanings based on word frequency; however, basic content statistics were analysed.

I recognised the variable nature of the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee, and took notes after each interview on how this aspect might be taken into account. Some interviewees were more knowledgeable, or felt more comfortable and disclosed more; others had limited time, and so the data cannot be assumed to be of uniform quality. The interpretation of the data was therefore sensitive to any significant variation.

I anticipated that new ideas and theoretical understandings might emerge during the collection and analysis of the data (Silverman, 1994) and notes of new ideas were also kept during the interview period and when scoping the data.

According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 26), 'the segmenting and coding of data are often taken-for-granted parts of the qualitative research process. All researchers need to be able to organize, manage, and retrieve the most meaningful bits of our data.' The coding and categorising of data was best done on the basis of judgments of what data contributes to theory development already underway in the literature reviews in chapters 2, 3 and 4. This was achieved by analysing each interview and coding relevant sections of the transcript and then using NVIVO to retrieve the coded material and its surrounding text. The collected material identified the interviewee each time the tag occurred in the interview. According to Carney et al. (1997: np), this flexible approach substantially speeds up the qualitative research process and allows the researcher 'to be patient and curious in [synthesising] different themes, categories, and patterns, which were the threads that wove the themes into a meaningful tapestry'.

As exploratory research, its main aim is to identify the central theoretical issues for further inquiry. It is anticipated that this research will provide a helpful set of data for theory development. While there exist a number of limitations to the study, there is a substantial body of non-scientific data which confirms it.

The data should allow for a formulation of important issues around the conception of self in economic thought. These issues will guide further understanding of Buddhist insight into the nature of self and its meaning for economic action in a western cultural context.

5.3.4 Limitations of the research

In any qualitative research, bias cannot be entirely eliminated. However, a conscious effort has been made to let the data speak for itself, presenting differing voices and counter-points as they arise. As Patton (1997: 149) notes, 'The possibility of attaining objectivity and truth in any absolute sense has become an untenable position in evaluation'. The thesis is distinctive from others' work on this topic in its attempts to take into account multiple perspectives, interests and possibilities as it seeks to give a flavour of the interdisciplinary and complex nature of the research effort.

The study was affected by the sheer breadth of information available on the topic. This created problems in reviewing the literature, but also limited the full depth of description of the interview material. While lengthy quotations and detailed description are essential to any research project, I have summarised material where that could be done without violence to it.

The representativeness of the study sample relative to the population of western Buddhist teachers cannot be determined, due to the limited information on the latter's numbers. Clearly, the sample does not represent all Buddhist practices, and is specifically biased towards western Buddhist groups. Moreover, the sample size of teachers interviewed is relatively small, which restricts its generalisability for the population of teachers. The sample of interviews sought to cover as wide a range of people as possible and there was an imbalance towards the male sex; however, this gender bias may reflect the status and position of women in western Buddhist groups generally. Furthermore, as the interviewer was male, this may have affected the nature of the responses from women interviewees to questions, based on the gender difference. While virtually all the interviews seemed to be frank and open discussions, subtle trust and power issues may have been present that were not detected. As a counter to these biases, special attention was paid to identifying differences based on gender in the analysis, and although there were differences in style they were not substantive.

The study was conducted over an 18 month period (July 1998 to December 1999). It is possible that the make-up of the teacher population may change over time and their values and beliefs may change in response to changing social and economic conditions both during the period when the data was collected and since the study. Moreover, the data collected in the study was through in-depth interviews about personal insight experiences, personal accounts are prone to some inaccuracy as subjects do not have perfect recall, or they may lack insight into their own process, or be uncomfortable with self-disclosure.

The final limitation, as discussed in section 3.1.6, is the potential for a lack of correspondence between self-report and actual behaviour.

CHAPTER 6

THE EXPERIENCE OF INSIGHT

Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogical interaction.

Bakhtin (1984)

6.1 Writing the interviews

Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 5) suggest that, of the many images of the qualitative researcher, the researcher 'may be seen as a *bricoleur* or as a maker of quilts, or, as in filmmaking, a person who assembles images into montages'. These images often came to mind as I sat listening to the various accounts of insight experiences given to me by the 34 people interviewed for this research. Each account reflected something of the interviewee's personal exploration of the world of insight, but, like travellers, their paths were often different and no two experiences were identical. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that the many accounts evoked a common geography. The quiltmaker's work of collecting pieces and fitting them together in ways that were thematically connected to create a pattern or picture resembles the researcher's sense-making process. Yet this image also seems inadequate, as it stays too close to the modern understanding of research as a controlled process. Nevertheless, even after the data was collected and 'captured' on tape, it seemed that each reading revealed something different. The ideas and understandings of the interviewees are likely to be subject to change, and what was 'captured' reflects a particular time and place in their lives. The data is thus necessarily fluid, as insight is a human experience and reflects the ephemeral nature of human experience. Nevertheless, it hardly amounts to a reason to dismiss the findings; as van Manen (1997) suggests, the process of understanding a text is subject to similar dynamics, and meaning is co-created through the interaction of the reader and the text.

The aim of the first thematic question is to explore Buddhist insight gained from uncommon experiences in meditation and related practices. Van Manen (2002) suggests that it is hard to convey experiences which are uncommon, particularly to those who have never experienced it themselves. As Hove (2002) points out, Buddhist experiences

constitute a special case, as they are the result of a further cultivation of how we experience our everyday lives. Research of this nature is best left semi-structured; although unstructured interviews are more flexible and capable of providing greater depth and responding to unexpected data, having some structure can provide a basis for comparisons across the sample. This may be generalised, depending on the nature of the sample. The detailed nature of the experiences themselves were of secondary importance to the inquiry, which focused on learning or insight gained from many such experiences rather than any particular experience.

Insight and learning are not stable goods to be methodogically accumulated, and thus the use of semi-structured questions allowed for the discerning of shared elements of knowledge, even though each interviewee had explored the territory in their own peculiar way, and some accounts were more valuable than others. Critical to the process was the use of many accounts to check and cross-check in order to gain a coherent picture. This collective dimension made each account a valuable piece, which made it feasible to develop a coherent guide to the territory. Like a travel guide, this account is not exhaustive; the limited number of questions that I could ask in the time available across a number of interviews provided much information, but the territory is vast. The challenge for this research was to work with these individual accounts to provide a serviceable outline of the much larger picture – an outline which sets out some recognisable landmarks for analysis, and which may prove useful to future researchers.

For Denzin and Lincoln (2003), quiltmaking is not only a craft, as in sewing the pieces together to form a meaningful structure, but also an art in which the choices are not necessarily set in advance. This facet of the analogy is pertinent to the research. While I was constantly seeking overlaps and connections, it was not until the later stages of writing, when I read an extract of an early draft of this chapter in a PhD workshop, that I fully understood the importance of the aesthetic dimension of quiltmaking. I found myself interjecting a personal narrative over dry accounts of the data. The group pointed out that a personal narrative indeed did not interfere with the objectivity of the reporting, but on the contrary brought the data to life for them.

As I became more familiar with the process, another dimension became apparent. After having spent many months with the interview material, coding and transcribing it or carefully checking the transcriptions, I gained a deeper sense of the complex nature of

the interview situation and how variations creep into the process in ways which are impossible to control. Each interview literally grew out of an interaction between my own character and the interviewee's, the circumstances of each interview and how well we worked together in the cooperative enterprise of constructing knowledge. I recognised that the best interviews involved the interviewee's active collaboration – their making an effort to understand what my questions were trying to elicit. The choice of very simple open-ended questions required a cooperative effort, and left a lot of choice to the interviewee in how to respond. It also meant that a lot depended on my skills as an interviewer in probing and guiding the interviewees to clarify their answers and to capture their stories in ways that provided the most useful material relevant to the research. This process resonated with the Buddhist idea of dependent arising; each interview was a co-arising out of the interrelationship between myself and the interviewee, and addressed a level of complexity that defied conscious control.

The interview process was thoroughly pre-tested. This was achieved by using a separate sample of 3 Australian teachers and asking them for detailed feedback after the interview. This lead to several revisions of the questions, most of which came about through changes in my own understanding rather than having learnt from the interview responses. During the subsequent interviews, very few respondents suggested problems with the interview questions, and in these cases, the interviewees felt enough rapport to seek clarification.

As discussed previously, for the purposes of this research only a broad description of the phenomenon of Buddhist insight and some indication of the circumstances in which it occurred were deemed necessary. In the section that follows I have chosen the most salient accounts to provide the reader with a sense of the territory. In the text that follows I have tried to incorporate a distilled summary of the other responses which may either contradict or elaborate on the first detailed response.

After each research question comes an analytic summary of the data, including some basic statistical data. It is pointless at this stage to set out some *measure* of insight; this research explores insight along the lines suggested by the Buddhist tradition, and then elucidates what the experience means for the various interviewees. The similarity of interview questions made some simple quantitative analysis possible. Since 34 is a reasonable sample, when the answers of high percentages of the sample converge, this

can suggest (but not conclusively) that the experience in question is shared by western Buddhist teachers as a whole.

It was expected that some (if not most) of the teachers interviewed would have some degree of insight. While most non-Asian Buddhists are prepared to discuss their experiences, the traditional reticence about disclosing (discussed earlier) needs to be considered. Thus the first question was deliberately kept general; it asks the interviewees to describe only the most salient and obvious insights that they had gained from Buddhist practice. Based on the literature review in chapter 2, the assumption was made that the experiences discussed earlier, in chapters 2 and 3, are necessarily significant. A genuine insight experience would be a salient and transformative one and likely to be among the first to come to mind for the interviewee.

Some interviewees with academic training in Buddhist studies questioned the use of the term ‘insight’ as being too broad and too general. However, while the objection was valid, many nevertheless chose what was salient for them, and all respondents were able to provide a useful answer. Given the potential for different levels of practice and insight, a general question also allowed less advanced practitioners to engage in the interview process with a question that did not put them on the spot, and yet potentially revealed to the interviewer a great deal about their personal experience.

The practical reality of doing qualitative research is that all respondents do not necessarily listen to or fully understand the questions, nor answer them directly, and this research has not been an exception. Some interviewees wandered off the topic, or answered questions in so much detail that time became a consideration. Where subsequent questions seemed to have been answered already, I omitted them. The result of these natural variations is that any attempt to interpret the data in a simple collative fashion would waste too much valuable information. On the other hand, with so many questions asked in a relatively uniform way, it was not difficult to make distinctions in both the content and style of responses. These distinctions did not always follow the order of questions, and often answers appeared as part of a response to other questions, but by scanning through the interview an answer to most questions could be found, thus allowing quantitative data to be distilled.

The theme of the first set of research questions concerned Buddhist insight and explored the nature of the insight experiences. The opening question was non-directive, and was designed to elicit a wide range of responses without pre-empting the nature of the insights the interviewee might have experienced.[28] A follow-up probe was also prepared, one that asked for the most significant or salient insight experience if a teacher felt the question was too broad.

6.2 A new sense of self

Question 1: *What insights have you gained as a result of Buddhist practice?*

The answers to this question revealed a rich spectrum of experiences and insights. The use of probe questions proved an effective strategy, and many interviewees provided further important clues to the nature of their insight in their answers to these probes, as well as to other questions over the course of the interview. All of the interviewees were friendly and cooperative, and almost all the responses struck me as genuine and frank accounts of what they had learned. The NVIVO software allowed for easy access to the material, and the ability to trace material across different questions was particularly valuable for uncommon experiences, as making of sense of such experiences is a callenge.

The interview data revealed several thematic patterns. The dominant theme among the teachers was that their most significant insight was the sudden realisation that our normal notions of a coherent self were illusory. Overall, 88% (30 of the 34) teachers interviewed reported that they experienced a different sense of self, after which the ordinary sense of a coherent, separate self appeared to them as an illusion. While most interviewees' responses addressed this experience as the most salient that they had encountered, respondents highlighted a range of related experiences, and some responses required some interpretation. Table 3 summarises the different data.

Table 3: Type of insight experience

[28] Non-directive questions are often simple questions, such as 'How are you?' On close analysis they found to be quite unstructured and may elicit a wide range of responses. The response may be superficial or it may be deep, but the nature of the response reflects what is most salient to the responder.

Response type	Number	Percentage
Clear and direct reference to illusory nature of self experience.	27	79%
A somewhat clear reference to illusory nature of self experience, but could be open to other interpretations.	3	9%
Total	*30*	*88%*
No clear reference to illusory nature of self experience, and could possibly be a confusion.	3	9%
No reference to an illusory nature of self experience, or a conceptual psychological interpretation of insight.	1	3%

Insight into the illusory nature of the coherent self confirms most traditional views of Buddhist enlightenment and not-self. This finding provides the research with a baseline and establishes a sample of respondents with a significant experience of insight with which to explore this perspective with some confidence. At the very least, the great majority of the sample reported having accessed such an experience.

It is difficult to mistake the sudden realisation that our normal notions of a coherent self – who we are – are illusory. The responses, however, reveal a depth and a lived dimension to such experiences. They go well beyond intellectual and abstract convictions; they were experienced in a deep way as a new understanding of who we are as people. This is evident in the following interviewee's response to the first question, a response which captures the power of this experience, as is indicative of this deeper dimension of being in these experiences:

> I think the intimacy, the opening of the doors, letting the world rush in and make me up. And that's predicated upon the actual realisation that there is no abiding self here ... the actual profundity of the experience of my realising that selfhood is without permanence or without any abiding enduring separated reality ... The

> impact of that on my own life and what it's done to my heart and my behaviour really has been experiencing the world as my own mind and body. (Interviewee 11)[29]

This extract also highlights the intimate nature of this experience. Experiences like this one are not restricted to one particular tradition, but Zen teachers, particularly those from the Diamond Sangha, seemed to be most forthcoming about this type of insight experience. Teachers from all the relevant traditions, however, reiterated the illusory nature of the coherent self; for example, the following extract came from the Tibetan Buddhist:

> I think the key insight is the awareness of what we take to be the self is [illusory] and the recognition of emptiness – that there is not an actual separate existent self. (Interviewee 19)

We can take another example from an Insight Meditation tradition teacher:

> That's interesting because insights about impermanence and insights about *anattā*, if we were talking about that, I could tell you more about how I was doing this and what really arose in my mind is there's no one there, or I really arose in my mind, it's all empty, it's disappearing as it arises. (Interviewee 31)

This insight into nature of the self suggests that it is neither unitary nor coherent, but something that is not separate from others or 'empty'. Some interviewees were reluctant to discuss something they regarded as impossible to express conceptually, as the attempt to do so could confuse people who haven't experienced it. One interviewee even refused to elaborate on this, explaining:

> I would fall into reducing them, you know, it's the same thing as if you asking me about ... love. I would say … you have got to fall in love ... those experiences I have ... a great deal of respect for them, on one hand and I hesitate to bring them back to the conceptual level the same as I would with dreams. (Interviewee 6)

Anticipating the difficulties in understanding such experiences phenomenologically, teachers mostly responded with accounts of their insights rather than specific experiences. As one interviewee shared:

---

[29] The subjects are numbered randomly. This was done to indicate where the transcript is from the same or subject of someone different.

> I've discovered, I call it a dimension and that's not the way it presents itself, but it's the way I can talk about it. I discovered a dimension of my presence in the world that I'd never suspected before. Doing the practice basically is what it is and at different times, this dimension has been manifested in different ways. Sometimes, it's been manifested in just the depth of silence and presence. The words are not really available. At other times it's been manifested in the feeling of and a sensation of life being really a flickering phenomenon of arising and passing away of sensations, feelings, of whatever. In other words, things lacking solidity, etc. (Interviewee 24)

This interviewee later explains how the experience he describes related to his sense of self, but clearly it was a profound experience. The depth and power of another teacher's experiences is obvious in this following excerpt in which he describes a major experience for the first time to another person who was not his teacher:

> And at some point, I think the mind, on its own, as an intuition simply accepts the nature, the insecure nature of things and then shifts into this state of very sweet equanimity where the mind is very balanced. The only way I can describe it is very simple, it is very simple, very peaceful. And although the mind is very clear, it is also enormously stable – very beautiful. In working with that quality of equanimity for some time, and the only way I can describe it is, you know I've never talked to anyone about this, except my teacher … so it's difficult ... actually I got to a place, it happened a number of times, where the mind, and I shouldn't say the mind as there was no longer any reaching for what was pleasant or any pushing away of what was unpleasant, where that quality had simply disappeared. And there was a sense of absolute wholeness. And a sense of perfection and I knew that it was a conditioned state because it would come and then eventually it would destabilise. But it felt to me that that experience of absolute unity and perfection, that there was no place to go from there. And I remember reporting to my teacher, you know, that I don't see that there's any development beyond this. He said, 'how do you know that?' I just felt that way. Very beautiful and my teacher, said that it is said that Arahants are in that state all the time. (Interviewee 16)

The first question had two components: insight and Buddhist practice. The main concern of the question was insight, as this research did not seek details of the methods by which teachers gained insight, but rather its nature, depending on whether they had gained insight or not. It came as a surprise when two teachers played down the influence of Buddhist practice. In one case, the teacher subsequently resigned from the association which had endorsed his teaching in its tradition; but in the other case it turned out that while the respondent was a prominent Buddhist writer and highly regarded in Buddhist circles was he not strictly speaking an endorsed teacher, and during the interview claimed only an interest in Buddhism rather than an adherence to it. Despite this, the person is widely recognised as a leader in the Buddhist community. A close reading of

the transcripts revealed that both these teachers had significant insight experiences and so the decision was made to leave them in the sample since they provided valuable data.

Some interviewees were careful to distinguish their experiences from conceptual or abstract forms of knowledge. The insight that arose from these experiences provided a platform for new understandings that involved a reframing of their ontology, and as such brought the recognition that the nature of self did not hinge on a coherent self. The problem of understanding the exact nature of how these insights into the nature of self arose was also investigated, by the following probe:

Question 1 probe: *Can you describe that?*

The following interviewee's response shows that making sense of such experiences is difficult without some framework. Interestingly, although this was a significant experience for the interviewee involved, his full understanding of the experience developed quite slowly over the following of ten-year period (which is elaborated on in Section 6.3):

> Yes! And it is said that the Buddha could immediately formulate his experience. Whether he could or not, I don't know, but that is the tradition. We don't find that first expression of the Buddha under the Bodhi tree looking up at the morning star and saying 'Now I see that all beings are [by nature] Buddha and it's only [through] their delusions and ignorance they do not realise it', until the Hua-yen sutra and Dogen Zenji says 'At this moment I and all beings have attained the way', but anyway it didn't happen like that for me.[30] What I was able to do with this initial experience was to find my own voice joining in the teacher's voice while he was shouting in the Dojo – KAAAAATZZ and spontaneously from me came AAAAAAHH.[31] (Interviewee 24)

Time constrained obtaining a more detailed account of this experience, but it highlights some of the problems in making sense of insight. For example, how could the involuntary response to the shout 'Kaaaaatzz!' be explained? And was this the significant aspect of that experience to the interviewee? While detailed first-person accounts of insight experiences may be possible, they may also be incomprehensible.

---

[30] The Avatamsaka Sutra was developed in the Hua-yen school of Mahāyāna, in which their interpretation of interdependent co-origination is symbolised by Indra's jewelled net.
[31] *Kaatz* is a ferocious ritual Zen shout.

Perhaps too much ink has been spilt on speculation about the detailed nature of particular mystical experiences. Focusing on the more general concept of insight rather than specific experiences avoids these emic/etic questions and places the onus of interpretation on the experiencer, allowing the respondents to convey what they have learned. Learning is in itself interpretation, but, as Wallace (1999: 73) suggests, perhaps it is better to 'rely more heavily on the authority of individuals who have deeply immersed themselves in Christian and Buddhist theory and practice than on those who know of both only on the basis of what they have read'.

For many their insight experiences came with a sense of liberation. Although only about 20% of interviewees specifically used the term 'liberating' or 'liberation' to describe their experience, the majority of the sample described their insight experience as something that greatly changed their lives. As one interviewee put it:

> It is freeing. I think that is the bottom line of concern. And I have just spoken about how understanding is only significant if it makes a difference. Insight is only of value if it allows for a sense of ease in life, that it feels freeing, that one feels less bound, that one sees that where there was a problem before there is no problem now. And one can't really identify what it is that has changed within that, and yet the capacity for living with things, untroubled by them, is significantly changed, and then one knows that that is an authentic understanding, and authentic seeing, because it has clear and tangible results, of freeing. (Interviewee 9)

As anticipated, leaving insight undefined enabled respondents to establish their own meanings in the dialogue. In the case below the process uncovered a view that did not seem to match with those of the other interviews:

> Well, first of all, let me say that the term 'insight' is a little bit uncomfortable for me because it, for me, implies a certain kind of super wisdom ... I would say experience/insight may be equivalent terms, but insight comes from experience, rather than some flash of super wisdom. I just want to make that distinction. I don't have any insight. I don't have any of that kind of super power. Insight is not a super power ... It's very rational, it's based on experience in the world and observing things and feeling what really goes on in the world.
>
> One simply develops a meditation practice and that becomes part of one's way of being in the world ... So that one's awareness is enhanced in everything they do. There are times when we do that consciously – I'm really going to pay attention now, or I really should force myself to take a break and step back and reflect on what's happening. But those moments are a small percentage of behaving in a way that is in line with practice. It happens more and more naturally as we continue our meditation practice. And so our ability to pay attention, to focus, to be patient, all those things is enhanced without our thinking about it. It's just because we're practising, and so that changes our behaviours.

> What is insight? Because that's a term that you use quite a bit and I wonder if we have the same definition of it.
>
> *Interviewer*: Um. Well I guess I'm working from a sense of ... the kind of scriptural sense of the experience of nirvana.
>
> Okay. I see. Well, I don't have much interest in that ... And I'll tell you why. You know I talk to a lot of people who have various experiences, various insights, and various flashes, um, but it doesn't change their behaviour. They're still the same person ... that the insight itself may be interesting and useful, but it's not nearly as important as continued practice of awareness which is what changes us, which is what puts us more in touch with the world, which is what makes us patient and careful and focused. It's the continued practice of awareness. So having insight is okay, but it doesn't change our behaviour because we have all these old tendencies. We have all these old habitual tendencies that get us in trouble and part of our foolishness. Insights don't change that. (Interviewee 17)

This interviewee clearly had experienced great benefits from mindfulness, and he felt that this had changed the way his 'way of being in the world'. While he was one of the few who did not speak in terms of a shift in understanding of the self, it became clear in the interview that he had obtained a great deal of benefit from the practice. This interview raises the question about the efficacy of insight in precipitating self-transformation, on how people act in the world. This is obviously a key point, and one to be addressed in chapter 7. The contrast, however, highlights that insight experiences are not universally understood by Buddhist teachers and may not be essential to a Buddhist practice that is rewarding.

6.3 Spontaneous experiences and insight

For many Buddhist teachers, their first experience of insight did not arise because of Buddhist practice. While this was not specifically asked, several interviewees reported early childhood experiences. For example, this interviewee recalled:

> I used to have spontaneous non-ordinary experiences at the age of 14 that would occur when I was out in nature sometimes, and normally always on my own, in woods, or on hilltops, or looking at sunsets. I would have spontaneous experiences when my mind would go quiet and I would move into a more expanded state of consciousness which seemed to be also located within the heart centre, as well as within the sphere of awareness. At that age I had no context for those experiences and so, although they were very sweet on one level, they were actually very disturbing on another, because my ordinary everyday life and my family situation and everything was quite incongruent to that … and sometimes it also occurred listening to music, beautiful music. (Interviewee 1)

Without a framework within which to understand such experiences, this interviewee (and others) found such experiences quite unsettling. Another interviewee explained:

> Yeah. I was up in the mountain, I was fairly young, 22 or 23, and the whole world collapsed. 'I' or what I would consider 'I' disappeared, but nevertheless there was an awareness. I was on Mount Tamalpais and there was an awareness of my body, of this thing, but that wasn't me [laughter] and I was literally hitting my body saying 'I am John Brown [not real name] (slapping his thighs), this is John! I was desperately trying to hold on to that. It didn't happen on drugs, but this was the hippie days and I had done drugs. I didn't have a container for that experience at all, so that it could be held. I really got terribly scared, very, very scared … I would just try completely to come back to what I thought I was ... just by hitting my body, not like a flagellant or anything like that, but just to sense it, to come back to my senses. Another way was 'I have to get out of here. I have to go back to the city' ... it was that childish in a certain way. So, from then on, my life changed forever. (Interviewee 28)

What became apparent as I interviewed several teachers is that such experiences in themselves are not sufficient to bring about transformation. In some cases, the experience may have been traumatic, as suggested by the above account. Buddhism provided the respondents with a conceptual framework in which to locate and make sense of their experiences, one not otherwise available. For one interviewee, a succession of Christian visions in childhood ironically led her to Buddhism:

> because intuitively it seemed like a practice that matched what I already knew about the world, you know ... so for a long time it essentially reinforced what I already knew or it helped me to understand it more. (Interviewee 14)

6.4 The processes of ordinary everyday mind

Question 2: *What have you learned about the processes of your ordinary, everyday mind?*

The purpose of the second question was twofold; firstly it was designed to explore the relationship between insight and ordinary mind states. Secondly, it was included to gain some understanding of how a cultivated mind may be different from what most people regard as normal. It gives teachers an opportunity to explain how insight contrasts with their normal state of conscious. A further, subsidiary aspect was that cryptically indicated by the Zen koan: 'Ordinary mind is the Way', which points to the nature of the insight experience.

This question proved to be a valuable one and elicited a patchwork of different responses from which it was possible to develop a clearer picture of the relationship between practice and everyday mind states, and how insight could be generated from the cultivation of ordinary ways of being. For the vast majority of teachers the everyday mind was chaotic. Representative snippets of their views are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptions of ordinary mind

… very often self-centred. Some notion of who I think I am pops up in innumerable ways. (Interviewee 30)
Just chemical, electrical activity that is somehow perceived as patterns. (Interviewee 5)
It operates from the strong vantage point of self and other. The mind seeks to serve itself even though the self is a mental construct, it doesn't even exist fundamentally. It's, there's nothing behind these thoughts, feelings and sensations and nevertheless this ego consciousness is programmed not to be forgotten and it's running the show' (Interviewee 11)
… that the ordinary mind, and not just Mind. The mind of the human being is very easily distracted by events, by non-events, just stuff of the everyday world, and also by personal things such as emotions and feelings. The mind is very distracted. And that leads to all kinds of complications. That's what meditation practice really drives home. (Interviewee 17)
It jumps around an awful lot [laughs], not as much as it used to, but it still jumps around an awful lot. Things arise in consciousness, they stay awhile and then leave, then something else rises up and it's very attractive and when I play with it, it hangs around longer, then I let it go, then something else. (Interviewee 8)
The mind just changes all the time and that the mind is full of thoughts. (Interviewee 29)
I am surrounded by difficulty in organising my own life. It doesn't take me long to turn a very tidy desk into a kind of kitchen bin and 'tomorrow I am going to get organised' is practically the motto of my life. (Interviewee 24)
It's absolutely there and I don't find it so discriminating or anything; that's what makes me who I am and I find it very fascinating and I play with it, you know. (Interviewee 27)
And a little self-centred. I don't mean to say that it's of no good at all because it's incredibly useful and that's what makes me earn a living and do a good job and be

honest, fairly regularly, you know makes me make decisions and all of that, but it tends to be self-preoccupied and habitual. (Interviewee 28)

I am … often surprised by how easily it is for me to get trapped in a confusion that's come about either as a lust or as an aversion. (Interviewee 31)

It never stops moving and that it doesn't have anywhere to stick and that truly like the wind and the trees as it comes from nowhere and it goes nowhere. (Interviewee 3)

From this starting point of ordinary mind states, it was possible to make considerable sense of the nature of Buddhist practice and how practice leads to insight. While ordinary mind was generally regarded as a chaotic process, one conditioned by a whole range of events, including inner cognitions in which the sense of self is constantly created, many interviewees elaborated on the relationship between ordinary mind and insight. The way that teachers work with these ordinary mind states is the true work of Buddhist spiritual practices.

One interviewee suggested that the crux of practice was learning about the process of ordinary mind:

> how to relate to them [ordinary mind states] in a way that enables clarity; how to relate to them in a way that enables the capacity to work with them, not be stuck with them, to learn from them how to engage them in a way that helps me discover how to be more fully alive. (Interviewee 4)

The following excerpt reinforces this perspective and gives a more detailed account of how this might be done:

> the mind is a complex animal, it's multifaceted, so that's one thing I've learned is how complex the mind and how multifaceted it is. I learned a lot about the conditioned aspect of the mind in terms of the ideas, values, perceptions, the way we see the world, the way we see each other, the way we see ourselves and it's, to a large extent, conditioned and by our experiences and by our family, by our society. So it's my meditative experience which has shown me in great detail how that works. I learned a lot about conditioning and how it affects our perceptions. I learned a lot about the nature of clinging, the kind of forces that cause us to have suffering, to feel sorrow, pain and regret and the forces that cause the mind or heart to contract, and therefore the suffering. A lot of Buddhist practice is becoming a connoisseur on the impact that clinging and aversion have on us ... how my mind reacts in response. I've learned a lot about the possibility of, of leaving the mind alone, meaning having reactions and responses occur, but not associating them with me and mine. Not having them be the agent, and not being and having an agent that picks them up and connects them and rather letting these different responses and emotional reactions, or whatever, simply arise and if they're not particularly interesting or useful for me to act on, to let them go.
>
> *Interviewer*: Umhum. And prior to your Buddhist practice?

> They would bury me. My thoughts and my emotional reactions were me. I didn't see any difference. (Interviewee 12)

In the last part of the quoted interview the respondent provides valuable explanation of the effects of Buddhist practice on volition and agency. It illustrates how different cognitive processes may develop, ones which reduce or eliminate unreflective identification with impulses and emotional reactions, so they are less likely to be acted out. The mind develops ways to no longer associate emotions and thoughts so intensely with a sense of 'me', and its sense of ownership 'mine', and this shift has implications for how established our sense of ownership and acquisitiveness may become.

The weakening of the sense of being a separate self brings contentment and mental spaciousness. The following extract suggests there may be a further dimension in the relationship between insight, on the one hand, and the everyday mind on the other. The first step towards insight appears to be a process of deep self-examination that comes about from the practice of mindful presence and meditation. This process leads into a growing sense of freedom from the compulsions due to 'ownership' of thoughts and emotions, and a sense of spaciousness in which the usual acquisitive promptings no longer hold sway. This same process seems to open up a deeper sense of interconnection:

> it's possible to become really intimate with the processes of your own mind, it is what we would call in the West the psychological processes, and that can be horrifying as well as an illuminating experience [laughter]. But I think if you stick with the practice the sense of those things as being impenetrable or unfixable begins to change and everything begins to get a little empty, and starts to dissolve a little bit before your eyes, and so you begin to have a sense that transformation is possible. I think it's a ruthless stripping away of illusion about oneself and about really looking at one's psychological processes. Simultaneously it blows the walls off the prison in the sense that you find that even your ordinary consciousness is so much bigger. (Interviewee 14)

This sense of freedom connects with a key theme in the data – liberation – by recognising and stripping away illusions about oneself through close observation of ordinary mind states. This observation of the mind's processes seems to cultivate deeper experiences and awareness. This view is confirmed again in the following extract:

> So, out of the observation of that mindset, and a way of seeing – seeing the process of that and being able to leave it aside – comes a possibility for a greater range of experiences that are not bound by running towards or running away from. (Interviewee 9)

Another interviewee provides a more detailed discussion of this:

> That equanimity or peace has to happen in the middle of [ordinary mind states] because they are with me forever, and the nature of them. This practice, this silent sitting practice in particular, is very good for seeing the mind's processes, [going] beyond that and relating to them in samadhi[32] and not in samadhi, but … [I am] just increasingly convinced that, that equanimity or peace or harmony has to be, and is not paradoxical ... and that it happens in the middle of everyday, busy complex life ... I think emptiness theory, if you would want to put it that way, demands the opposite – that emptiness is only expressed in and through all phenomena, so why call that something, not apart, it can't be then apart from absolute reality or whatever you want to call it. (Interviewee 26)

In the last extract, the interviewee uses an often misunderstood Zen concept, emptiness. As discussed in chapter 2, Buddhist concepts mostly reflect a phenomenological epistemology in which emptiness is thus an apt description of the experience. Emptiness is often hypostasised beyond this phenomenological view, reducing it to vacuity, on one hand, or transcendental 'pure experience' on the other. In this extract, the teacher suggests that emptiness is something is expressed 'in and through all phenomena', and that emptiness is not apart from 'absolute reality'. In her experience she connects the two. This raises many questions about the nature of reality and how mind states are reflected in the world, which take us outside the ambit of economic thinking into metaphysics.

In the Zen tradition there is a koan about the nature of ordinary mind, and the double meaning of this koan was one aspect of the intention behind the formulating of question two. *Ordinary Mind is the Dao*, below, is a famous koan in Zen, and other koans have built on it:[33]

---

[32] *Samadhi* means a state of meditative immersion in which subject and object distinctions become lost. In this state it is not uncommon to have blissful and panoramic visions; in Buddhism these are dismissed as workings of the mind and potentially subject to grasping.

[33] Interestingly, Buddhism appropriated the word Dao (Tao) from Daoism, as a metaphor to explain insight. Over time these concepts seemed to merge and for many Chinese the two are the same.

Ordinary Mind is the Dao

A famous old Zen master Chao-Chou asked his Teacher Nan-chüan:

'What is the Dao?'
'Ordinary mind is the Dao', Nan-chüan replied.
'Shall I try to seek after it?' Chao-Chou asked.
'If you try for it, you will become separated from it', replied Nan-chüan.
'How can I know the Dao unless I try for it?' persevered Chao-Chou.

Nan-chüan said, 'The Dao is not a matter of knowing or not knowing. Knowing is delusion; not knowing is confusion. When you have really reached the true Dao beyond doubt, you will find it vast and boundless as outer space. How can it be talked about on the level of right and wrong?'

(Source: Sekida, 1977: 73)

This koan begins to make sense within the context of detailed introspective analysis of the processes of the mind. The two aspects of this koan come through in the above interview material: how our ordinary everyday life is messy and complex, and yet, through cultivated observation, a basic ontological structure of the mind manifests, one which is called 'the Way' (Dao). The Way seems to reflect the real-time becoming aspect of the contents of awareness. Interestingly, only one of the Zen teachers interviewed noted the relevance of the koan, and his answer adds a significant amount of detail:

> the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. If there is no awareness, then there is greed, hatred and ignorance. There is no freedom from these imprisoning factors that arise from this deeply rooted notion of self. So I relate what I say about my mind as it occurs to me now, what I'm saying about it is, what ego does all day to maintain itself. It desires, it expects, it requires, it demands, it needs, it fears – I fear – it remembers, it imagines. I am speaking of the small mind ... ordinary, everyday mind. You know, when Nansen [Japanese version of Nan-chüan] says 'Ordinary mind is the way', he is not speaking of what Robert Aitken Roshi calls the tedious tape that goes round and round, and reinforces the notion of other. So that's what I am referring to when you say ordinary mind – my mundane consciousness. (Interviewee 11)

There is a very subtle distinction here: 'the tedious tape that goes around and round' is the Way, but when we lose mindfulness of it and so get caught up in it there is just mundane consciousness. The problem is set out in the koan, and as one Insight Meditation teacher (Interviewee 9) also suggested, liberation comes from being 'not bound by running towards or running away' from the objects of mind. Implicitly, there appears to be a need for insight into the mind of another order, so that the ordinary mind

reveals itself as the Dao. The ordinary mind is what most people experience before they cultivate a more mindful practice. Our thoughts, on close inspection, have an ontological dimension which constructs an ego; when we are able to watch this process mindfully, our felt experience of the self shifts towards not-self and interconnectedness.

6.5 The process of gaining insight: sudden or gradual

The third question in the interview was designed to uncover the process of gaining insight. How does this transition occur? Does this arise from a sudden insight – the Aha! phenomenon – or does it arise as a gradual learning? The tension between 'sudden' and 'gradual' conceptions of understanding has been the subject of polemic discussion in Zen and Chan in particular. Answers to Question 3 could resolve some of the issues that have arisen in the debate. This question was somewhat closed and specific in nature.

Question 3: *Was your gaining of insight a sudden or gradual process?*

The results show that the teachers who described their experiences as largely sudden (21%) included both western Insight Meditation Tradition and Diamond Sangha Zen. But most teachers (47%) reported that their experiences incorporated a mixture of both sudden and gradual insights, with 29% having gradual insight. The results of this question suggested that, for these western Buddhist teachers, insight was a broad term and included a mix of understandings, summarised by the following extract from a Soto Zen teacher:

> It's a mix; there are experiences that arose through intensive meditation practice; ... experiences that arose through just bringing the intention of practice to bear on our everyday situations … ones [that] sometimes manifest suddenly with a clarity that wasn't there before. And ... there is just the gradual process of continuing to attempt to uphold the values and standards, and also to maintain a steady practice of precepts, and meditation, and relating in a compassionate way that steadily informs my life. (Interviewee 4)

The mixed nature of insight recurs in the following extract from an Insight Meditation teacher who, while suggesting most of his insight experiences were sudden, adds a lot more explanation:

> I would say mostly sudden. I can relate to both of the models of sudden and gradual, I don't think they are separate. I think there is a sudden and a gradual

> process of understanding going on at the same time. The flip-side of what seems to be the normal relationship, i.e. gradual leading to sudden. But in my own experience [it was] the sudden leading to the gradual, in some strange way. We have this idea of purification towards enlightenment, practice towards enlightenment, towards insight, and yet, for myself, the real sense of practice has only come out, out of the understanding.
>
> Practice as striving suggests going somewhere, and the sense of practising towards observing its application, of trying to understand somehow, and yet the teachings tells us, and experience shows us that, at any moment, there is the capacity to see something very clearly – to see things exactly the way they are. And in my own experience, a moment, unbidden, uncalled for, not able to reproduce and unable to explain how it came about, of seeing something very clearly, there was such clear seeing that the motivation to then, to practise that comes out. Now it can seem like if you practice something, then you understand it, that's the ... way the process moves and it ends with understanding it. But in my experience, it doesn't really begin until I understand it, and that seeing something clearly is actually the beginning of practising it. And the practice looks after itself, in that way, although you need the diligence to go with it, so that, in the moment of just seeing some aspect of life very clearly, seeing some event of body/mind, some way something works, then there was a real sense of, of practising that. (Interviewee 9)

So something that may be understood as a 'normal process' of gradual accumulation of small understandings, leading to a sudden putting together of the picture, may not be the case in Buddhist practice. It would seem that large insights may occur, but a key aspect of the practice is learning to integrate these experiences into a psyche that has been conditioned to see things very differently, in a society that takes for granted a coherent separate self. Let us return to the 'Kaaaaatzz!' example; the following account of a Zen teacher's experience supports that of his Insight Meditation teacher counterpart (above) in his explanation:

> Yes. So at the next dokusan I was not able respond to any checking questions and I wasn't able to respond to any checking questions for another ten years, and then only two or three of the very preliminary kind of questions.[34] It wasn't until pretty well after a few years that I began to find applications in daily life. But it was an interaction between practice, insight and maturity. (Interviewee 24)

---

[34] *Dokusan* is the Japanese term for a ritualised interview, called 'a meeting of minds', in which the teacher examines a student's practice. Only a teacher who has received *Inka*, lineage transmission which formally gives authority to teach the Japanese Zen tradition, is permitted to give dokusan. *Checking questions* are special koan questions that are asked by a Zen teacher to check the insight of a student.

This account reiterates that an experience alone may be not insightful, and seems to be insufficient as a basis for a transformed sense of self. So several factors, including 'practice, insight and maturity', are parts of a wider process in the development of an understanding of a different sense of the self. Experience alone, without a framework of understanding provided by the tradition, was potentially frightening and incomprehensible, as illustrated in the examples above in Section 6.3. Another Zen teacher adds to this:

> I tend to learn the hard way, a gradual process, but to quote the Korean monk Chinul, who (if I am not wrong) said that with sudden realisation there is personalisation, so the process of assimilating insight is gradual, which is the difficult part. The flashy thing about the opening experiences is the easy, it can come, the thing is what to do with that, and this takes forever. (Interviewee 6)

This interviewee plays down the role of experiences in the development of insight understanding; another interviewee picks up on this:

> So there have been some sudden insights, but the most transformative thing is just daily practice with other people mirroring you, allowing people to see you as you are, being willing to be as you are. (Interviewee 30)

One interviewee seemed dismissive of the entire notion of 'gradual' or 'sudden', as such distinctions distract a practitioner from the real point of Buddhist practice, which is that insight is something that is born out of mindfulness of each moment:

> I'm in neither Buddhist tradition for that, it's gradual in so far as one can turn. [I can turn] my attention back and say: 'Look – oh! Something beneficial is going on that is generic according to the gradual light, and its sudden in so far as some experiences which occur in the moment are felt to be genuinely important and profound enlightening or liberating, etc.
>
> But it's just ways of interpreting – gradual or sudden – one, the other, or both, or neither, it's just ways of looking. I am generally more enthusiastic and keen towards pointing toward something immediate. In other words, the here and now, whatever the condition of it and I think this provides the best opportunity for liberating insight and so most people get it in this world, more immediately rather than long-term gradual practice. (Interviewee 20)

These extracts suggest that Buddhist teachers generate and explore a whole range of experiences over many years of practice. These experiences provide the basis on which they develop insight wisdom. It would appear that some powerful experiences that might be understood as liberating or enlightening were critical to this understanding, but

they do not necessarily lead to an enduring understanding, and without some framework to make sense of them could easily be quite confusing, if not disturbing. Thus the power of an experience to elicit insight depends on contextual factors, particularly if the practitioner has a framework by which they can integrate and make sense of their experience. A number of interviewees experienced a very gradual process of development. For example, one interviewee said 'I haven't had a real big experience, like Yamada's experience in "Three Pillars of Zen" [Kapleau, 1967]. I have had a series of smaller experiences' (Interviewee 8).

The interview data shows that insight is a learning process. Even if powerful experiences occur from time to time, it is the day-to-day practice, the learning to bring awareness into each moment that forms the basis for any significant transformation. Yet it would seem that some moments of clarity, even small ones, are helpful in informing this day-to-day practice in ways that lead to maturity over time. As the above interviewee acknowledges:

> The first experience one was at the first sesshin,[35]. It was in a break in sesshin with [my teacher] in the garden and there was this beautiful Monarch butterfly on one of the branches of the tree, and all of a sudden there wasn't any separation between us. I don't know what happened, something fell away. And I knew what it was like to be that butterfly. I think that was the first real experience of the self dropping away. I wrote a verse about it and I gave it to [my teacher] in the next dokusan and he liked [it] a lot and then the next day I gave him another verse and he thought it was terrible. (Interviewee 8)

This suggests that what might be a big experience, one that allowed the clarity for this interviewee to write a poem acceptable to his teacher, did not confer enough understanding to be applied the next day. The development of understanding from any singular 'insight' experience may simply reside in our capacity to learn, which returns us to the sense that the core benefit from all these experiences is their contribution to a learning process. This learning may not simply be limited to Buddhist practices, but extends to a wide range of other life experiences, as well as the amount of practice, innate ability and richness of a person's frameworks to make sense of them. The process

---

[35] *Sesshin* is a western adaptation of an intensive week of meditation that normally occurs in Asia towards the end of the traditional rainy season retreat.

of learning allows for the gradual development of their understanding to find application in everyday life.

After all, life is a series of experiences, so what distinguishes one experience and makes it become insightful? The bigger experiences, which included seeing into the emptiness of the self, may only be distinguished by degree of salience. For many teachers, their progress on the path arises out of the practice, and, while some had big experiences, others found that subtle, seemingly insignificant changes served as the foundations of insight when framed in different ways at a later stage or clarified by an experience of greater intensity or clarity. It was because of this process that insight was used by teachers interchangeably with experience. This issue was addressed by a specific question that was included later in the interviews (see section 8.3.2).

6.6 Validation and confirmation of insight experiences

There is a substantial literature on the nature of religious experience which has somewhat uncritically incorporated Buddhist experiences alongside deep revelatory and sometimes awesome experiences of mystical union. These are usually couched in terms of their relation with God, or direct and intimate consciousness of the divine presence. These mystical and religious experiences are often assumed to be a direct knowledge of absolute Reality. This literature is extremely broad and has, at its borders, studies into the paranormal, such as ESP and telepathy (see Blackmore, 2003, for a review). The conflation of all religious experiences is problematic for Buddhism, which does not assume an absolute Reality, nor a divine presence. Nevertheless, the same question that sceptics ask of mystic experiences applies to Buddhist experiences, which is the simple but powerful epistemological question: how does the experiencer know that their experience is valid? In other words, how much weight can others place in these as having any connection to the world outside the person undergoing it? And how are these experiences valid, given that hallucinations are so easily mistaken for reality?

I decided to put this question to the teachers themselves: how did the subjects themselves understand their own experiences? Did they feel that these were ‘true’ and, if so, by what authority? The next question explored these issues.

Question 4: *How did you check or validate those experiences?*

The results were coded into four generic categories and cross-tabulated in Table 5.

Table 5: Nature of insight validation

	Respondents to Question 4	**Self-validated**	**Teacher validated**	**Socially validated**	**Text validated**
Totals	30	23	20	13	7
Percentage	88	67	59	38	21

The results indicate that most teachers had used a variety of methods to check or validate their experiences. External methods seemed to be regarded as less important to most teachers than the experiences themselves. The sense of this is captured in the following dialogue:

> Well, insight itself is a validation. That's actually a very good question. How does, there's just absolute knowing, that that's true. When an insight occurs you see it and you experience it first hand and in that experience first hand, you just know that that's true because you've experienced it and no one can take that away from you, you know, and it's not as if someone can challenge it. It's not an arguable point. It's just that's what true. Insight is a perspective on reality, but it is an intuitive perspective on reality that translates in terms of thought. But it's when you have the insight, when one has the insight, it's an actual direct confrontation with reality in that moment, direct contact, so you see it. And then someone can't come along and say did you really see it. I saw it [laughter]. So it has self-confirmation.
>
> *Interviewer*: Someone could say perhaps you're mistaken.
>
> They could say that but it wouldn't shake, I mean, for instance, insight into anattā or non-self, you get a lot of people saying you're mistaken, to that one. But when you see the emptiness of self, when I perceive it internally, I just know it to be there, it's just absolute confirmation. And then you always have the literature of the ancient traditions confirming that. (Interviewee 7)

The power of the experience to self-validate was confirmed in many interviews. As set out in Table 5, around 70% of the teachers gave self-validation as a source of checking. For most respondents this was not the only source of validation, even if teachers

approached the question in different ways. One teacher closely observed how his experiences affected other aspects of his life:

> Well, it was not an active process of checking or validating, it felt like it has been a continuous confirmation coming through of itself. As I have continued to practise and continued to feel carried by my practice – my life carried, my path, the way things have unfolded for me in a way that I am very grateful, and I don't feel wholly responsible for. It has been confirmed somehow that, by continuing to practise and trying to deepen my understanding of this, it brings me more and more in line with some natural flow of things and everything seems to just come much more effortlessly, not necessarily the good things but even the difficult things. You know, like something that has been brought, and is part of the whole necessary landscape along the way, rather than feeling like an interruption or barrier, which confirms, that's the process of confirmation. (Interviewee 21)

The Diamond Sangha Zen tradition has formalised checking processes which all teachers must undertake. As this teacher explained:

> Zen has a very specific way of checking, and a very much delineated way of passing on transmission and ways of doing that ... I went to [my teacher] and told him about it.[36] (Interviewee 5)

Not all teachers within this tradition were so confident about this process of validation:

> I don't think validation from somebody else is particularly important, although it is helpful. The guidance, guidepost functions are very helpful, but I don't think validation means a lot. Teachers are validating people all the time and then having doubts later. I have met many notable teachers who express such things to me [laughs], so I don't think anybody is infallible on that way. And experiences can also fade, you know, for mysterious karmic reasons. (Interviewee 28)

Other traditions regarded the process of external validation as problematic, because they felt it should be primarily a thing of personal value. The following two responses highlight some of these issues.

> in a way there was no doubt that it was valid or not, because it's like you see your own hand and okay there's a hand there, you don't doubt it, because you can touch

---

[36] Chan and Zen Buddhists refer to a 'pure wisdom' that is given from one teacher to another as 'transmission of the teachings outside the Scriptures'. According to Michel Mohr, professor at the Center for the Study of Zen Buddhism at Hanazono University in Kyoto, there are only 39 Rinzai monasteries and 50 Roshi (teachers) who can give the whole transmission of the teachings in Japan, and it takes 15 to 20 years to go through the whole koan system (McQuaid, 2001).

> it, it's tangible and it's really clear ... and I didn't ... have particularly anyone to go to and say ... I didn't have a particular need to ask somebody, but in meeting Sri Punjaji in India, one of the great beings and a wise person, was the reconfirmation, just in the meeting, not just because of anything I said, but just somehow through being seen and being confirmed in the silence and that was enough. (Interviewee 10)

Even though the same teacher felt confirmed by another teacher, highlighting potential commensurability with a Hindu tradition, the most important thing was the personal relationship with the understanding. She continues:

> And actually I don't think that's the most important thing. What I feel is important is as just working with things that come, when I feel doubt, or self-criticism, or fear for whatever, of not being good enough or fear that something might happen. To relate to all those small and difficult circumstances in a good way, to be very spacious there and loving, and when that happens with others or in relationships, somehow that feels much more significant than any moments of experience over that is the base of things. I think it's important to see who one really is and that's crucial, but then the rest of just handling memories and all the things accumulated inside relationships, responsibilities, all the things that move, all the thoughts, all the feelings and that takes time, it really requires lots of patience. (Interviewee 10)

The following teacher's response picks up on the two aspects of a formal process of validation, suggesting that, while there is a danger in clinging to such experiences as attainments, there are benefits, in that misunderstandings are possible, and that a certain amount of checking can resolve these:

> I think on why in our school is that there is a reluctance or to put into words to what [can't be described. After all] what are you checking? I think that it's a strength and weakness. The weakness is that people can have some strange ideas and also that people get stuck or sell themselves short and don't move themselves and the strength is that there's a kind of understanding of transcendence as being every moment available. (Interviewee 18)

A further mode of checking included comparisons with experiences set out in canonical memoirs and texts of Buddhism; while only one teacher used this as a primary source of checking, several teachers mentioned this as an additional basis of checking if they were on track.

Late in the interview process, and perhaps as a mark of familiarity with the material, I decided to strongly challenge the teachers regarding the validity of their insight. I asked them the following probe question:

Question 4 probe: *How do you know you're not deluded?*

The nine responses to this question varied greatly, and one revealed a completely unexpected answer. Each gave a clue to the nature of insight, however, and how it affected the teacher concerned. One teacher I challenged by suggesting that the majority of people regarded Buddhism as something you believe in, like God. The response was clarifying:

> They have not read the Diamond Sutra because the Diamond Sutra says clearly that all ideas, notions concepts and archetypes deconstruct! RIGHT AWAY! Right away! There is no belief in Buddhism, and in this view Theravadin Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism are united, there is no belief involved.
>
> *Interviewer*: So it is direct experience?
>
> It is partly direct experience and it's partly guidance from these various notions, archetypes and so on. They are kind of lights on our path. The eightfold path is a good example, which is not a set of beliefs, but a set of guidelines: What are right views? Right views are that everything is ephemeral, everything is passing away – all the time. (Interviewee 24)

It is interesting that the teacher, who seemed to have a conceptual sense of insight, responded by acknowledging that he did not know if he was deluded or not:

> All one can do is make their best effort to stay aware and to be reflective. I think to be reflective and to pause when we have bright ideas or when we come to conclusions about things or we have opinions, if we pause to do our best to make sure we're not too emotional about it. I think that reflectivity and that contemplative approach is the best way to try to ensure that we're not deluding ourselves. But of course we never know. We never know. (Interviewee 17)

This sense of 'we never know' is in stark contrast to the confidence of the following teacher:

> Uh, no, no. I [laughter], I don't have a doubt that [the experience] is real, and the reason I say that is because I have learned from other people, exactly the same thing in different circumstances, but [it's] basically the same thing. And I've experienced it again, slightly differently, but basically the same thing. Once in a sesshin ... I'm sitting there ... I remember you know, it was very interesting, and all of a sudden my experience was like, I do not have a head. It was just like that book that's out on not having a head [Harding, 1986]. I don't know if you've read it, but that guy describes an experience which is very similar to my experience. I still perceived the grass, I would sense the wind. I knew that I was there, but I didn't

> have a brain, I didn't have what I would call a mind, and it physically felt that I didn't have a head. Sort of a mixture I think maybe a little Makyo was involved there too.[37] It had that quality of not being me. And one of the ways it has manifested is the thought 'maybe I'm not who I think I am', and that phrase has been with me, ' maybe – you know, whoa, maybe, things are not, it wasn't so much things are not the way I think they are, but maybe I'm not who I think I am'. So I don't doubt that experience. (Interviewee 28)

The teacher finds his experience confirmed by its clarity as well as by the descriptions of others. Furthermore, we can see that with so many teachers in the West it is possible to find confirmation through dialogue; through dialogue there is the recognition that this experience may be uncommon but not unique. In the same vein, the following teacher responded to this line of questioning by the following:

> I sort of think it is there, but it is called different things, um, I'm curious of what Christians think of being born again, you know I am not a Christian, I don't know what that experience is and I guess Christians would call it something beyond words, but it used to be when it is the genuine thing deeply felt and altering one's perceptions, and I think that can probably be genuine or shallow, you know, deep or shallow experience. I would respond that this experience happens in a lot of different cultures. It is called by different things, but it is not a Buddhist experience, it is not an Asian experience, it's a human experience. You see it in certain poems, this poem by Elizabeth Bishop [see Appendix 1] about the fish I think it is called. No it's not that one, but you can see it in her poems, one of her poems about somebody as a child remembering being a child in a waiting room looking at a National Geographic and suddenly she has an experience of absolute identity with the woman that she sees in the photograph. And it is kind of a shift in her awareness of everything around her in the waiting room at the age of six or seven ... so I think that this experience is there in the West in a lot of different forms. (Interviewee 29)

The sense that this experience can be recognised in poetry and other traditions was widely held, as was the sense that you 'experience it for yourself'. Some teachers were very interested in exploring the question of delusion; for instance, this teacher was also a psychotherapist:

> Could it be delusion? It doesn't feel like delusion. I'm interested in delusion, and it doesn't feel like it has the same degree of frantic certainty that delusion has. The problem isn't what I don't know, but what I know that isn't true [laughs]. It doesn't have a feeling, which is usually accompanied by certain body tensions, and wanting to prove it, and things like that. So it doesn't, it doesn't come with that, it

---

[37] The Japanese word *makyo* refers to dream-like hallucinations or other illusory sensations which may be encountered in meditation.

> comes with the sense of, it is not like it is the right way to see the world, it's just how I see the world. So to ask me whether it is valid or not is like it's a bit like asking whether it is valid or not to be a human being, well you know – you know!
>
> *Interviewer*: Could it be different?
>
> Yes! It could be different, and could there be deeper ways to see it – oh yeah, absolutely, sure there could be. Is it interesting and it is somewhat changed from the way I used to have [seen things] … yes. (Interviewee 34)

The Zen tradition has a long history of students confronting Zen teachers and finding their own worldview powerfully challenged. One teacher had a particularly humble style and seemed to play down his insight. I thought, at the time, that his responses, were contradictory, suggesting 'nothing special' at one time and at another suggesting that his experience with Buddhist practice saved his life. So I decided to challenge this teacher on his answers, which had a surprising result:

> *Interviewer*: And so the kind of sceptic that might be looking at the sort of work you're doing in Buddhism might say, well, you know, you can do that with a pill or with a relaxation technique. What's the difference?
>
> I think the difference is that there is a ground of understanding, interconnectedness and it's not just a physical experience of interconnectedness, but it's also the physical experience and the knowing. … in your mind. [They] go hand in hand. So that's not just relaxation. I've never taken a pill that had any kind of unifying effect, that didn't also feel like it was adding an artificial energy, you know, an artificial and distorting energy. That's one of things I was thinking this week going in and out of sesshin, going to sesshin (to the zendo) from my house, I felt that when I was in my house, I was in my house.[38] When I was relating to my kids, I was relating to my kids; and when I was in the zendo, I was in the zendo; but actually there was a kind of clarity in both of them, that was not the usual busy-ness and so I think that's something rare and find myself more and more able to be in that mind. (Interviewee 18)

Given that I was interested in what it exactly was that teachers were referring to in their comments about interconnectedness, I improvised with the following question:

> *Interviewer*: And this connectedness, can you elaborate on what that is?
>
> [A very long pause] It's hard. I would say it's something that lies between you and me right now, as we're looking each other in the eye, that is co-creating this moment and you know I'm experiencing it from my side and you're experiencing it from your side and it's something very wonderful and is something mysterious there. (Interviewee 18)

---

[38] Zen training hall.

Interviewer: I can confirm that.

This interaction moved the research into another domain; all of a sudden I was no longer the passive, independent, atomistic collector of data. Out of the blue, there was a subversion of the research paradigm, one which brought my 'private' experience to the fore. It was a surprising moment, because as this teacher spoke these words I clearly recognised the deep interconnection between us that he was talking about. The conversation felt intensely intimate, and there was a deep sense that this interaction was not something that occurs between two separated beings, that we shared the same *interbeing*. Equally important was that, although there was a sense that we were merged, in some mysterious way, although nothing had changed, it was just like seeing a pattern that was always there. My mind was not blank, and I was calm and attentive, although I was aware that at the edge of this attention there were thoughts – a slight personal unease that came with this closeness, and the thought that 'This is an insight experience being recorded on tape! It may be a big serendipitous discovery!' Yet what was on tape, although empirical, lacked the (apparent) certainty of the physical sciences. What had I really captured on tape? How could anything capture this experience? It was only through our phenomenological reflection that both of us *knew* that the other was experiencing the same thing. Although I felt this at the time, it was not until I replayed the recording that I realised how clearly this teacher had actually spoken of this knowing. The best way to describe this moment is indeed that we had an awareness of interbeing.

In writing up this chapter, I found a copy of the poem 'In the Waiting Room' (see Appendix 1) mentioned in an interview extract. What is remarkable and worthy of comment is the correspondence of this interview experience with that so vividly recounted of the little girl in the waiting room.

This teacher was able to *demonstrate* interconnectedness in our interaction. It was a significant experience for me, one I can still recall. I doubt whether he would have called it a 'big experience' and I could not say, as Elizabeth Bishop (1979) did, that 'nothing stranger had ever happened', having experienced similar connections in my practice. What was new for me was to experience this degree of interconnection 'cold' with a relative stranger – to be so intimate, understanding that experience as being the one person. It remains a puzzle as to how we shared the contents of our experience,

although this could possibly be accounted for on the basis of non-verbal cues. This explanation, however, would not account for its ontogenic quality.

It seemed that what had occurred in that moment arose out of a combination of both of us just being very open and the bringing of awareness into the moment, precipitated by the unusually long silence. The normal defences, which are triggered reflexively and maintain emotional distance between people, fell away. This unusual experience highlighted how peoples are capable of, but reluctant to engage in, this level of connectedness, except perhaps when they are in love. It was a similar situation to that of Elizabeth Bishop, who found herself in a comparable situation with her aunt: 'I might have been embarrassed, but wasn't'. The experience brought into relief the degree of distance in contemporary interpersonal exchanges and the degree of attentiveness, trust and openness required to experience such an interconnection. It opens up the possibility of enhancing our intimacy and degree of relatedness to each other; however, such connections are not common in western culture, as almost everyone avoids such intimacy in their day-to-day interactions. The experience, however, was not so much about the interpersonal relationship – as in Elizabeth Bishop's poem where she does not seem particularly enamoured with her Aunt – but rather that the experience challenges assumptions about the relationship with one's self.

In the context of this research, the encroachment of this event into the research process may seem out of place. Yet it is the uninvited guest which Alain Badiou (2003) maintains, in his conception of event-signified truth, where something happens which does not fit with our knowledge. This event serves as a reminder that the view described by the teachers implies a foundational shift not for themselves but for how a growing constituency of Buddhist practitioners in western countries are beginning to understand the world. The shift implied by these teachers' accounts carries major philosophical commitments which might affect how we even think about research. Obviously, when the object of interest of research changes, by necessity so might the methods, and changes in this direction are already manifesting in the work of Peter Reason (1981, 1988a, 1988b. 1993), for example, who is seeking to be more open to such a view.

CHAPTER 7

THE TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS OF INSIGHT

7.1 Introduction

The question of what Buddhist insight is, is closely related to the theme of personal change: the purpose of Buddhist practice as stated by the Buddha is ultimately freedom from dukkha, but, as discussed earlier in chapter 2, awakening is not only the acquiring of insight but, in the case of the Buddha and other historic Buddhist figures, grants certain positive attributes, such as a natural integrity, dignity and authority to one's life (Batchelor 1997). This research question is interested in what transformation of the person occurred as the result of insight. While there has been much work on what Buddhist texts have to say on the matter, little research exists which explores the long-term effects of Buddhist practices outside of specific techniques such as mindfulness and meditation. This chapter adds new empirical work which examines the ways in which practitioners have they found that they have changed over their years of practice.

To understand the transformational effects of insight, a series of questions was designed to explore how insight might have affected teachers in the psychological, social and ecological dimensions of their lives. This meets the rationale that was developed in chapters 2 and 3, and assumes that our actions are related to how we make sense of the world. Buddhist doctrine predicts that there is a relationship between insight and action; if this is the case, we expect that teachers will report some change as a result of the cultivation of insight through Buddhist practices. The questions are designed to explore how insight experiences inform the respondents' actions in the world.

7.2 General changes resulting from insight

The first question (see below) was designed to cast a wide net, so as to explore the whole field of possible changes that might be result from insight experiences. The question was designed to elicit the experiences most salient to each respondent at the time of interview. It is important to keep in mind that the respondent's ability to link certain predispositions and actions to a particular types of experience depends on what that respondent finds as important; obviously there are things that one respondent might

overlook that another does not. Despite this potential for individual differences, it is likely that, given the salience of such experiences, there is some transformation in how the respondents act in the world.

Question 5: *What are the most obvious ways in which your insight experiences have changed you?*

While all the teachers reported some form of personal change, the results highlighted the complexity of change. Only three reported very minor changes, which included the teacher who claimed not to be Buddhist (but subsequently became a Buddhist teacher) and the two teachers who made no clear reference to an illusory nature of self-experience. The challenge that arose in interpreting this data was in locating the link between the changes and insight.

Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch (1974) highlight the complexity of change; they note that the question of why things persist is equally poignant. Since the world is a dynamic system, everything is in a state of flux and therefore changing. Change occurs at different levels, and the very least change in a subsystem of a highly dynamic system may result in no change at the system level or may result in second-order change, which might transform the entire system in multiple dimensions. For this reason we need some reference points to make sense of change.

Each interviewee made sense of their experience in the light of their own history, the context of their life, their national culture and Buddhist tradition, and the process by which the insight actually arrived. The salience of a change thus may depend on their personal history; for example, a person who was already caring and outgoing might find that insight brought no dramatic transformation. On the other hand, an emotionally closed-off person may find insight and its opening effect immensely significant. What is happening in the practitioner's life and in the process of gaining insight, whether sudden or gradual, is also related to the intensity of their practice. These aspects of change need to be considered in making sense of the interview data. What became evident was that, in the context of many years of practice, respondents had difficulty isolating any singular influence out of a complex pattern of life events. As one interviewee put it:

> It's a question that asks me to select out what realisation experience I may have had from this whole stream of experiences which have been in the Buddhist

> context, all the time. But to isolate the experience I would have to fake it. (Interviewee 24)

This theme was reiterated by another:

> I cannot be sure if those [changes]were due to practice or through just basic living, getting feedback and learning from them or what ever, so yes there has been a change, but I am not certain if it was all credit to Buddhist practice or it is just living in a certain way. (Interviewee 1)

These two interviewees problematise the precision with which one can pinpoint casual factors. All accounts of change are provisional: they cannot capture 'the truth', as there are limits to human information-processing capabilities. The context and history of all events depends on a perspective, which shifts over time. However, the modern desire for precision risks contriving a false rigour. Since the vast majority of teachers referred to changes that they regard as related to insight, we must accept that the link exists. Yet we must be cautious in interpreting these reports; we cannot assume that other factors have not contributed to the changes. The following response reveals the diffuse nature of the changes, but also points to their significance:

> Yes indeed [those experiences have changed me], but I cannot pinpoint what transformation occurred. I'm not, for me transformation has been a gradual phenomenon and so I could not say on that day, in that event, meant that I was different. But I can say that I am different from a few years ago. I take life completely differently. (Interviewee 13)

A number of the interviewees had undergone tertiary education in the social sciences, which contributed to the high degree of reflexivity in the thinking about change among the sample, and many respondents had explored both the content and context of their personal changes. Some teachers distinguished between the changes they perceived in themselves and the feedback they received from others about changes. Some teachers discussed how it was possible to gain feedback on their ability to manifest insight through their practice by skilfully opening a dialogue with their practice communities. One theme in the responses was that insight could be considered as having little direct effect on a person's behaviour, but rather that there was a change in perspective which

was brought about by their a sense of liberation.[39] This distinction was evident in the following extracts:

> No, I don't think anything transformed or changed. I think change is shown over time. It took the problem out of things. It didn't change much; it just took the problem out of whatever …
>
> *Interviewer*: So you saw the world differently or you saw yourself differently from then on?
>
> Not really. It's more a recognition like Aha! Yeah, I didn't see differently, I just sort of recognised what was already there like, oh yeah this is, this is what it's about. (Interviewee 14)

This sense of liberation from the 'the problem' was reiterated in a range of different ways:

> I think the first thing was the sense of psychological ease. I was tremendously aware of that sort of unsatisfactoriness of life which the Buddhists call dukkha. And so, that got set to rest, so the basics of paranoia about existence I suppose were set to rest ... (Interviewee 28)
>
> Let's call it kensho[40] … It carries with it a wonderful, wonderful sense of release because you're not pushing against the world. You've stopped holding the world out there at arm's length. So there is nobody pushing against the world and nothing to push against; there is this wonderful feeling of moving from one thing to another without resistance. (Interviewee 11)
>
> How do you explain this? ... Actually it is such a freeing! The smaller, as well as deeper, insights [are accompanied by] a certain sense of liberation or freedom; it might not be the total liberation, but if it's even a small liberation, in some way there's a sense of freedom. Some burden falling away … You just call it freedom, basically ... you could call it freedom from a sense of identification or ego [but] it feels more like a freedom. (Interviewee 15)

In many responses the sense of freedom from suffering was expressed in a range of ways. Freedom from suffering did not mean that suffering was removed from life, but rather that there is a sense of freedom, of 'being at ease', with the events in one's life. The following teacher had a difficult life and lived very frugally to support his teaching

---

[39] This is why the noble eightfold path places 'right view' first.
[40] In Zen Buddhism, the term *kensho* means 'to see into one's nature'.

(evident in his living situation); this extract gives a sense of how he found a sense of ease with it:

> I'm in the right place! That is something that I know deeply: that I'm in the right place, and sometimes it is incredibly difficult and I'm lost, I don't want to deal with it, but man! I'm in the right place! You name it, all the different qualities of feelings that that entails ... That I'm not, I'm not in a mistake, I didn't take the wrong bus and it's like 'Oh God this has just been a waste, I have to go back to square one and redo', no. Am I doing the right thing? Of course, sometimes I don't do the right thing. But still you know it's like I don't question, I don't have an existential question about 'I wonder if this is what I should be doing?' Again, I do in certain particulars, you know, but in general, I don't. In that sense, yeah sometimes it's difficult, sometimes I don't have a clue, sometimes it's this, sometimes it's that, but it's not a cosmic mistake, it's not like a huge screw-up, you know. It's not like 'My God, I'm just completely in the wrong place'. Maybe I'm not explaining myself that clear. (Interviewee 29)

The above extract indicates how insight brings a sense of acceptance of life as it is. It should be apparent that this sense goes far beyond simple resignation, but entails rather the ability to accept whatever comes in one's life, including times when this ability is limited, perhaps through tiredness or illness. This boon is not something that is open to Buddhists only, however; it comes with psychological maturity (Allport, 1950; Erikson, 1963) or manifests itself as a wisdom that might be attained through reflection. There is something more in the consistency of these reports and in the intensity that strongly indicates that insight into not-self has more than a purely emancipatory effect. Firstly, this sense of acceptance of just being confirms and helps make sense of what was expressed in more than one answer to Question 1 (on the nature of insight):

> [It's] difficult to single anything out, as one type of experience for me [which is] very illuminating is the moment of really deep presence and deep silence, and the mind not doing anything besides just being there. (Interviewee 21)

Over the course of the interviews, the multi-dimensional real-life nature of insight, as opposed to canonical accounts, emerged as an important finding. The effects of insight relate to a range of things, particularly those which we normally associate with compassion, such as patience, generosity, kindness and care for others, as shown in the following responses:

> I think ... my sense of time, I am more patient, this is the evolution over quite a few years, I think greater tenderness, [my teacher's] definition ... that patience is loving acceptance or affectionate acceptance, I think it's that deeper sense of this or that response to the world. But I think that [it] is very natural and in the

> direction in the work that I do, in working with people who are suffering, that one thing [has changed]. (Interviewee 18)

> [I've changed] also in many ways. I think perhaps, most significantly, I have much more compassion for others. I didn't have much compassion for people before I started to practice, and my compassion and my compassionate response to people around me has grown steadily and considerably, since before I started doing Buddhist practice. So, in being more compassionate, it means I'm also much more sensitive to the degree of suffering in other people than I had before. I had no idea, until I went deeply into my own psyche, the degree to which people can suffer and the human capacity for suffering, and so both the sensitivity that comes with practice and the awareness of the depth of our suffering. I tune in much more to, more aware if I want to, to the degree of suffering that goes on in individuals; even when they're happy there can be a lot of suffering, and so the sense, the sensitivity to suffering gives birth to empathy. (Interviewee 12)

> I think I feel pain of the awareness of somebody else's pain, especially if I've caused it. I think it has to do with a quality of empathic resonance that happens between people if we are attentive to the degree that we're not confused with our own stories, our vision so to speak is able to be outer directed rather than egocentric and a sense of what's happening with other people. And a sense of delight, when they are delighted and distress, when they're distressed, especially if you're distressed, if you're the one who causes their distress. (Interviewee 31)

This sense of caring and compassion segues into the next question in this series, and the next section.

7.3 Effect on relationships with others

Implicitly, a change in the way teachers understood themselves in the world should have some effect on their relationships with others. There is a growing consensus that the personal and the social are not simply two separate realms, but rather can be seen to constitute each other (Giddens, 1984). The nature of these effects may provide important additional information about insight as well as increasing our understanding of the effects of insight. Question 6 was designed to examine the effects of teachers' insight into how they related to others.

Question 6: *How has your insight experiences changed how you relate to others?*

Generally, the responses were consistent with those given in Question 5, but adding more detail. For example:

> I am thinking about insight ... The strongest area [of change] is my quality of the heart. The capacity, although I can easily feel anger, because I do when some

> horrible situation arises, so it is easy to trigger it, but I often feel that the capacity for forgiveness has grown immensely. And the capacity to move on and not to hold onto issues for too long and even the types of catastrophe and calamity, you know that after not too long time, you know the heart soothes again, where some old friends say 'how can you ever speak again to that person?' So it is the capacity of the heart. (Interviewee 15)

This sense of 'the capacity of the heart' strongly emerges from the data and gives some indication of what comes about through the process of insight. This is the most salient effect, with all respondents reporting some consequent opening of the heart, or the development of compassion.

The responses also pointed out the link between the different sense of self and how that shifts a person towards compassion – not necessarily automatically, but through the recognition of the desire towards a compassionate response – and some teachers sought additional psychotherapeutic support in this regard. To give the reader some sense of the diversity and richness of responses to this question, in Table 6 I have summarised quite a number of responses that suggest a shift in empathetic disposition. This should also give a sense of the consistency with the heart theme of these findings.

Table 6: Examples of the heart theme

It showed me when my heart was closed. It showed me where I was not able to love. (Interviewee 23)
It helps me to see my own agendas, my own, what I need from others, the patterns and the projections that I impose upon others, the prejudices, and to have a deep wish to go beyond that and to cherish authentic interaction with others. (Interviewee 4)
I don't know if it is a change; it has given me confidence to accept the way I relate to others and not worry about trying to fix it. (Interviewee 5)
It has made it possible to relate to others more decently, compassionately, with greater understanding. It has made it possible to more often to make room in myself for another person, just as they are, with unconditional love, but it is an enormous task. It is not just a matter of the weight in the experience that provides you with new bearings like a compass that is the challenge. That is really where the rubber meets the pavement. (Interviewee 11)
Well, if you knew me about 15 years ago, you would have found me to be very driven, very high-powered, high-energy, task-orientated, quite black and white, little tolerance for ambiguity. Not terribly sensitive to other people's feelings, easily angered, and I think all of those things have changed, although they have not all disappeared. I think I am much more sensitive to people's feelings, much more sensitive to my own feelings. I'm much less easily angered; I still get angry at times, but usually it is because of a pretty good reason, and it passes. It doesn't hang around like it used to; there is a tolerance for

difference; there is a tolerance for people being themselves, rather than being they way I want them to be. (Interviewee 8)

I think that my own life is not so important. I think that others' lives are just as important; even so, I no longer just naturally put my own needs first. It's sympathetic joy. (Interviewee 29)

I was a very ego-centred, self-absorbed person and I know it doesn't bring me joy any more; I've pretty much given up fulfilling that need. (Interviewee 27)

I think I'm kinder. But my internal experience is I am more consciously dedicated to kindness. It hurts me more when I'm sloppy and not thoughtful. When I am careful and thoughtful and kind, it's like a gift to myself as well. (Interviewee 31)

Well certainly I'm less critical of others because I'm less critical of myself, and that whole stance of somebody needing to be right in many situations, you know, preferably me! [laughs] It doesn't seem to be the motivation that used to be in my life. There was a very strong motivation in my life for many years of wanting everybody to love me. I went to a friend of mine who is both a practitioner and a therapist and we got down to the bottom of some of the kinds of things I was holding on to from early in my life, so that that is not a primary motivation in my life now that everybody love me. How I relate to people is that clearly [my teacher] saw Buddha in everyone you know, and so that's been my aspiration now for a long time. I can't say that I have certainly arrived at that aspiration, but it is my effort. (Interviewee 30)

These answers reveal a complex but coherent pattern of change. They reveal that, while taking up the Buddhist path in itself is regarded as a source of significant change, the teachers find that insight changed them in many more subtle ways. The changes reported pointed more to a shift of perspective rather than to a direct transformation of personality. Interestingly, the findings suggest such shifts in perspective lead to a consistent intention to develop new behaviours. As their not-self nature is understood with greater clarity, this leads to a corresponding change in sense of self-importance. Teachers find that this new not-self perspective evokes a greater sense of compassion, which they wish to express in actions. This aspiration finds support in the practices of Buddhism as well as its general culture of non-harming. The complexity arises because insight does not immediately create a new personality, but changes how the practitioner regards himself or herself in relation to the world. A theme that emerges from the data is that the embodiment of insight is a process separate from acquiring it. This processual change is illustrated by the previous interview extract, in which a teacher recognised that other factors, such as early childhood issues (which traditional Buddhists might call karmic), limit his ability to embody this new perspective. There is a sense here that the shift in perspective, if cultivated, leads to personal transformation.

The subjects' responses indicate that insight leads to a new ontological understanding. It does not rest on supernatural claims to oneness with God, nor omniscience, but rather utilises a window onto the nature of conscious existence, seen as something that we all share, naturally. In this sense, the experiences of insight are part of a learning process based on a thorough examination of the experience of self. As a learned outcome, insight is dependent on a host of intervening factors, the most salient being the psychological state of the practitioner before any insights arise. Where there are unresolved issues, particularly from formative childhood relationships, the degree to which such problems can be overcome is limited. Developmental psychology has been accumulating evidence (Schore, 2001) suggesting that certain early childhood traumas affect brain development with relatively permanent effects. Interestingly, several interviewees reported recognising the need to seek intervention by a skilled therapist to resolve enduring issues highlighted by their meditation practice and insight. This aspect of insight might also account for the following teacher's ambivalence regarding the feeling side of compassion. The following interview provides clues about how insight interacts with complex psychological processes:

> Yes ... getting back to myself rather than others. Others may operate under some kind of compassion, love ... the heart motive; a lot act upon their heart and they just do it in that way, but it doesn't actually ... work very well with me. I am not that kind of person. Some kind of awareness and insight [which is] not quite inexplicable, but whatever I witness that occurring, there is suffering, and therefore it follows that it contains delusion, possessiveness and thus greed. It's like turning on the light, to find the snake in the shed was a piece of rope all along. I know it is not the nature of things, the pure nature of things is the rope or old branch or whatever metaphor you might want to use [for insight into not-self], but it's out of that connection which serves me because it's freeing, it's liberating and it's enlightening. And that's why I do things; I don't feel very special or especially compassionate in that way. (Interviewee 20)

Several observations arise from this extract. The first is that this teacher is unusual and that he recognises that he is not the norm in terms of his emotional response. This lack of affect is in itself is a good marker of other psychological factors. Despite the fact that emotional responsiveness is subject to wide variation, the effects of trauma and early attachment issues, as well as natural genetic differences in predisposition, can both play a role. The above extract is interesting because it suggests that this teacher might manifest their insight as a sort of rational compassion, separate from a felt emotional response. The sense of interconnection with others is so tangible for this teacher that it informs his action as a logical response rather than an affective association. Insight thus

has transformed his object relations from the ego to interbeing, and yet a split seems to remain, so that his engagement takes on a rational dimension – as not-self, but lacking a feeling dimension. Thus the respondent's insight has shifted his understanding of himself, but this shift may have reflected some earlier emotional trauma. After the interview, I learned that this teacher had encountered some difficulties and had engaged in a program of therapy.

Emerging from the above extracts is a picture of insight that suggests a powerful shift in perspective, one that is both liberating and at the same time brings into sharp relief a sense of connection and identification with the world. This does not necessarily effect some major transformation of the person, and old habits, patterns and psychological traumas may persist. The shift, however, is of such an order that it may challenge a person to do something about faults in how they relate to others; on the other hand, it may liberate the person from needing to be someone different. Thomas Moore's *Care of the Soul* (1992) captures this dimension of acceptance and perhaps appreciation of who we are, just as we are. Freed from judgements, we may recognise our faults have their own beauty, as quirks, which make us interesting. On the other hand, insight seems to have allowed some teachers to recognise failings which they may have been unable to face before. The liberation from attachment might open them to work on an important aspect of their psyche that they had not seen. Insight, however, is clearly not about human perfection in a performative sense, and is not a psychological panacea by which all negative traits are washed away.

There is a powerful theme in the interview material – that seeing through the illusion of a coherent and independent self reveals a broader connection with others, and this experience feels very much like an opening of the heart. There is some sense that these effects have certain naturalness about them, as one of teacher explains:

> when the ten thousand things advance and confirm the self, we call it enlightenment – I don't like the word, I prefer 'awakening'.[41] You have two kinds of attitudes – I tend to think that most of the western attitude towards life and nature is the first one, trying to confirm and manipulate [things] to make them

[41] 'The 10,000 things' is a Chinese expression which means 'everything'.

> become an extension of yourself. While Buddhism and that heart, I have found in some people who are not practising [Buddhism] … the possibility of dropping fear, so that things may come forth and authenticate what you really are and the experience is that, that identification is about what you really are, do you realise that you are them – the ten thousand things, so from that naturally [it changes the way you relate]. (Interviewee 6)

7.4 Relationship towards nature

According to Evan Thompson (1999: np):

> One of the unique possibilities that human empathy affords is the development of non-egocentric or self-transcendent modes of consciousness. To understand these modes we need to explore the path that leads from intersubjectivity to what we can call, borrowing a term from the Buddhist teacher Thich Naht Hanh (1987), 'interbeing'.

He suggests that cognitive science has developed to a stage where it is capable of being 'able to understand, in concepts commensurate with its own scientific approach to the mind, that there are such pathways and that they exemplify one of the most significant aspects of the human mind – its empathic openness' (Thompson, 1999: np). Thompson argues that interbeing is a mode of thinking which cognitive science can account for, and that is the 'opening out' or 'disembedding' of the egocentric sense of self is a possible mode of consciousness. The results of the previous section support this contention, and suggest that this mode of consciousness manifests itself as compassion in the experience of Buddhist teachers.

Our relationship with 'things' lies at the heart of much economic thinking and neoclassical economics; it follows a line of reasoning moving from 'individual preferences' to 'choices made in a market context' and a 'market value of these choices'. Problematising the constitution of the economic actor as an autonomous utility-maximising individual presents profound challenges to the neoclassical argument. The coherence of self implies a certain sort of relationship to things which in turn determines the way our preferences are constructed, the argument goes. This ultimately directs our choices in the market place, which in turn constitute the market place and our relationship to it.

Did insight have any effect on how Buddhist teachers related to nature? The following question explores this relationship, and a further probe was added to look at the distinction between nature and the other-than-human world, and the built environment.

Question 7: *How have your insight experiences changed how you relate to nature?*

Only two respondents had little or no sense of a change in their relationship to nature. Interestingly, they enjoyed a strong conceptual understanding of insight. While the question only referred to nature, it was hoped that it would tease out some additional information about the character of this relationship. Several teachers simply failed to respond to the change dimension of the question and discussed their relationship to nature in appreciative terms. Some answers, however, proved useful in shedding light on the complexity of the relationship between insight and nature. Many teachers were reluctant to separate this connection from the context of a deepening of their affinity to all things. The following extracts exemplify this:

> Probably what has happened is that I have enhanced my concept of nature to include things that ordinarily we don't call nature, like buildings or machines, I tend to include them ... I don't think that they are the same [as nature] but I think we can't say that this is not nature. No, I won't say that a rock or a piece of metal is not a living organism. It is different from trees and this is the tendency we have from also from our human side to be anthropocentric [that] humans have a soul, but ants and cockroaches don't. Then we get a bit more wilder and say, OK, we accept that ants and cockroaches are not that different from us, by we see the tree and the plants and then we go a bit more wild-minded and we include the trees but not the rocks. I want to include them all as different ways of expression of that life. (Interviewee 6)

> With nature? Aside from my deepest experience in meditation, nothing comes to mind, but earlier in my earlier life, I had, going into Buddhism, a strong sense or understanding that I was inseparable from nature, that I am nature in a sense. And there was a kind of arrogance that human beings are anthropocentric and separate themselves from nature and but I had in my early life strong ideals of being in nature, of being in harmony with nature and living in nature. As I encountered Buddhism (my early Buddhist practice) my standing somewhat shifted from being so idealistic, where the idealistic approach to nature. I separated nature, the natural world ... (that's not made by humans) from the human world – as being radically opposed to each other. And as I started doing my Buddhist practice more and more, in my mind, that distinction collapsed. (Interviewee 12)

While these two answers suggest that a more encompassing view about nature arose from meditative practice, another dimension opened up in the answers of several

teachers who felt that nature *was* different from other aspects of their sense of connectedness to the world:

> I know that when I first encountered deep ecology through Arnie Naess, George Sessions and Gary Snyder, and a few others, their words, constructs and views brought together what I had felt before, in a rather inchoate way. I would be struck by something in nature, particularly a birdcall; with all this gradually evolving sense that I am part of nature, that I am nature myself, came the capacity to whistle back at the thrush, for example, and to actually set up a kind of dialogue, a communication.

> I don't think [that an aeroplane is the same as a thrush], no I don't think so; of course there are koans that, recently formulated koans, that apply the old wisdom to technology and aeroplanes are an example: 'Stop that aeroplane flying by in the sky!' It enables one to identify with the other so to speak in a very general way. Not the bird because there is a personal investment there ... in one of Keats' letters he talks about being down there with the sparrows and pecking in the ground, it's a sense of identity with the birds, and you know the matter of affinity, [it] enters in here [pats chest]. I feel I have an affinity for birds and I have students with a very deep affinity for plants. It's all a very personal thing; you know in one of my essays I ask: What was it that my great grandmother felt when she saw your great grandfather – She felt affinity! My mother was very honest, when she saw her future husband and my future father just walking across the dance floor toward her. You know then: something happened! Affinity is a very important element of conduct; in psychology now the doctors have developed a term called multi-dimensional partiality, which is a very neat expression, a consummation devoutly to be wished. I would love to be able to do that completely. And with regard to nature that's just the way I am, I particularly love birds. (Interviewee 24)

This interview conveys a personal affinity with nature, but it also seems to suggest that, while it does not necessarily arise from insight, the richness and value of this experience is enhanced by it. Insight adds depth to pre-existing connections to nature. This aspect is emphasised in the following extract:

> Toward nature I don't think significantly, except I have a much more profound appreciation of nature, just than I did as a child and younger. But I have a much more. I would see nature as all of phenomena actually. I mean nature itself, I've a more profound appreciation of the entire situation that we're in, that we're arising, that the earth is arising, the solar system, nature is so incredibly beautiful. I think that appreciation has really, really deepened, but the appreciation for the entire thing that's happening has deepened very profoundly. There is a difference between man-made and just nature – so just appreciating. It's like to me nature is like a gift. It's like an incredible gift that we were given. So, as I was saying, we practise, which reduces numbness and defences and that allows us to experience things more directly and freshly, so that experience of nature is more direct and fresh and for me man-made things too. There's a sense of that same spontaneous beauty coming out, but you know somebody has like gone through a process of

> efforting to do that and nature seems like it's just manifesting so effortlessly in a sense. (Interviewee 19)

The following extract strongly captures this changed relationship to nature and adds a profound sense of the nature of interconnection. This interconnection has a biological basis that links humans and animals to primordial origins. The sense of interconnection that arises from insight – not-self – does not simply manifest itself in some homogenous relationship with universe, but is embodied and localised and includes both sameness and difference. The difference in affinity arises from our biological history, which Maturana and Varela (1998) explain shaped the nature of bodies and our minds through our evolutionary heritage on this planet and perhaps beyond. As one of the interviewees puts it:

> Well I think [my relation to nature]changed; before it was a quite utilitarian kind of thing, there were nice views and stuff like that, but [insight and practice] has given me the discipline to – there's a way of looking at it – where a person is just not there: just seeing it and that is quite a different way. It is beyond intimacy in some cases, this is one's very self. Not [like concrete or bricks] because these are made. But, if one is in touch with nature, as one is in touch with one's roots as a human being and everything else, then what one makes one strive to be in harmony with the way things are rather than conquering it. (Interviewee 5)

The above account comes from a teacher who has both a Christian and Buddhist practice. His comments highlight a Christian view which is not noteworthy in Buddhist traditions, and that is the sense of what *is* as something that is *given*. This view picks up on what an earlier extract had to say about nature as a gift, along with a sense that our relationship with this gift is fragile and that we may find it tainted by 'efforting' and utilitarian purpose. We can sense from both these extracts a reverence for the world that *is*, and for this we could perhaps substitute Heidegger's term *Dasein* (discussed in chapter 3). This 'something', like nature, is not controlled, and so gives rise to the sense of being 'wild'. It points directly to more than an aesthetic relationship with the other-than-human world. The world-as-given comes though our senses, which are evolutionary constituted, and as such the experiential sense of oneness may be differentiated through this historical affinity with other animals, with whom we share a common ancestry. That embodied connection may explain why there is not a homogenous sense of being, but a multiplicity in 'being one'. Not-self is not simply a homogenous and nihilistic nothingness, as we are of the world and part of the web of life.

The next extract gives a powerful sense of how this differs from the ordinary experience of nature and how difficult it is to achieve this connection with nature. Even after many years of practice, this teacher was unable to meet with nature in a way that he so devoutly desired:

> Something used to happen to me over and over, at one point, when going to sesshin post-kensho, and somewhere around the fifth or sixth day I would be walking along, as I tended to stay inside, doing my hours of sitting. It had a beautiful garden, but I tended to stay inside; I would be walking to go to the bathroom or walking just after a meal or something to go take a shower, whatever, and I would have this experience over and over, the miracle is just walking, everything is alright, and would think to myself I could hardly wait until after sesshin because we used to go on this walk with [my teacher] in this ... beautiful, beautiful very rustic parkland. I could hardly wait to be like this – there, it's great here, its great everywhere really, but how magnificent it would be. Then the time would come and sesshin would come to an end, after which we were very busy, as there was lots of work. The walk in [the park] was Sunday, the day after sesshin, and when I got there, for the first four or five years, my thoughts would crowd back in and separated me from nature. There is a wonderful verse in the Mumonkan:
>
> > *The flowers come in spring,*
> > *Full moon in autumn,*
> > *Cool breeze in summer, Snow in winter,*
> > *When the mind is not clouded with unnecessary things,*
> > *Every season is your best season.*[42]
>
> It's a wonderful poem, but I used to get so discouraged and upset at being out there in such a beautiful and natural setting, feeling in exile from it. I could really feel the thought processes and as we were saying, 'How do you understand your mind?' I could really see it, but not deep enough so that the awareness, the seeing was greater, than what I was seeing, otherwise it would just be awareness, but it was very painful. After a while I just gave up on it, and is often the case when we give up and just do our work, one day ... I remember, after sesshin, I noticed I had been there for an hour and it was very intimate, my mind was still in a relatively still state, and generally there was a sense of purely being in nature, of nature, with nature and [now] after sesshin ... I go away for three days and just walk in the mountains by myself. (Interviewee 11)

The following extract provides a fascinating in-depth view into the process of being just with what is, and how valuable just being with nature can be as a teacher. We can see again how striving and utilitarian purpose are so inimical to the goals of Buddhist

---

[42] Case 19 of the Wu-men kuan (Mumonkan).

practice, and how the extreme, almost neurotic attachment to effort, which is so predominant in western culture, is so clearly exemplified by this teacher's struggle:

> At first [my practice] was very self-indulgent. I just was after my own salvation, after my own happiness. One of the insights that broke me from that model came in England some 20 years ago, when I was doing a course with [another teacher] and I was a very ardent and hardworking yogi, very disciplined in my sitting and walking, very effortful in my striving and my ambition to gain. About two weeks into [the retreat] this teacher drew me aside and told me he didn't want me to try any more and I said 'Well, how am I supposed to do that? I feel like I'm crossing a river and I'm half way across and you're asking me to throw in my paddle.' He said, 'That's a nice simile, but it has nothing at all to do with spiritual awakening'. He said, 'I'm not going to tell you how not to try because then you'll just try in that direction, but rather to understand that practice does not move toward something, but springs out of something.
>
> For the next four years it became a mantra for me and what it did was it broke me from a kind of self-serving model to a model which was much more inclusive in which insights began to arise out of interconnectedness rather than out of self-despondency and how awareness itself embraces the totality of life and not just my own. And no longer was the practice brittle or striving, but it became a flow and a movement of a very natural tendency and I found my heart just becoming more and more warm – natural expressions of affection, where I had never been able to have such natural expressions of compassion when I saw harm or suffering in the world. (Interviewee 7)

7.5 Self-image or sense of self

This critical question was designed to explore identity – the sense of who one is – and goes to the very heart of Buddhist practice. The answers to this question will hopefully provide detailed accounts of how Buddhist insight relates to a person's image or sense of themselves.

Question 8: *Has insight changed your image of yourself or sense of who you are?*

For a number of reasons not all interviewees were asked this question. Some interviews had time limitations or had in many ways already answered this question in great detail. In one interview I unintentionally omitted it. Even so, 28 (85%) of the respondents answered the question. The question also served as a checking question for Question 1 and provided further data by which conceptual insight could be distinguished from a deeper experience. While benefits of Buddhist practices are evident in the following extract, and there are common elements, it suggests more of a psychological change, a letting go, rather than a reframing at an ontological level:

> I believe I no longer try to fool myself about who I am; I am more realistic about who I am. Before I started this practice I really believed I was a fool, in the US we say jerk. I maintained a certain image, a certain face to the world, you know cover up, hold back all my failings, idiosyncrasies or shortcomings. Don't show that, show somebody that's perfect and on the ball. That doesn't bother me anymore. That kind of phoniness, or that kind of mask, and maintaining that kind of mask doesn't bother me anymore. I don't mind being vulnerable, if people see that I'm foolish in a certain way, that's OK, I don't care ... [laughter]. I'm not so fearful of my own image anymore. I don't care about that. I think that's right. (Interviewee 17)

The following extracts pick up a similar sense of spaciousness and freedom of identity, but there is an additional sense of not-self, or an ontological shift:

> [My sense of who I am] dissolved some, I can say is that is has shown the facility of having a sense of who I am, somehow. The sense of who I am is so different each moment, and practice has shown me, just that difference. Whereas before, every time I had a sense of who I am, I believed it. I thought 'yes, that's who I am', or I would say 'I'm like this' and I'd believe it. Even though I could say 'I'm like this' one minute and 'I'm like that' the next minute, and 'I'm like something else' the day after. It never occurred to me to think, well, hold on, if I said, 'I'm like this' and then said 'I'm like that', what does that show about the steadiness of the 'I am like'? (Interviewee 9)

This extract reveals the significant overlap between practice and insight – this teacher is constantly examining his sense of self and noticing that each time different circumstances vary the outcome. As he notes:

> Practice reveals it is different each time, so it is absurd to believe in any one of them, more than the other, when it can change so much. So, the sense of who I am becomes much more relative, somehow, and with it, seeing its relativity and its interdependentness and dependent arising with circumstances, one ceases to take it nearly so seriously. That contributes to a lightness and an ease around it that we can see the humour of it, the humour of that situation, the humour of believing 'I am like' you know, this is me, and then yesterday, that was me. (Interviewee 9)

These extracts reveal the importance of the moment-by-moment noticing: it yields a learning process in which the sense of self begins to shift. At those times when the mind clears, the sense of being created by what is outside comes to the fore. This insight also brings about a sense of liberation, which accompanies a loosening of the sense of limitation about who one is. The following extract conveys a deeper sense of unknowing and relates it to the previous question about the relationship with nature:

> I used to think I knew who I was and [laughter] now I don't have a clue [laughter]. You know, I feel really no different, at nights when I'm sitting and the owl hoots, I

> truly don't know, or when the coyote screams or when the water falls off that falls and I really don't know. I think in the city, I have so many more senses of who I am, there's so much reinforcement to my bottom Buddhist (if you want to use that word) experience of not knowing. Again when a fire-engine goes by, I sit with the group in Seattle, I hear the fire-engines go by, and the people yelling next door and you know there's still that sense of intimacy that's not truly yet, for me, what informs my life, nor nurtures it. I imagine if I lived in the city, it could and it would have too. But it's not the place that I, you know. just biochemically, neurologically, I just don't feel as comfortable there. (Interviewee 3)

As this teacher sits in meditation out in the country he hears an owl hoot, and because there is nothing else in his mind the owl hoot comes to him as intimately as any other sense of himself – there is *only* owl hoot. In the city the same deep sense of interconnection arises, even if the fire-engine is not the same. Animals are closer to us than mechanical objects. The affinity for nature seems to be separate from a broader sense of undecidability about the self; a sense of interdependence or interconnection with life forms comes forth to generate a sense of being. This insight is exemplified in the next extract:

> Well first and foremost that I'm not the insular separate self that I thought I was. The main thing is understanding the complete interdependence and interconnection between everyone and everything [laughter]. That we're, in a very real way, all one being. It's not just an interesting way to talk about it, or a poetic image or something. It's very real – that everything is included in me and I am included in everything. The image of Indra's net in the Avatamsaka Sutra, there is this net with a jewel at each intersection of the strings and each jewel is reflected in every other jewel and every jewel is reflected in each jewel. That's kind of a metaphor for how I think we exist in the world. In my happier moments, how I experience existence in the world, but even when I'm not in those happy moments of insight, those experiences are real enough that they colour my whole life. (Interviewee 30)

The metaphor of Indra's net is borrowed from the Chinese *Hwa Yen Sutra* and is interesting because it evokes a complex interactive relation in which each point connects and reflects all the other points, a view which physicists such as David Bohm relate to holographic conceptions of the universe. This view evokes a complex interactive relation rather than a simple shift to a homogeneous encompassing sense of one being. The basis of the metaphor is a network in which each element reflects all the others. It implies a sense of individuality and yet each point is the same, containing a reflection of all other points.

Answers to this question also give some sense of what it is like to experience this shift. For many of the teachers interviewed this shift was a life-changing experience. The comments that these teachers gave are similar to the one that follows:

> I feel like my feet are more on the ground and I'm more confident and I'm more – I just, it's quite powerful to be able to tune in any time I want, to a feeling of gratitude for having been given something that I never knew was there, a practice that I really feel saved my life in two ways: I felt that for the first thirty or thirty-five years of my life, I mean I was aware of my abilities, but I felt that I was sort of wandering in the wilderness and then I came home and it wasn't an easy place, I immediately felt home but it wasn't easy to settle in there, but that place of practice is always open to the more I wanted to pursue it and I felt like my life is pretty clear. I've been given all these wonderful things and these wonderful relationships with people and wonderful teachers – you know teachers, my teacher, the kind of intimacy that we have, it's painful to say, but it's much closer than the intimacy that I had with my parents. He understands me much better and so it's the gratitude on those levels. (Interviewee 18)

This extract conveys a sense of gift that comes from the practice, in particular the gift of intimacy, which was not anticipated by the questions. Although few teachers actually mentioned this specific word, most used synonyms that conveyed a greatly valued interconnectedness. Intimacy also conveys the process of opening, similar to the intimacy, which I experienced with this interviewee (see page 202). This intimacy is recognisable as the ability to touch one another at the deepest level, something which, as David Loy (2000) points out, we all are seeking in life and experiencing as lack, and yet is 'something very wonderful and mysterious' that is right before our eyes.

7.6 Rebirth and past lives

Question 9: *Did you gain any understanding about rebirth and past lives?*

This question addresses a highly controversial area of Buddhism for which there is little empirical data. There is a great deal of scepticism expressed in western philosophy regarding rebirth and past-lives (see section 2.4.3 Karma and). Problems with karma and rebirth are particularly evident when Buddhists explain the fate of people in terms of karma as though they deserved their deaths; for example, Lati Rinpoche, in talking about the Jews who were murdered in the holocaust, said:

> The victims were experiencing the consequences of their actions performed in previous lives. The individual victims must have done something very bad in

> earlier lives that led to their being treated in this way. (quoted in Nagapriya, 2004: 31)

Despite these problems, there exist canonical texts that set out a more complex view, in which karma is the result of a multitude of factors. In the case of rebirth or reincarnation, however, according to Nagapriya (2004: 131), 'We have to stretch our imagination a lot further if we are to take this on. Not only is it not immediately verifiable but it also raises a number of questions which traditional Buddhism has not decisively answered.' Many Buddhist traditions place great emphasis on rebirth or reincarnation, particularly simplistic versions, and while this does not seem to have the same degree of significance for most western Buddhists, Coleman (2001: 122) found in his survey of western Buddhists that 81% agreed that 'after death, we are reborn into another life'.[43]

The western teachers in my sample, however, provided little evidence to support this view. Of the 29 respondents to Question 9, most (around 75%) indicated that they not had an experience related to past lives or reincarnation. Nevertheless, such a finding is by no means conclusive, as some teachers suggested a different understanding which might explain the growing collection of studies of people who claim to recall past lives (Woolger, 1988). This is a complex issue in contemporary Buddhism; it is the subject of an ongoing debate and has significant consequences for how Buddhist economics is understood.

The findings certainly do not comply with simple explanations, but reveal explanations that potentially might fit with Penrose's (1994) notions of consciousness that connects with the unified field of quantum physics. In this view, neurological interactions are of such a scale that, Penrose argues, there are potentially quantum-level effects which might thus allow consciousness to possess the attributes of the quantum unified field, such as unboundedness, indeterminacy and holographic dimensions. On the other hand, scientific evidence about the embodied nature of mind holds that every mind is a distinct emergence, so that consciousness is intrinsically related to brain structure.

---

[43] It should be noted that this survey was a forced choice, and so may be an overestimate as respondents may have chosen to agree rather than disagree when they may have been unsure.

Cognitive neuroscience thus suggests that our individuality is hardwired into our brains and bodies, and that we could not function were our brains preserved in a vat and it was possible to have an electronic interface with the world (Putnam, 1981). The current understanding of embodied nature of the mind suggests that rebirth or reincarnation are implausible (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

There is a range of differing explanations of the significance of past lives in Buddhist doctrine, and my findings suggest that none of the teachers acquired a knowledge of their own past lives through Buddhist practice. The interviewees' responses to the rebirth question were not unanimously incredulous, and a few teachers believed they had had some experiences which made some sense of rebirth. The latter tended to belong to the more senior teachers. What they had to say about their understanding of rebirth and reincarnation added additional information about the nature of insight. The following view is largely a private and speculative theory about the nature of life, but it adds some sense of the understanding that insight brings:

> No ... this is my understanding when I talk in this field, we are talking at the very edge of what can possibly formulated. I think in terms of niche. You know that even physicists are now seeing that every particle has its niche. When I look into the face of a kangaroo in Australia, I see the face of a deer, and the kangaroo has exactly the same function in Australia as the deer does here in the northern hemisphere, there is a niche there. And it is very, very subtle because just as each physical particle has its own unique niche, when you think in that detail you can appreciate how each human being, say, has a niche and it is our responsibility to furbish that niche and to make the most of it; now somebody else will step into that furbished or refurbished niche bringing with her or him other kinds of karma too, but there will be a kind of faintly recognisable continuation there; now that is being about as specific as I can get to this question.
>
> I would challenge anyone who has [understood this through insight from Buddhist practice] ... there is a lot of very loose talk about rebirth and reincarnation. I think it is a grasping of straws; true rebirth is a return in which one is then a part of the mystery that creates the world. A monk asked Chao-Chou: 'All things return to the one, where does the one come from?' Do you know? It is a good question! [laughs]. (Interviewee 24)

This is not talking about rebirth in the traditional sense, but an interesting observation that the nature of life seems to create commonalities which appear in different forms across different circumstances. While it is beyond the bounds of this thesis to evaluate such a view, the sense of return to a common source, 'the mystery', was not unique to

this teacher or even his tradition. The sense of mystery, 'the unconditioned', did arise in many of the responses to that question.

In the following extracts this question began to reveal some very interesting findings. The following teacher suggests that ideas of rebirth and reincarnation come out of this mysterious side of being, a realm where perhaps 'all things return to the one', including past, present and future:

> I could answer that truthfully, and answer yes, and truthfully answer no to that question. When I go into in that realm where there is that dazzling clarity and spirituality, then the past and present and future are sort of simultaneously there. But [it] is not highly differentiated for me and so there's not a sense of past lives – that stuff feels like the story, having a self is kind of the story, a kind of fiction, and Buddhism acknowledges that, so that it is in a dream. So I am not very big on that [rebirth], although I've noticed sitting with people who are dying, that something is going on after they have died, one seems to be able to track them awhile on a journey. How much they would think of that as themselves any more is a whole other question which I am rather dubious about. (Interviewee 34)

So while this teacher is rather dubious about the idea of any coherent sense of a self that might be reborn, he opens up an inquiry into phenomenological experiences around death. In the extract that follows he then takes this discussion into a related and interesting aspect of meditation, and that is the role of intuitive knowledge:

> One of the things about meditating a lot is that sometimes it will improve your intuition or your sense of where somebody else is. I suppose we should test that, it is an experientially testable hypothesis, but it seems true. You get certain kinds of intuitive knowing that comes naturally, like somebody is going to come to see you that you have not seen for a few years and then they walk up to the door, that sort of stuff. Everybody has that. Meditation seems to enhance a bit that sort of sense of knowing without knowing how you know. And in the same way one can, in a certain sense, know what somebody's mood is, and what their state of mind is, and things like that. And since, so sitting with people who are dying, one can feel that they're clinically dead, there is no brain activity of something like that, but there is something alive there still, there's a sense of journeying, or a sense ... if you sit meditating with them you can feel them go, and some people seem to go quickly and some people go slowly, and some sort of linger around like for hours or days or whatever. Although I would say that the Tibetan mapping seems to be Tibetan culture specific, and that our mapping would be different in that realm, but whether or not it warrants to call that rebirth, I'm not sure. (Interviewee 34)

This sense that there were some dimensions to the insight experience that gave rise to an interpretation, that there was continuation, but not in the sense of coherent self in the simple sense of rebirth. Such intuitive experience could give rise to both simple

accounts and complex interpretations. The following teacher struggles with any view of rebirth beyond the sense that our lives arise with us and fade without a centre:

> I do [have some understanding]. It's not part of my inborn culture to think that way. Mostly because of what I have just said about anattā, so vehemently, mostly it's so clear to me that there is no-one who owns the story. I can't imagine what owner of the story would find itself continuing the story complete in another body. I just can't figure it out. No, other than the continuity of all things and everything rises and everything falls away and because there's no abiding self, nowhere to say to what's who and who's who and when it begins and when it ends. (Interviewee 2)

The next two extracts, like the one above, suggest a different notion of individual existence. They suggest a common experience of mysteriousness about the universe. Their view arises from experiences of deep states of meditation:

> Did I gain any understanding about previous lives through my practice? Yes I did. I put it slightly in inverted commas, so if in the course of inner work things happen in that consciousness, in the mind, which such experiences bear no relationship on what we call present mind, and some might call it a past life. One knows that it is definitely not this life, as one did not dream these things up. But there is a range of experiences in the deeper levels of the psyche, almost like coming out of the genes and it is inexplicable. These kind of events and circumstances occur, and I can't put a handle on it, so I just put it in the field of dependently arising or a bit more Buddhist flavouring, past lives. It just manifests from one knows not where and goes one knows not where. [These events] have the flavour of the movement into the whole evolutionary process. So it's just outflows and outpourings or expressions that come out of the whole genetic makeup. (Interviewee 20)

The same theme can be seen in the following extract with remarkable consistency:

> Sometimes the mind is sufficiently altered [that] I have fleeting intuitions of what that might be. When I do, it's more the sense that everything is happening to everybody always and that it isn't discrete bits. The fact that discrete bits of memory seem to be parts of certain people's experience, which then leads to the notion that discrete lifetimes make their way over time. It sometimes seems to me that discrete bits of memory for one reason or another are remembered more in some lifetimes than others. But I have very much a sense that maybe if the mind is totally awake and open, everything would be available and for one reason or another maybe discrete bits of it fall out here. I don't know why. It seems to me beyond time-space kind of phenomena. It certainly has been my experience, and I have had very strong intuitions that there's a way in which every bit of awareness is available all the time. I have very much a sense of connectedness, along with my very strong sense that there isn't anyone here. There's a very strong sense that I'm talking to you because your body is there, this body is here and these sense doors are the primary organisers of this discourse. But it could be anywhere, anything. I have a very strong sense of connectedness. I very strongly feel that this

> conversation is happening now because of everything that ever happened ever. (Interviewee 31)

The above dialogue crosses into very interesting territory: the experience of non-duality in which the event of the interview was created by a constellation of previous events that includes everything that has ever happened. In this sense a person is a reflection of the universe at this point in time, in which every event is unique and occurs because it is the summation of everything that has happened in the past. The teacher goes on to explain how the circumstances of the interview were due to her family history, and that that was in turn greatly affected by a range of world events.

For a number of teachers the sense that their lives are constituted by all events into one story is a perspective that seemed to be reinforced in states of deep meditation. While virtually none of these teachers accepted the traditional Asian view of rebirth and reincarnation, there was a strong sense that the western linear sense of time and place did not apply in those states.

7.7 Insight and the unconscious

Question 10: *Are there some regions of yourself into which your insight doesn't reach?*

About 52% of the interview responses regarded insight as being something that gave them awareness of every aspect of themselves, and if insight fell short, they did not know about it.

It became apparent in the analysis that this question was ambiguous, as some of the respondents interpreted it differently from others. Unfortunately, this was not obvious to me at the time, partly because many teachers who participated in the research had similar backgrounds to those who were involved in testing and developing the interview questions and shared a familiarity with the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious, and took it for granted. Through the close analysis of the transcripts, I realised that not all interviewees had understood the question in the same way. It is also not clear how this affected the data; however, it seems that some interpreted the question to be asking about the nature of their insight and others took it in the more psychological sense. Either way the ambiguity in the data stimulated some interesting dialogue which in the

end proved to be valuable in the context of adding some more understanding about the process by which insight translated into action.

These answers clearly linked insight with awareness in the spiritual sense:

> It is difficult to say if there is any part that hasn't been touched; and probably the ones that haven't been touched – I'm not in touch with! So it is difficult to think about them. The thing is, it is interesting to come to; there is lots of interest at the moment between spiritual practice and psychological work somehow, and the way that they can support each other. But in some way, they are quite diametrically opposed, I think, in as much as psychotherapeutic work is aiming at psychological health – making you a better person. Spiritual practice is *not* [necessarily] concerned with making you a better person. It is true that through spiritual practice we can feel more comfortable with our life, we can feel a bit more at ease, a bit more relaxed, a bit more comfortable in the life we inhabit, and yet if that becomes the goal then spiritual practice is a great sham. What is being offered [by spiritual practice] is something infinitely more vast than that, and I am much more concerned and interested in what a spiritual life can offer, and not in psychological health, particularly. (Interviewee 9)

This response opens up the complex relationship between performativity and psychological health in contemporary Buddhism. This issue has become topical in light of the recent books (Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998; Ricard, 2003) that associate Buddhism with learning to be happy. The teacher elaborates:

> In the East that has been very clear, I think, up until now, but the psychological part no-one's paid much attention to. Now, paying attention to psychological health is a great thing, and it is happening a lot in the West. But I see it as being more important to people who aren't interested in spiritual life, because if there is a real firm clear interest in the practice in spiritual health, don't worry about psychological health. I think it is quite possible you can be very spiritually healthy and not particularly psychologically healthy! And I think that's alright. Lots of eastern teachers, by a western model of psychological health, could be seen to be pretty crazy; if you look at Ramana Maharshi, say, [who spent] years and years in the cave, until his legs didn't work anymore, and the ants were making nests in the crook of his knees, you know, this would be pathological. Plenty of eastern teachers would be pretty much nut cases by the western model, and yet, if one is experiencing a true spiritual freedom, and there is all kinds of psychological quirks in there, if they are not being experienced as a problem, so what? Call them unhealthy, so what? So, I think, probably on a psychological level, there are things that are untouched by spiritual practice, and if one perceives them as a problem, then they need some attention. And yet, things can be untouched and non-ideal, if you like, and yet there needn't be a sense of 'problem', I suppose. (Interviewee 9)

The question of what constitutes a 'problem' for the Buddhist practitioner forms a bridge to the series of questions set out in chapter 8, ones designed to inquire about the relationship between insight and action in the world. The relationship between

psychological well-being and spirituality has been a topic of discussion for some time. The distinction underlies several deeper questions regarding the nature of well-being, which was discussed in chapters 2 and 3. The following extract provides a considered view from a teacher who draws from experience to show how her insight allowed a greater ability to integrate aspects of her psyche:

> In one sense I think the mystery is endless, and in another sense, if we think about it, as shadow parts of the personal self or whatever I believe that that probably for a long time after very profound levels of realisation [there are aspects] where we don't see either [because] it hasn't come to our attention or it's something we're really not ready to deal with. My personal belief, and this arises out of my own experience, is that the more profoundly we experience what we might call our Buddha nature, the more capacity we have to look at shadow parts of our self, because we know that that's not the totality of who we are. I think that that process of the unfoldment of obscured parts of who we are, unwholesome habit patterns, and all that kind of stuff is a pretty long process for most of us. In another sense, from the perspective of absolute reality, there's nothing that awareness doesn't penetrate, but, on a relative level, that is not the case. (Interviewee 19)

This extract raises some interesting questions about the relationship between insight and psychology – the profound impact of Buddhist realisation takes time to integrate. Insight provides a level of confidence necessary to support a gradual transformation process of our habitual patterns, so that we can develop new habits which express our new understanding.

The next extract, from a teacher in another tradition, confirms this view, and suggests that action in the world is the nexus where Buddhist practice has value. This view downplays the role of insight, not as the culmination but as the beginning of a new phase in which something that is understood becomes embodied:

> There are certainly regions inside myself and questions that I feel are still very much in process. I feel my practice is still working on [these] very strongly and [I] don't feel even provisionally at rest yet. There's a sort of a mythology that Zen is about enlightenment and I think [what] it's really about is embodiment and that's a tremendously difficult process. We have, in our tradition, almost no help at all with that. The stories all end with 'he was enlightened' and it's sort of like the assumption is and 'then he lived happily ever after'.
>
> That's not true, but the stories draw a curtain across at that point and I've come to believe that it must be that we really are meant to figure it out for ourselves, each of us, one at a time, without much help and it's the most difficult process I've ever experienced. To me [embodiment] has come to feel like the only one worth doing. I don't mean that [in a] sort of solipsistic sense of figuring myself out or purifying myself or something. I really mean it in a sense of like how do I take my place in

> life. How do I join all beings and what is my role, you know, in terms of how could I be helpful and what art can I make? (Interviewee 14)

The evocation of art brings the aesthetic dimension to the fore, thus evoking a latent theme of manifesting realisation in life is art. The sublime in an aesthetic sense may also manifest itself through the dance of living.

The previous teacher finds her insight presents her with questions about the nature of her role in life. One effect of insight is to open up a more holistic agenda and perspective on how we might understand our role in life. She is suggesting that this role is something that she finds the need to figure out for herself in practice, which recognises that roles are co-structured and can never been specified outside of a particular context and setting.

In the following extract a teacher from another tradition is very adamant about what constitutes right action, and links character development to insight in the reverse way as a foundation for depth and clarity:

> I think character is where it [insight] most reaches. I don't think we get any more worldly wise. But I think character most of all. I've [thought about it] very much, I've had a very simple dharma life, actually been teaching for years, and I can say the whole of the dharma in seven words: when we see clearly we behave impeccably, out of love, on behalf of all beings. I see clearly how much suffering is caused, how much suffering there is inherent in the very business of being alive and how it is exacerbated by the factors of ignorance, greed, hatred and delusion and how they are continually arising, unless we're vigilant.
>
> When I started to practise it became clear that there were major issues of malfeasance in the Buddhist world. There are also issues of malfeasance all over the place, but it was tremendously upsetting to me to discover this. I had such a simple dharma, when you see clearly the suffering in the world you behave yourself impeccably – finish! You know – it's so clear – that you can't do it other ways. And I asked my teachers about it and they did not have good answers; they said, well, such and such a person is much better than they used to be, and I would say that's not good enough. Much better than they used to be doesn't count [laughter]. I still think so.
>
> Since then, I'm also more sophisticated, I'm also a psychologist. A friend of mine said to me, well you realise of course that the highest level of insight a person has can only come though them at the highest level of ego integration that they have, at the highest level which really would include a level of moral integration. It doesn't build character. In fact, some of the insights themselves give licence to narcissism. If you see anattā clearly enough there's no me, there's no you, there's no anyone who actually is doing anything, so what's yours is mine and what's mine is mine, and everything's mine, I do whatever I feel like, there's a way in

> which I would restate that. I still don't think that a person can clearly have insight into the three characteristics and misbehave even given the caveat about the highest level of moral development, because I think if you don't have the highest level of moral development, you cannot see clearly suffering because you've not developed enough to look outside of yourself. So you don't really have suffering down again. You can have anattā down really well and anicca, as well, but not the suffering one. You know without the suffering one, it gives licence to narcissism rather than compassion. (Interviewee 31)

This long answer touches on a number of desiderata which add to our picture of insight. It can be reconciled with the previous teacher's contribution if we look at the process of insight as a learning process. As we found earlier, some people experience insights without any formal practice. It is likely that something in their character predisposes them to this sort of experience. The value of Buddhist doctrine, practices and techniques is that they provide a basis by which insight experiences can be generated and made sense of, expanded and deepened into insightful wisdom. Like learning as such, this may not be a linear process; some people gradually 'get the idea' while for others it comes in a rush. A link between learning and character is recognised by Buddhist teachers. Some character traits, such as diligence and focus, are essential in the development of a practice. However, other factors, such as kindness, may become essential later on.

In the above extract, the teacher suggests that the process of spiritual maturity is not only parallel to psychological maturity, but that the latter is a prerequisite for the former. To really open oneself to others requires a certain ego strength and an ability to let go of the grasping of the wounded ego. The encounter in which I shared an insight experience with the teacher I was interviewing (page 202) highlighted to me how one aspect of my character, which might even be cultural, manifested itself in a certain guardedness and resisted the intense intimacy of that encounter. That guardedness, I recognise, can be worked with, and fits with the reports of other teachers, some of whom sought psychotherapy following their insight experience. The above teacher later explained how she had an exceptionally nurturing childhood, including strong moral values that complemented the Buddhist precepts. Teachers who come from less functional families may find that their insight sets up a role they may wish to enact, but they may not have developed the requisite character traits to enact it. This point affirms the comments that character work and integration are the difficult aspects of Buddhist

practice, as we can see from an extract which came from an answer to Question 5: 'What are the most obvious ways in which your insight experiences have changed you?'

> That's a good question. I think the hardest actual part is the integration into the personality structure, the ego structure, the psycho-physical system. I think that's the most difficult part of the whole process actually. I mean not difficult in the sense that there's more of an experience of liberation, but to actually fully integrate through the levels of what it is to be a human being and all the aspects of that I think is a long work. (Interviewee 19)

Thus, what seems more difficult is that experiences of insight act as reminders of what is possible in terms of how to be in the world, and for some this may open up a lifetime of valuable character work. After all, if Buddhist practice were only for the well-adjusted then it would not be adding much to social well-being.

Personal development after insight is one thing, but issues of malfeasance are another. This finding suggests that unskilful actions might spring from the complex interaction between the individual's personal history, their new perspective on the world gained through realisation, and finally, the dynamics of community. Insight alone, it would seem, does not change a person's life habits, and problems such as stealing, lying or sexual predation – that might have existed in the past – may continue after insight. But through conscious recognition, the individual might be inspired towards reform. According to Buddhist teachings, these are karmic barriers to engagement in true intimacy and operate both at the level of intention as well as consequences of action. Without explicitly identifying a theory of causation, it appears that a similar dynamic of cause and effect operates in the experience of the teachers. The next chapter explores how insight more directly impacts on action.

CHAPTER 8

INSIGHT EXPERIENCE AND ACTION IN THE WORLD

8.1 Introduction

The eightfold noble path can be categorised into three types of activity: (1) *sila* (moral action), (2) *samadhi* (meditation practices), and (3) *prajna* (wisdom or insight). As discussed earlier, these practices overlap and interact, with morality providing the foundation necessary both for successful meditation and insight. The 'folds' of the path covering moral action are right conduct, right speech and right livelihood. These headings cover various prescriptions for behaviour, attitudes and mental dispositions that come in various forms, including the precepts. These precepts vary in form depending on the school of Buddhism, although, as Faure (1998) points out, a close examination of attempts to regulate monastic behaviour reveals many variations across different cultures and times as well. For instance, tantric and Chan/Zen Buddhist traditions allow greater laxity in certain aspects of the monastic codes, particularly sexual conduct.

Most Buddhist traditions recognise that morality rests on insight. The interrelation between insight and action is the third theme of this research, and focuses on two areas of interest. Firstly, how does insight affect everyday living practices? Everyday practices cumulatively constitute economic action. The first section of this chapter attempts to get a sense of how insight and Buddhist practice transforms how people make decisions as individuals, and in groups and organisations. Secondly, do Buddhist ethics have their source in insight or are they simply cultural artefacts? The thrust of Buddhist economic writing reviewed in chapter 4 advocates economic action based on doctrinal prescriptions for moral conduct, especially the precepts. While ethical questions are continually raised in the sutras and other doctrinal sources, the relationship between these ethical guidelines and insight, and the basis on which these ethical guidelines have evolved, is an important question.

What grounds the Buddhist approach to ethics is its non-dualist perspective; as Loy (2003a: 182) puts it:

> Buddhist morality cannot be comprehended apart from such a realisation, which liberates us from the dukkha inherent to a sense-of-self. In order to understand Buddhist ethics, therefore, we must consider its foundation in the Buddhist understanding of the self – or, more precisely, the Buddhist deconstruction of the self.

This is not the only basis by which Buddhist ethics are distinctive, since there are arguably cultural dimensions, as certain practices are in themselves unique to certain cultures. But Buddhist traditions lay claim to a foundation of their ethical framework that transcends culture. This claim problematises the role of culture, both as a context of ethical action and as a mediator of insight experience.

8.2 How experience of insight affects action in the world

A series of four questions was asked about this theme to explore how insight experiences influence action. These questions elicited quite a wide range of responses, and, as expected, a variety of experiences. In this last section of the interviews, the structured approach was somewhat relaxed to respond to the diversity of the respondents' life histories and professional background, and because their experiences varied correspondingly.

Question 11: *In the last part of the interview I am interested in how your experiences of insight, or Buddhist insight, affect how you act in the world.*

There were 29 responses to this question, with several involving long dialogues. Responses were less focused and revealed a rich spectrum and diversity of experiences. It is daunting to interpret this sort of data, as so much interesting material had been collected (over 80 pages of transcript for this question alone). However, it was not difficult to recognise several themes running through the multiplicity of Buddhist teachers' life experiences. One important observation was that the diversity in the data itself suggested a degree of complexity in the relationship between insight and action. It became evident in accounts of the process of tracing their insight to a particular event or situation, which, for many of the respondents, proved to be an impossible task. Ellen Langer (1989) suggests that we often fail to reflect much on what we do every day because much of our behaviour is habitual in nature. Thus, questions directed at why we might do certain things may not elicit as fruitful responses as we might expect. This finding converges with Bourdieu's (1984: 466) notion of the habitus, which functions

outside of awareness: ‘the schemes of the habitus, the primary forms of classification, owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will’.

Introspective accounts of our behaviour might be incomplete. For example, Nisbett and Wilson (1977) have questioned the ability of people to accurately remember and report their cognitive and emotional states. Wilson (2003), however, qualifies this earlier view; he suggests that when using introspective reports researchers should ascertain the kinds of mental states they are trying to measure while being aware that different approaches are subject to different limitations. This study does not avoid these limitations, and explores a range of different phenomena, including introspection on insight, as well as self-observation of behaviour. In this exploratory study, I am interested in the overall picture, and it is beyond the scope of the study to examine how unconscious factors might mediate action and its description. Many of the teachers were themselves aware of the tendency of the mind to construct its own version of behaviour, and some included feedback they received from their communities to support their personal understanding.

Another consideration is that being a Buddhist teacher is in itself a role which evokes certain expectations that will co-structure behaviour. Since many of the teachers supported their teaching by full-time or part-time work, or had worked for many years in the workforce before taking up teaching Buddhism, they were able to provide some valuable data on how Buddhist practices and insight might contribute to economic action, particularly in the workplace.

The responses to the first question seemed to develop several salient themes. One major theme was the quest for harmony in life at work, and for many this involved major decisions.

8.2.1 Living simply

Buddhist teachers tended to choose careers and lifestyles that supported their practice, and this generally meant making choices that allowed them to maintain the three aspects of the eightfold noble path: moral action, meditation practices and wisdom. The

teachers, for example, regarded the practice of the precepts of moral action and meditation as an essential part of their everyday lives. Wisdom and insight not only derive from these practices, but also arise from other life experiences which they reflect on. Insight informed the teachers' actions in a whole range of life experiences, so there are complementary understandings that come about by integrating all three aspects into their lives. In particular, the role of applying these practices to their lives seemed to have a major impact on their behaviour, including the critical choice of livelihood. A number of teachers clarified how they brought their insight to bear in terms of lifestyle choices, making ones that incorporated the Buddhist penchant for voluntary simplicity. The following explanation seemed to reflect the general thrust of many teachers' views:

> An overall container for many choices or decisions [which] encompasses a lot of other choices is the choice of my overall lifestyle, to have a relatively simple lifestyle. Having started my working life as a pharmacist, I could have had a very comfortable life with a considerable amount of money. The choice to let go of that and change my lifestyle was influenced by my meditation practice and insights. The decision to not give so much importance to material things, being well aware of the impermanence of them, and the unsatisfactoriness of them, and from my experience of travelling and being on retreats, and living simply in quite primitive conditions in India, and knowing there is a real happiness that is not in any way dependent on having things and having luxury or having a particular type of outer situation. Having lived the life of a pharmacist, having the income and seeing that there is still no guarantee of happiness, in fact quite the opposite – a guarantee of unhappiness and stress and unsatisfactoriness. So, having seen those two situations, making the conscious decision that [a simpler life] is much more important. So, I would say that has been that was the biggest decision, and many of the decisions that I have made since then have been smaller ones, just to keep within that. (Interviewee 2)

The experience of living simply and happily in Asia impacted on many teachers, and many felt this was a desirable lifestyle. Another interviewee made a life decision to help create a Buddhist-inspired educational organisation where she took on a managing role. In her own words:

> I wanted to make myself useful in some way, and create something that was open and inviting for people to explore many different things. And I wanted to bring the Buddhist practice into a larger framework, including work life and restructuring society, merging it with feminism, with deep ecology, critical thinking, the melting pot where something could be married together, [with] something coming out of it. I started a company, together with thirty or so women at a centre in the [city]. The purpose behind this was to have a company that was ethical, following basically the [ethical guidelines of Buddhism]. (Interviewee 10)

This teacher's project was an ambitious one; she found it 'an enormous challenge' largely because it attempted to establish a new format in work organisation. This proved to be a particularly informative process, as it prompted significant reflection which she found 'made us all look at our actions, look at our intentions'. The program included daily meditation, and training for 'forty volunteers in the eightfold noble path and to implement that on a daily, moment-to-moment basis, that living practice'. For the purposes of my research, it is hard to evaluate such a multidimensional and complex experience; however, the centre was closed a year prior to the interview. It appeared that, while the centre was not profitable, it was financially viable, and the main motivation for its closure was its very scale:

> I found it very, very hard to generate money for the company, and caring for all beings in the world was virtually impossible. The centre and the business closed for a number of different reasons, but basically because it was becoming an umbrella activity containing many different things – Sufi training, permaculture training, Buddhist meditation. The directors of the place found together that it was quite hard to contain that spectrum and do it with quality and with depth. For me personally, I thought things were getting watered down, and I couldn't practise or learn or share and provide anything in the depth that I wanted, so rather than changing the form, we decided to close it and end it. (Interviewee 10)

It seemed that a key problem was lack of focus, with a huge range of different activities, including 200 different teachers coming every six months. 'Personally carrying most of the responsibility as an administrator, caring for the staff, doing the next program issue, and publishing, and having groups and classes in the evening – the workload was too big.' There is no great value in trying to assess the performance of this particular venture, as organisational performance in this context cannot be measured by profitability, particularly as it never played a salient role in the actual purpose of organising. This teacher simply notes:

> It was a structure that didn't work. My co-workers were great and the financial resources were OK, and we could find more people, etc. But that's not the dinosaur of an organisation that I would like to organise. It was too much of a workload: you have to be a saint to be able to be equanimious in such circumstances. (Interviewee 10)

Clearly, insight does not transcend the complexity of organising such a venture, and at some point the competing demands of work and personal life become a dilemma. While this is not surprising, what seemed to be distinctive teacher such as these (Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 10) was the degree to which they were prepared to sacrifice money and

career for something they deemed more important. Interviewee 2 gave up a sought-after pharmacy career, and Interviewee 10 had the following to say about her decision to quit:

> In seeing that things are very impermanent, they come and they go, and there's no way we can control it. All things, starting something and ending it – is very OK! I haven't got much of a residue, although a sense of missing and regret or whatever, but actually on a deep level it's OK. Even if I use all my energy and all my care and all my money in this thing, and it didn't work, it's almost like learning how to surf, I guess it is learning how to surf with life experiences. I guess that's what the practice of freedom brought to us. (Interviewee 10)

This sense of freedom is evident in the following extract, in which a teacher became involved in a social action campaign, and eventually initiated a major legal action. Legal action involves a risk, and in this case the costs were substantial and she was liable for them, as she recalls:

> It was going to cost $20,000, $30,000, maybe even more, $40,000, and I had no idea where the money was going to come from. And still, I made that decision to do it. And, at that point I said 'OK, I can: that much I can risk'. I don't like saving, but I wasn't doing it for myself. It was for the work we wanted to do. It was not a personal work. (Interviewee 27)

For many of the interviewees, being a 'dharma teacher' was in effect a major life change which often involved material sacrifice. One teacher talked about this decision in the context of the question how insight had changed her:

> I have to think of what hasn't changed! [laughter] When I moved to come to and live [at the meditation centre] in England, I actually left my job as a lawyer, sold my furniture, left my flat, and everything. That was quite a step at that time. Then to live here for a time and then move back into that world – it just felt alright to go back into the lawyers' world – but the dharma actually, since the very first encounter, never left me. So the compassion is there and therefore my life is dedicated to that. Everything is to surrender to that most important thing. I went back to the law work, when an invitation came to do some teaching and study in South Africa. I immediately left for South Africa, and again quit my job [laughs], sold the few pieces of furniture there were and went to the other end of the world. To some people, it looks like madness, but it was important to do it. So a certain feeling of being comfortable with that uncertainty, there are no guarantees, like that. (Interviewee 15)

Again, we find the freedom to do such things as give up being a lawyer and sell one's property. The question might arise whether people who choose to become Buddhist teachers have already taken 'the road less travelled' and have a predisposition towards unworldliness. There is some evidence to support this, but it seems they also felt that

this new sense of freedom developed through their practice and had an important bearing on their choices. In the next extract the teacher explains in detail how bringing insight into ordinary life involved a number of aspects that permeated how she went about living her life:

> I think [insight affects how I live] in its own way, from choosing to live in a small house to taking pleasure in making compost. These are dharma activities. Living lightly on the earth is for me a dharma-connected activity; that's where my connection to those things comes up most. Then there is choosing to not devote much of my time to earning money, and putting most of my resources into the development of this zendo, and now also into writing and some social things I do every day, being there in the morning, to greet people and sit zazen and in terms of ordinary daily activities. I must say that, from the time of my early forties, I had what I would call a vocation for this practice, becoming a priest and eventually becoming a teacher. Just by being here and doing it, so people come because someone is sitting here and doing it, the schedule becomes alive, and so this is my daily life. There's washing dishes by hand instead of using a dishwasher, no all of that. It permeates and yet we are not great saints, isn't that amazing! [laughs]. (Interviewee 26)

This teacher used the word 'vocation' in the Christian sense, as being God's calling, suggesting that she 'became' a teacher out of a mysterious calling, rather than exercising a rational choice to take on this role. Again, the willingness to give up financial rewards is also evident, although she had already made choices for simplicity early in her life by choosing to be an artist. What she makes clear is that her vocation is 'just being here and doing it' – this has, particularly from a Zen perspective, both the dimensions of the practice of mindfulness, and insight, which is 'just this moment'. For Soto Zen students this is the beginning and end of practice. As the prominent Soto master Shunryu Suzuki (1970: 48-49) wrote, 'continuing practice, week after week, year after year, your experience will cover everything you do in your everyday life'. It is the permeation of the practice into all aspects of life, as this teacher suggests: 'That's a little bit like asking how do you bring your breathing into [laughter] everyday activities [laughter]. Well, I guess the most obvious answer is my choice of profession, which is to teach the dharma' (Interviewee 14).

8.2.2 Perfection

In these responses the theme of Buddhism as a practice arises, and manifests itself in teaching, not just in rhetoric form, but as being an exemplar of how it is practised. In Buddhist discourse, the Buddha is regarded as a perfected human and this perfection is

associated with the completion of practice. Lama Thubten Yeshe (1987: 15), for example, describes Buddhist practice as an evolutionary process towards the 'fulfilment of our highest human potential', which is the state of 'enlightenment or Buddhahood ... of unlimited wisdom, unlimited compassion, and unlimited skill or power'. In answer to the earlier interview questions, some respondents expressed the view that notions of perfection were both mythical goals, and confused performative dimensions: perfection needed to be approached without a grasping mind. Many interviewees regarded their teacher role as a day-to-day engagement with practice towards self-improvement, as a progressive embodiment of their insight. This process does not always unfold seamlessly, as the above teacher suggests: 'we are not great saints'. She continues:

> I think when one is having experiences of insight in one's practice there can be a really strong split between those and everyday life. I hope what I'm trying to do is not have that, be so split, but to make that a more seamless blending. So that I'm not thrown from one side to another, which doesn't seem like it's very helpful to anybody, but that those things bleed and dye, bleed into and dye each other. (Interviewee 14)

In order to gain some sense of this I asked for an example, which sparked a very long and interesting dialogue. I have summarised it below. This reply segues nicely into the question that follows:

> You're washing the dishes and you're on the spirit side. I mean, that can be very beautiful. It can be: this is perfect! This moment is perfect, there's nothing else I'd rather be doing. Look at the hummingbird out the window, the sunset, everything is just perfection itself in this moment. That's a true thing. But if there's a baby crying in another room [unattended] that's *not* the best thing, that's the pathology of spirit.
>
> [On the other hand] to be stuck on the soul side is 'damn I hate doing dishes! I always get stuck doing the dishes, I can't bear to do another dish, I'd rather be doing anything else but this!' The virtue of the soul side is you hear a baby crying in the other room and you go and attend to it. Is that helpful?
>
> *Interviewer*: Kind of. I mean a question somebody could ask is: Well why, if you're on the spirit side, why don't you just pick up the baby too?
>
> Because being lost in the spirit side is to be unable to do that, that is the problem – I'm not saying it's not possible – actually I will say that. I think to be purely in spirit is not to do that and that there has to be some integration of the soul. It's more like everything's perfect: 'What's the problem? It's perfect! (Interviewee 14)

Is it that in this condition we find the effects of insight closely related to the issue of narcissism raised in an earlier question (see page 232), given that there is something narcissistic about blissfully doing the dishes and not attending to a crying baby. On the other hand, it could be argued that in this state of mind everything is perfect. Just as we cannot solve all the problems of the world, here there is no judgement to distinguish perfect from not perfect. Yet surely perfection implies a discriminating mind, adding something to reality in the form of the judgement of perfection. It is easy to see how the natural movement of the mind to categorise such an experience as perfect could prevent us from realising that subtle judgement of perfection itself is a grasping. The mind in touch with the world just as it is finds the baby is hungry and crying. In order to act in the world, we need to make discriminations; the question of attending to the baby or not requires some form of discrimination regarding action. So on what basis does one act? This ethical question confronts our humanity; otherwise we need only remain passive to the world – unable to act – as any purpose would be supplementary to the perfection of the world.

This teacher's report reflects John Tarrant's (1998) somewhat controversial work *The Light Inside the Dark*, which draws on James Hillman's (1979) distinction between 'soul' and 'spirit' to explore different aspects to insight. This distinction, arguably, arises from the Christian belief in the chain of being (see page 242) in which the higher realms of 'spirit' are those that draw us closer to God, and 'soul' reflects the baser and secularised, but more natural, earthy, and human, realms of life. Tarrant recognises how closely linked these distinctions are in the modern psyche, which he sees as struggling to accommodate their apparent oppositions. Although Buddhism does not recognise these distinctions, as its morality is more pragmatic, Tarrant opens a dialogue between these two, suggesting that both can learn from each other. The example above suggests that Buddhist 'spiritual' states are where everything is in accord and perfect – just as it is. This condition appears to be one of such openness and acceptance that there is no sense of suffering, as the suffering of the world is transformed and everything is 'perfect' within the context of eternity of the 'spirit'. This raises some important questions regarding the nature of insight. If in such a state there are no adverse consequences, this suggests a potentially harmful deluded side of 'insight'.

Some interviewees sought to focus on the nature of their engagement with life in the moment. Their references to life choices in the light of non-material priorities highlighted a consistent pattern throughout the data. It was more than simple austerity, or going without, but rather a different set of priorities altogether. The difficulty in relating insight to life became manifest in the responses to this question, and for some it was too abstract and seemed far too removed from the here and now. One teacher turned the table and pointed to the logocentric nature of this inquiry:

> I don't look at it, necessarily, as this experience of insight was really powerful, clear, and that experience affects my life. I can sometimes bring my insight into my everyday experience, in the sense of reminding myself of an experience I had in the past that was very powerful and inspiring, [but] I am here talking to you now and I need to remind myself of that and so I will somehow bring [the present moment] in. I don't think that [your question] is the question – it's not a path. I don't think that my experience of insight of X years ago can do anything now, except inspire or give me some perspective. I don't think it can do anything, maybe it can, [but] there is something in the way I live my life, that is the real question, the truth, the best answer and the way this question should be addressed: 'How I do and how I live my life moment to moment?' So, in the way that I am being here right now, in the way that I talked on the phone a few moments ago, and in the way that I get hurt [referring to recent loss of relationship], the next time I get hurt, and how will I act [laughs].
>
> If there is awareness, when it *is* there, [as] I am not saying that there is awareness constantly every moment I breathe. But when you say 'What is it that your insight brings to your everyday activity?', you know, just like, well, the interview right now! [Otherwise] that could sound a little bit too heady. I mean my experience is here, right now, talking to you and you [ask] 'how does that experience of insight manifest in your life' – I say hey *hello*! (Interview 29)

This extract is a particularly useful, because it highlights an overlap between practice and insight. The spontaneous, habitual nature of ordinary life is the stage for insight; insight arises from moment-to-moment attention. This is, perhaps, the point made by the koan 'Ordinary mind is the Way'. The rational analytic process of research, arising out of a modern western worldview, is something that takes us away from that open spontaneous engagement. 'Big' insights come and go and become absorbed like any other experience, but their content is the intimate basis of the practice, in how we (in the first person) live and act with the openness of consciousness in real time. There is something about engaging openly in real time that reveals interconnection, in ways that abstract thinking never can. Another teacher also conveyed scepticism about the ultimate value of rational analysis:

> There is not an easy way to see how insight has affected [ordinary everyday decisions], because it is so bound up within the context that it is kind of an effortless outflow. Somehow the insight effortlessly informs the outcome of the decision-maker. (Interviewee 9)

The next teacher also turned my question around:

> It [insight] doesn't make you bring your dharma[44] to your life, you bring your life into your dharma. And if you see things a certain way, they aren't apart from it. It's bizarre that we come to a retreat and take the precepts, as if we are not doing that our whole lives. I feel ridiculous saying, well now I will take the precepts, like ready, set, go! [laughter] I think they are part of your life; how could you not? (Interviewee 31)

This incisive answer explains the complexities of integrating one's life into the dharma. Since each person's life experiences are unique, that process of integrating those experiences into what they understand from insight will vary in difficulty. Several teachers regarded insight as a perspective, or source of inspiration, to which they aspired in living their lives. One teacher (Interviewee 24) felt that his insight was not manifest as much as he would like in his ordinary everyday activities, admitting: 'I know better and I don't do it'. This teacher continued to explain that much of his orientation towards moral action was established in childhood, and his Buddhist insight did not contradict it:

> I think inherently I was sensitive to others and concerned about not hurting others. I was already a vegetarian [before I began Buddhist study]. So what insights I have had since then, in the course of my Buddhist career, have certainly reinforced all of those early things, clarified and sorted them out. (Interviewee 24)

It would seem that what is emerging from this data is that teachers engaged with Buddhist practice, firstly from the perspective of a beginner practising according to the dharma or teachings. The practice has developed through establish traditions, which MacIntyre (1984) suggests evolve as a collective project, dialogically incorporating the experiences of earlier teachers, reflecting their understanding and learning gained through insight. A tradition is itself a dynamic dialogic space which, over time, modifies

---

[44] *Dharma* or *dhamma* is the Buddhist term for the teaching or doctrine. Ultimately in Buddhism written doctrine is the finger that points, and the 'truth' can only be learned independently of the written word through insight.

its practices in dialogue with the insights gained by its leading lights. It appears that in the case of Buddhism the moral practices set out in the noble eightfold path reflect a convergence with the aspirations of the leaders of the community to integrate their own insight into their lives. Initially, this inherited practice is the foundation of insight, but after insight a mutually reinforcing process evolves in which insight and practice inform each other. The moral dimension of insight brought into practice early helps the practitioner avoid potential traps along the way. The interviewees' answers began to bring morality, meditation and wisdom into relief, summarised by the following teacher:

> Well, I can only speak to both because I don't know where those things break together. I'm not one who did something in isolation, had insight and then stayed in isolation, and then had another insight and lived my life from there. Those two things for me, as Dogen says, those two things, practice and insight, are the same thing. (Interviewee 19)

The next extract reinforces the above theme and serendipitously provides an explanation to the question of the 'crying baby'. It should be noted that a variation of Question 11 was made so that it read: 'In what ways do you bring your insight into your ordinary, everyday activities?'

> I would say more that I don't bring it in. I think that the insights that I've had are part, were part of a process of transformation, and that my experience has transformed. Because of that I'm sure my outer actions [too]. There isn't a sense of separation between doing an action and being. The way I conceptualised it [is] just spontaneously being appropriate, so whatever action arose, it just felt more or less, with some obscurations, like spontaneously responding to whatever was arising and whatever action came out of that. It's like if the baby cries you go pick 'em up. You know, just pure spontaneous compassionate response to whatever is arising. (Interviewee 19)

Recalling the earlier discussion of the perspectives of spirit and soul, this teacher suggests that an enlightened response to the 'crying baby' is a spontaneous and human response, one which evokes a compassionate, in-the-moment, non-reflective action. The teacher goes on and explains that, while the vast majority of ordinary everyday actions can be made in this non-reflective way, there are exceptions which require another level of inquiry. The key to being able to be spontaneous is many years of working on attachments to our personal story or ego:

> I worked for thirteen or fourteen years on my own ego [with] the kind of things, that needed to be worked out. I don't have a sense of a separation between inside and sitting on the cushion and what I'm doing. I just don't experience any

> separation; it's hard to answer that question. It seems to me [action] is something that spontaneously arises in response to what's happening and we don't have to think about it too much. I think it's obvious, [but] some things aren't so obvious and require reflection or really tuning in a deep way to our inner self, to find out about a particular course of action, like starting a PhD or something [laughter]. (Interviewee 19)

In the second group of interviews, following a large discussion around money with one of the earlier teachers, I decided to add a supplementary question that focused on personal finance. This question shifted the discussion towards more economic issues, and proved to be a valuable source of data.

8.2.3 Money and finance

Supplementary to Question 11: *In what ways does your insight influence how you make decisions in your life around money and finance?*

The theme of money as a secondary concern in teachers' lives was revisited in the answers to this question, as the following extract exemplifies. The low priority given to money, however, was probably not something that preceded their insight, but rather was reinforced by it:

> I've always been really loose with money, whether that's a psychological thing, or more the basis of how I live my life. I can always spend more money – we buy land. So that that land can be its own self, it doesn't have to be cultivated; it doesn't need to be utilised. It can be used, but not utilised.

> Before practice, before insight, I worked in the mountains, on endangered species and on land/water use. So I spent hours and hours up in the mountains and that together with practice and insight brought me back into working in the world. I'm a psychotherapist. I felt like, and I think this was pretty much out of the insight, my continuing maturation of daily practice. I felt like it was time to come off the mountainside, back into the marketplace. (Interviewee 3)

This theme of relegating monetary gain occurs again and again. The following extract is quite detailed and reflects many of the views provided in other answers:

> Well I don't take money as being the ultimate social security in any kind of way. I'm trying to do what's reasonable, in terms of creating some kind of financial security, especially now that I have a family. I don't feel having sources of income is something that can be ultimately relied upon. If I put all my reliance into the world of money and acquiring money, it feels very risky to me. I have another sense of security or comfort from my deep experience of meditation practice. I know that there is something unconditioned that gives me security. I don't need to

> have security and things and activities, in the way I did before. Certainly money is one of these. (Interviewee 12)

The first point that this teacher makes is that the unconditioned – a pure, unmediated, and non-dual experience which is the liberation, as discussed briefly in chapter 2 – provides a base sort of security. This does not mean the sort of security that prevents hardship or starvation, but essentially reflects a lack of need beyond the basics required for a reasonable subsistence. By establishing a new ontological basis for their lives, the teachers lose their dependence on financial accumulation for security and peace of mind.

This teacher explains how he uses money from this position and how his need for financial security underwent a change.

> So how do I use money? I am much more generous with money than I used to be. I give money to people much more freely than I used, when I feel there is a need. I think of money as representing, as having representative value. It represents a certain momentum of intention that, people you can spend money, but it's the spending of the money that's important, not the having of it. The spending of money presents an intention. I'm more interested now in [the intentions behind the money and the values behind spending of the money] than the money itself. I think of the money [as] circulating through society as a stream of intentions. Some of the intentions are wholesome and some of them are not; some of them are beneficial for society and some of them are not. As money goes through my hands, I like to put a spin on that money, so that the stream that it goes, at least in the short term, is spinning out into society in a wholesome direction, beneficial direction.
>
> For example, I have for the last few years a retirement account, and put some money away for retirement. Seems like the responsible thing to do. I have enough money to do that. But I'm very interested in where the money is put, so I put it in a socially responsible mutual fund because I want that money to have a spin on it, hopefully that supports companies which are doing at least something that's not harmful, and maybe something that's beneficial to the world around me. If I put it into a regular mutual fund that is invested in the arms industry or tobacco industry or alcohol or, then my money is putting some spin and the reinforcing or strengthening that momentum and intentionality that is already so prevalent in our society. So I think of money as representing intention and I am eager to infuse it with a new intention as it passes through my hands. (Interviewee 12)

This teacher seems to be very cognizant of the effect of his financial decisions; how his investments affect others has become particularly important. This sensitivity was manifested by others in a variety of different ways:

> In one sense, the way things are is that money is used as exchange and the nature of it is to exchange. What you decide to exchange it for is influenced by your insight. (Interviewee 5)

> Whereas I experience money as neutral, much like feelings they are neither good or bad, they are just there, they give us information. It is what we do with them may be morally good or morally bad, the same with money, it is there. It is something that we can use for good or ill. But what the practice has helped with is the appreciation of what money can do for other people, and I am probably fortunate to be in a better financial situation than most teachers. I have had that plus, the whole aspect of being sensitive to what other people need, I think has really helped me to be more generous with money. I think the practice has helped me become much less acquisitive. I have what I need. I don't live extravagantly, I live comfortably and certainly well within my means. That is different, as I was always living right up to the edge, right up to the limit. No matter how much I made I always spent it all. One of the things that the practice taught me is that I don't need that much. Once the basics are taken care of, you can use the rest for other people. Therefore, I think I am much more comfortable with my money than I used to be. I remember when my therapist said to me one day, 'Have you got a hole in your pocket? Do you have to get rid of all your money?' Well, I don't, I don't have to spend it on me, and I don't have to feel (which I think may have been operating at one point) like I am undeserving of it. There is a much more comfortable relationship with it. (Interviewee 8)

> Money is given to me as a tremendous energy – to do something, to make it happen, you know. It is really energy and I have found that if you let it stall, it makes it very stagnant. So when I receive, I use it. And just let it flow through me, and that's how I use money, it never stays with me. So I have a very different, non-conventional decision-making over the money, and I am fairly proud of that. I became good, better at making money because I don't feel attached to it, and I know I can use it well, so I became very good at making it. (Interviewee 27)

While some teachers spent little, others were spenders; the recurring theme in the interviews, however, was non-attachment, which enabled them to live simply themselves while passing the surplus on to others:

> Well I'm more generous with sharing my money with other people. That's one big thing. I don't worry about it so much like I used to. It's that money is no longer a large measure of security, which is what it is for most people. It's not, it's part of it; one has to have a certain amount, but it's not such a big component anymore.

> I try to live frugally. I drive a 15-year-old car and it is fine. I certainly don't practise poverty. I wouldn't begin to claim I don't go out for a meal when I feel like it, which isn't very often but I do. I don't have a television and I don't have a stereo and I don't have material kind of stuff which I think is not the usual way of life in this country [USA] these days, for someone of my class background. I do like to give money to my kids and their kids and I don't think a lot about money to tell you the truth [laughter]. You know I get, I have a place to live here, I have two rooms and I get three meals a day and I seem to have everything I need so I don't worry about it much. (Interviewee 30)

One teacher expanded on living simply and added the proviso of self-sufficiency:

> I think it is very useful to have money so you can give it to things that you support and care about or people, like [my teacher], and also to be self-sufficient; I think it is very important to be self-sufficient. Every tub on its own bottom. It frees you, it's a kind of freedom; I am more or less thinking about independence, but there is a certain obligation because we each come into the world with a great deal of support from others, you know financial and otherwise. I like the idea of both [of financial independence or that you pay your own way]. I am the one who you supported, who is paying their own way and giving back. (Interviewee 29)

More research would need to be done to ascertain how closely these teachers' behaviour matched their claims, although my observations in California were consistent with these claims and I do not doubt their commitment to living frugally. It was observable from their choice of car to the lack of kitchen appliances, how they dressed and what was in their houses. There were some exceptions, and a couple of teachers I visited were clearly well-off. However, they were in relationships and this meant that their partner's income and choices would need to be taken into account.

Two considerations need to be factored into the interpretation of this finding. The first is the question of how much their commitment to simple living was a replication of the subcultural values of the alternative community, which prompted so many people's interest in Buddhism in the first place. The second consideration is that much consumption is conspicuous, in that it seeks recognition and status. Being a Buddhist teacher accords a significant amount of respect within the Buddhist circles and this factor may compensate for the lack of conspicuous consumption. But these factors do not negate the role of insight in reinforcing non-materialistic values. Buddhist practice promotes a frugal lifestyle, and teachers may find their leadership role in Buddhist communities reinforces their frugality.

8.3 The actualisation of insight

This section relates to a series of interview questions designed to explore how insight might affect the behaviour of teachers. The questions aimed to investigate how insight might be actualised in the teachers' way of life. Buddhism's ethical guidelines, the precepts (see page 44), are studied in Zen as insights. Basic ethical criteria attach to intention – how teachers actualise insight in action in the world. After much

workshopping in the survey pre-testing, the following question was personally devised, by a local teacher, as most appropriate to explore this issue.

Question 12: *How does the experience of insight meet with your attempts to embody the precepts in your daily life experiences around work, organising and community?*

Although reluctant, I felt persuaded to use this form, only to find in the field that many interviewees also found this question odd. Nevertheless, the interviewees were highly cooperative, and the final responses proved interesting and valuable. The following extract comes from a variation on the above question, which opened up an unexpected new dimension to Buddhist insight that other interview questions failed to ferret out. In this particular interview, I rephrased the question as: *Where does your understanding the precepts or the ethics of Buddhism come from? Your insight or does it come from what you have read, or else where?*

> It comes from my early instincts, my early feelings, my early rejection of my father's militarism and all of that has simply found an outlet, so to speak, a form, a container. You know that there are three ways to look at each precept: one is the Buddha nature view, one is the compassionate view and one is the literal view. What that formula has done for me is just a small example, but it has enabled me to sort out and clarify that kind of unformed feeling that I don't want to hurt others. So the dharma has helped me to be much more of what I am. (Interviewee 24)

At first, I ignored this view as being a somewhat idiosyncratic perspective, but other teachers' responses echoed it. Their responses witnessed a developed authenticity – being true to what one already is. For example, the following interviewee brings into his response a similar observation:

> The precepts? I think of the precepts in various ways; they're kind of multivalenced, with many different functions. One important function of the precepts for me is that the precepts are guidelines that I use. If I'm about to break a precept, then I'll stop and reflect on what I'm doing and more often than not, I don't think every time, what I find out is, when I'm about to break a precept I've lost touch with the values which are most valuable for me in the deepest sense of contentment or well-being that I know. (Interviewee 12)

The values which are most important to us and through which we feel the deepest sense of well-being are those that we feel are natural to us, or fundamental to our identity. Is this a contradiction? How can not-self be helpful to authenticity, to being who we really are? Can realisation of not-self contribute – or even coexist with – the practice of

authentic self? The results point to the myths that surround the concept of not-self (anattā), particularly the confusion that it means *no-self*, that is, represents an assertion that the self does not exist. Lancaster (1997: 195) points out that the issue with anattā 'is not one of defining the self but of understanding the process of identification'. The teachers' sense of authenticity is to understand themselves as what is (in the phenomenological sense of what is given), as experienced both inside and outside, such that no clear distinction exists. When hungry, eat; when tired, sleep; the self is no longer at centre stage and the discursively constructed self is muted, at least temporarily.

The interviewees conveyed the sense that the precepts were both an aspirational goal and confirmed by insight. The vast majority of the respondents treated the precepts as something that they regarded as desirable and useful guidelines to be considered in daily action, but not something that bound them as an imposed idealistic code. For example, Interviewee 6 said: 'I am trying to reach a point where the precepts will not be imposed codes, so I will go around saying I should not kill, you know, but rather it will be impossible for me to kill'. This teacher saw the process as like learning a language; the ethical stance prescribed in precepts became so assimilated that it's the only thing you can speak: 'I wish to reach a point in which the only thing you can speak is that dharma, the only thing you can convey, and walk, and think, and shit is the dharma!'

This aspiration towards acting out the precepts moulds behaviour. The link to practice is explained in the following extract:

> The mind that is not paying serious attention to an ethical life cannot generate the capacity for a depth of understanding. So beneath, a real effort to keep the precepts leads to self-esteem and self-respect, which automatically generates a respect for other people and allows for the mind to quieten sufficiently enough to get some degree of insight. The insight further conditions the willingness to embody the precepts, so that the relationship between ethical considerations and meditative experience and practice becomes clearer. It is seen that they are not separate. The very goal of practice, to see where the suffering is and to see a way out of suffering, cannot be separate from the precepts which deal with exactly the same thing, suffering.
>
> So, the precepts seem to be external and practice seems to be internal, and yet, subtly, as experience shows us in the breakdown of the inner and the outer, the precepts themselves not to be separate from the meditative practice but part of the same whole. Therefore they take on a much more effortless life of their own. I think rather than trying to refrain from harming, there is just a natural wish to nurture which comes forth and so, so what starts with a care in not harming or exploiting things and following the precepts, for its own end and for the purpose of

> cultivating the practice, becomes a way in which the wisdom of practice naturally informs a care for life and a genuine wish not to harm or exploit. (Interviewee 9)

This point brings up the dual aspect of the practice: firstly, the precepts form part of the eightfold path, and through these practices insight is developed; secondly, as insight develops, it appears to inform the practice, and so we see how our actions are a reflection of the nature of our inner life. As one teacher commented:

> Well, the precepts are my insight. So those two things are not separate at all. They inform and re-inform every part of our daily interactions. When I'm in a community group or in a peer group there's always the awareness that these people are not separate. They are not different. You know, I know there's tension, I know there's disagreement, but still, someway I am no other, they are no other, you know it's Joshu's 'Oak tree in a courtyard'.[45] It's lovely to be the oak tree, but then I have to allow the oak tree to be us and that's the same in all the community work too. I am no other. That one no other and it's a back and forth. It is so much the field of practice for me, whether it's in the workplace, whether it's in the community place, or whatever that one in the middle you had between those two. Which does not mean I'm always successful. None of this talks of success. I'm talking intention here. (Interviewee 3)

These last two extracts are extremely rich material; they point to a mutual interaction between action and insight. The second of these teachers has a deep ontological sense of the 'Oak tree in the courtyard' view, and this informs how he might act: he sees it as a field of practice in terms of both insight and the precepts. This sense of practice works under difficult life situations. For example, one teacher described the pain of finding out that her daughter had taken up what is proscribed in traditional Buddhism as an unwholesome livelihood. She described how she was able to use the practice to track her feelings and response. Although the revelation came as a great shock and was extremely upsetting, she was able to move beyond her initial response of shock, and through using meditation practices she was able to identify the internal dialogue of self-blaming and disappointment which underlay that emotional reaction. At the heart of her distress about her daughter's decision lay a sense of having failed as a mother. She had great expectations of her daughter, who was a top student, and the daughter's decision

---

[45] This refers to Case 37 of the Wu-men Kan, entitled *Chao Chou (Joshu): Oak Tree in the Garden*. A monk asked Chao Chou, 'What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?' Chao Chou answered, 'The oak tree in the front garden'. In this koan, at that moment, the oak tree is what stands out for Chao Chou as his insight.

brought feelings of disappointment and self-condemnation. Rather than dwell there, however, she found her Buddhist practice allowed her to recognise these as concepts that she had imposed on herself; she was able to let go of this story and accept her daughter without judgement, being open to hearing her daughter's perspective of her choice of occupation. Eventually, she was able to see that her daughter's choice as not simply a failure on her part. In fact, her daughter later gained widespread respect and prominence as a leading reformer in that industry.

The teachers linked insight to the precepts in a number of ways, and I have set this out in Table 7 to give a sense of how representative these themes are. The reader will get a sense that most teachers experience a sense of interconnectedness, of non-clinging, and a natural sensibility towards harmony that comes as part of the integration of insight and practice. The relevant comments are highlighted in italics where appropriate.

Table 7: Selected examples of the theme of interconnectedness

Well again, the understanding of impermanence gives rise to *less greed and less holding onto things*. And the understanding of *interconnectedness* very much affects how I work with other people. In that sense, who I am in any moment, or who we are, is dependent on who everyone else is in any moment and who you are in this moment, somewhat depends on who I am. Therefore, we influence each other's lives. And certainly I wish that my influence on others to be as beneficial as possible. It is not just dyadic [between people], it [includes] the fireplace, the piece of paper, and the clouds, as well as things from the past. (Interviewee 2)
Insight leads to *increasing non-clinging and contentment*, which the precepts describe, how we tend to live as opposed to prescriptive of how we should live. So, at the descriptive level, *it's how we kind of naturally act in the world.* In that sense, insight of the experience of non-clinging, which is so *closely tied to insight,* is described behaviourally. More significantly for me, deep experiences of insight and deep experience of non-clinging come with practice, become reference points for me for when I do cling, so that I have a strong confidence, a strong belief or faith or whatever that *something about my inner nature if its left alone or left settled deeply on itself would be ethical.* The experience of being ethical and of the purity that comes from deep practice is a reference point for me. The precepts actually bring me some sense of joy because I see them as an expression of the depth of my practice not as a 'should' or commandments. (Interviewee 12)
Quite practically, *our welfare is mutual*. And to me, that is the basis of the precepts. (Interviewee 4)
To expound the dharma with this body is foremost. Ultimately with your actual activities of body, speech and mind, is what the dharma is about. (Interviewee 30)

Insight shows you that embodying the precepts is the *harmonious way of living with the way things are.* (Interviewee 5)

I look at the precepts as *logical, like laws of nature, which* is how things are. Do you want to live the happy life or smooth life? [If that is the case] then just live a non-harming life with great care. It's the natural way to live, it does not require effort and rules that make life more difficult, it just makes it easier and easier. It [derives from] not wanting to create more suffering and harm. *It comes like a natural flow,* that's in us all; [it's] just our nature that flows and when we're stuck, clouded or drowned or just trying to find a way [through], then the precepts are handy reminders [which] will help to reconnect. (Interviewee 10)

I think the precepts grow out of practice. And the practice gives us the recognition of an authentic way of life – how to live our life in a way that conforms with reality. (Interviewee 17)

So the understanding of the precepts at a deeper level still comes from the mindfulness, they provide some framework for my life in a way that the commandments don't. Because they are not prohibitions, as someone said today, you cannot really break the precepts, you can only break the relationship with them. (Interviewee 8)

Well, I think it is very natural. (Interviewee 29)

I'd say offhand that there's no unequivocal way of knowing. I go to the supermarket and it's not just automatic that I buy organic or I don't buy organic, and it's not so much a scripted thing for me, but an issue of what feels right to do, and certainly there's very strong motivation for looking after the environment. Part of insight for me is *insight of not being separate*. So rather than seeing the world in terms of myself and the rest of the world, there is a sense of I wouldn't piss in my pants. I would not use too many plastic bags because I'm not that different from the environment that's going to receive all this garbage later. It's very much feeling an *inseparable part of the world*, which, of course, eventually at time of death, is what we become. (Interviewee 13)

They come from where they [experience and what I have learned from Buddhism] meet. There, I see them as a *kind of framing of a natural kind of aspiration* that just comes out of life. I don't see them as rules or strictures. (Interviewee 18)

But as I have grown in my practice, *I see them as invitations towards the vision of connectedness.* And if I find myself violating one of the precepts, I know in my heart has closed down to the understanding of that interconnectedness. (Interviewee 7)

I think it comes down to that really profound interconnection of being part of all this and *the deep reverence of respect for life as it arises naturally* from that. (Interviewee 22)

The respondents emphatically conveyed the naturalness by which the experience of interconnection meets with not-harming and a sense of mutual care. As the mind calms and insight opens to an ontological interconnectedness, not-harming, which is at the root of Buddhist ethics, seems natural, just like not harming oneself.

The next extract reveals a further dimension between insight and ethics. This teacher warns of a certain insensitivity that might come about as a result of the fruits of practice; this again emphasises the need to be able to maintain a practice which confronts old habits of being cut off:

> So as you have some freedom, you also have to nurture it carefully, you know *really* take care of it. Not so much rein yourself in because your freedom is going to cause other people to be envious, but because your freedom can desensitise you to other people's feelings. Unfortunately, that can happen and sometimes, if I'm feeling good, there's a danger of arrogance, not necessarily a conscious arrogance, it's just acting in a way that's unconsciously egocentric [from] habits of self-centredness. And so the trick is to feel good and be aware of what's around you, so that you're not acting in a way that is hurtful to other people, and I feel like I have to put a lot of attention into that. (Interviewee 18)

The following interview excerpt links this point to the community level; while other respondents addressed this level, this one puts the same points more succinctly:

> I find community really crucial for my practice and for my teaching. They are the witness, in a way, of my own practice. They are the thermometer, they are the indicator of my practice, they keep me honest, if I make a mistake.

> Two manifestations of insight are compassion and wisdom. So in my relationship with community and organising, let's say organising community, it is informed by compassion and wisdom, and by that I mean respect, a sense of caring and, hopefully, some kind of, a little bit of clarity and sharpness in allowing for differences [in] people. Because people are so different, and they can all come to the same community, respect the differences, and then nourish, nourish, different nourishments for different people. (Interviewee 28)

8.3.1 Embodiment of the precepts

Question 13: *Does your insight experience completely protect you from breaking the precepts?*

Question 12 was devised to explore the relationship between insight and the precepts; it specifically focused on domains that relate to issues of Buddhist economics. Question 13 was designed to uncover (somewhat playfully) a common misunderstanding, that insight so transforms practitioners as to make them in a sense 'perfect'. The question was not simply about perfection – the ideal rather than an attainable goal – but also explored further the relationship between insight and action. Are such claims to perfection more aspirational than representative of the effects of insight? The question

was designed to elicit a broad discussion of the nature of this relationship, and how western Buddhist teachers work with ethical questions. The answers to this question accorded with the views established in excerpts quoted above: no-one laid claim to immediate transformation after experiencing insight.

One teacher's answer added another layer to the question:

> My *relationship* to the precepts can, can go astray, but the precepts don't break, fortunately. There is nothing from which to stray. On a more phenomenal level, I break the precepts. They're not a code of living, they're an intention for me. They're a vow for how I live my life. So the precepts really inform my life. I'll never be perfect, so I'm always going to break them, but there are some things, such as asking, 'How can I live, today, with a little more spirit of not harming and of giving life; a little more in the light of truth, rather than in a place of not being honest?' It's a beautiful thing, Buddhism, whether it's a part of our culture or not, but there are so many forms, so many inner directives. I don't mean directives in any sort of rigid frame way, but ways that can hold us and in a very open way, the way that a mother that loves her child holds her child.
>
> At that, the central level: there is no one to kill. There is nothing to steal. How can one possibly be dishonest? Who is that one? So that's my insight. It's all this [seeing] both sides of it. And the expression when I step out of that place and away from it, and 'take a step off a 100 foot pole'.[46] That's the manifestation of that experience, you know. The precepts are the actualisation of that experience. That's what it is! Those aren't made of things that someone would [think of as] a cool way to live a life, they are the expression of that experience. (Interviewee 3)

In this extract we are presented with what seems to be a crucial point, that the practice and the precepts are an expression of the experience of interconnectedness.

The next extract emphasises that the links between practice, insight and expression are not automatic:

> Nothing can protect you. Insight is insight, it is seeing into something, it doesn't change a thing ... you have to decide to change and there is always the possibility, sure. And there is, also, the possibility that a precept, for a good reason, should be broken. (Interviewee 5)

---

[46] In the Zen koan Wu-men kuan Case 46, the teacher Shih-shuang challenges his student by asking 'How would do you step from the top of a hundred foot pole?' The hundred foot pole is a metaphor for the phenomenological condition, where the only thing between life and free fall to an inevitable death is a very tall bamboo pole, which we instinctively cling to with a vice-like grip. The saying is metaphoric of letting go of all our attachments – completely – including to our own life.

The view given in the last sentence reiterates what other teachers have suggested, that Buddhist morality is not universalised, but is considered to be contextually dependent. In other words, what it is right to do depends on the various specific circumstances and requires some moral judgement, based on the sense of being an interconnected part of the universe.

8.3.2 Role of practice

The following question was largely answered by the responses to previous questions. However, a freshly repeated question does not always evoke the same answers, as was the case with my respondents. They used the following question as an opportunity to elaborate on what they thought were important points.

Question 14: *Can you make a distinction between the effects of insight and the accumulated benefits of practice?*

One response to this question returned us to the difficulty of sustaining practice, the lure of narcissism, and how practice in a community might help overcome these problems:

> I think it's possible to have spontaneous insights into emptiness and impermanence, and use them narcissistically; and so think that you really have a sustained practice. I'm not sure there are a lot of people with sustained practice. I'm not sure a lot of people sustain real practice. Sustained practice in community, I think, at least mitigates [the problem and sets] a new direction in building moral character, [particularly] if you didn't have it beforehand. (Interviewee 31)

What emerges from the responses to this question is that different traditions of Buddhism place different emphasis on each aspect of the eightfold noble path – insight, ethics and wisdom. The Diamond Sangha teachers seemed to be the most insight-oriented, whereas Insight Meditation teachers and Soto Zen teachers tended to place a higher priority on ethics. The Insight Meditation teachers' answers also focused on how practice worked in unconscious ways and developed character so that when insight did occur it was able to be integrated into the behaviour of the person. For many, the practice itself embodied insight: paying close attention to each moment revealed itself as insight. One teacher used the term 'deep naturalness' to describe the intimacy of being in the moment. My experience with Interviewee 18 evoked an intimacy that arose out of the calmness and awareness of the moment; there was a way in which we

naturally interconnected, as if mindful awareness in itself constitutes an experience of not-self.

8.3.3 The gift

Question 15: *Can you talk about your experience of giving/dana as compared to commercial transactions as in buying and selling? (Probe: What are the differences for you?)*

This question was inspired by Lewis Hyde's (1983) exploration of 'the gift'. He distinguishes two types of economies: a commodity (or exchange) economy constituted through the accumulation of wealth as the driving force; and the gift economy, which is driven by participants being rewarded according to how much they give to others. He shows that the latter type of economy is not restricted to pre-modern societies, but also informs certain aspects of the modern economy. For example, in academic work, status depends on an individual's contributions to the academic community. The transactions in academia which take the form of unpaid publications, presentations, editing journals, etc, are given priority because knowledge that is not circulated, like a gift not given, has no value. Hyde (1983) contends that the interactions on which the market economy operates tend to be impersonal, whereas the significant function of the 'gift economy' is to establish connection and strengthen the relationships. It recognises ritual and moral dimensions in exchange which Hyde describes as 'erotic' (in the sense of Eros, or life force) as opposed to 'logos' (in which reason and logic predominate). Several teachers referred to Hyde's work and its suggestion that the gift is not lost when it circulates. Here are two examples:

> I keep coming back to *The Gift* by Lewis Hyde. It's a completely inspiring book and he's a Buddhist practitioner, actually. Yeah, he practises Zen, but the insight is that giving is circular and that has been very much my internal and external experience. Suzuki Roshi talked about this also. When you hold onto a gift, it is dead. When you keep giving, material things, you can give your time, you can give spiritual teachings, that giving is completely circular and you're also receiving. You have to keep it circulating. That's really my experience. (Interviewee 18)

> Insight informs that, in seeing that [things are] not given away, nothing is lost, nothing is given. It is somehow offered up, rather than offered from here to there, and therefore it seems like it disappears from the ownership of, something disappears from the owner, one location of ownership and reappears in another location of ownership. At least the location of ownership transfers, and yet insight

> can inform that it is just offered up, it is life giving back to itself. That can be seen in a very simple gift of something to somebody, and it can be seen in the constant process of the way life gives back to itself, the way life gives the human body form itself, and then the human body in form gives it back to life in becoming dust in the ground. (Interviewee 9)

In this last response, we can see the reiteration of the worldview of Buddhist insight, where the self is redefined. Its notion of self – a recurring theme of this research suggests – ontological questions that go to the heart of economic thought. How we understand a transaction is challenged if there are no simple individual, unitary points of exchange. Contrary to mainstream economics, the window of insight reveals a very different sense of being in the world, one which problematises the possessive and acquisitive individual.

For this interviewee, the idea of life giving back to itself presents a stark contrast to neoclassical assumptions about economic behaviour, yet as a different way of seeing economic life, it needs clarification about how one might act in the world from this other point of view. The teacher quoted above continues with an example:

> Last year I had my wallet stolen, and it actually had quite a lot of money in it that day. There was a sadness in that somehow, in acknowledgment of the pain of life. Not my pain of losing my wallet, but the pain that was evidently felt by the guy who had to steal my wallet, because he was obviously in the difficulty of having to do that. There is this lovely Zen story of the monk [who returned home] to find a thief, stealing his clothes or something, and that was about all he had, he didn't have any possessions, and so he said, the guy felt sheepish, but he said 'Oh take them, no problem', and as he left, the monk said 'poor fellow, I wish I could give you this beautiful moon'. (Interviewee 9)

The moon is a common metaphor for enlightenment, and something, I suspect, that has a special place in the practice, as looking at a full moon seems to arouse a sense of oneness. The story quoted is based on a poem by the Zen monk Ryokan, *The Moon Cannot Be Stolen*, which in full is as follows:

> Ryokan, a Zen master, lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening a thief visited the hut, only to discover there was nothing in it to steal. Ryokan returned and caught him. 'You may have come a long way to visit me', he told the prowler, 'and you should not return empty-handed. Please take my clothes as a gift.' The thief was bewildered. He took the clothes and slunk away. Ryokan sat naked, watching the moon. 'Poor fellow,' he mused, 'I wish I could give him this beautiful moon.' (Reps, 1957: 27)

While this story may be Ryokan's own creation, the legend it started highlights the spirit of the insight that the teachers are describing. Clearly, such an extreme response as the monk's in the story is not how the interviewees might respond. Few contemporary Buddhist teachers have cultivated Ryokan's austere lifestyle. One exception was a teacher I interviewed in his home. This teacher appeared to live in voluntary poverty, as his house was furnished with shabby old furniture, with no modern appliances – quite a shocking contrast to the typically middle-class circumstances of most teachers. My observation was that all of the teachers maintained property, and the communal property ownership found in monastic communities is not the norm. While we can ponder how practical Ryokan's choice would be for modern western Buddhist teachers, there is a way in which Ryokan's freedom from attachment sets up an ideal in their practice.

The loss of the wallet challenged the teacher quoted above, as it contained all the money he had at that time. When asked if he was upset by this loss he replied:

> I experienced a trust in life somehow. There might have been a temptation to respond in a habitual way, what the culture presents as a way of getting upset and feeling like a victim and all that stuff. But when I reflect on it, I don't see that I'm going to starve, I don't see that losing all that money has a real capacity to do me any actual harm. It doesn't really have a capacity to damage or create suffering. Because if suffering is seen as not being the result of that [act], but something that we are much more responsible for, internally, then one can always choose not to suffer – not to choose that road, not to choose the reactivity, not to choose the feeling of victimisation, not to choose the suffering. And if one doesn't choose that, then naturally from arising is a sadness at the pain of the other person's feeling. A recognition of the difficulty people are experiencing, you know, difficulties of life that are experienced. I'm not going to pretend that I was utterly untouched by it. It caused me a considerable degree of difficulty, but of external difficulty somehow.
>
> *Interviewer:* So the decisions you made, where would they come from, in terms of choices and so on in life; not necessarily about money and so on.
>
> Hopefully from a clarity of knowing what the most important things in life are not being willing to compromise that. [Not] being willing to compromise anything else is the truth, the way things are, and seeing clearly what in life is true and unshakeable.
>
> *Interviewer:* And how do you know that's true?
>
> Because there is a direct knowing of it: that which is true shows, shines the light clearly and unmistakeably on that which is not true. And by seeing all that, which is not true, in the way that it perhaps seemed to be, that which is true mysteriously, sweetly and unmistakably shines forth. It informs decisions that are made in life.

> And out of that, appropriate and skilful action hopefully follows. I mean, if it is made out of that, appropriate and skilful decisions do follow. I can't give you a causal relationship between how that happens but that's part of the mystery of life, somehow is. That's what's called grace, I think. Grace is the translation of the truth into life. (Interviewee 9)

8.3.4 Grace

The notion of *grace* is an interesting response. It introduces an essentially Christian notion into the discourse. It was not an isolated response. In a subsequent response on the value of giving, a teacher pointed to a similar sense of the mysterious:

> Yes, it definitely relates to less holding; holding on causes suffering. There is a relationship between giving and receiving, and I know that as long as I am giving, what I really need will be provided. (Interviewee 2)

This response gave witness to a similar trust in the world, which the previous interview had spoken of, so I suggested the connection:

> *Interviewer*: So you believe in a kind of grace, for want of a better word?
>
> For want of a better word! I believe that they coexist; giving and receiving are happening simultaneously; if one is blocked then the other is blocked also. (Interviewee 2)

The non-dual perspective does not discriminate between transactions, and the giver and the receiver are not different. If this were to be taken literally, however, we might ask how a person could conceivably be able to make any decisions, when the distinction between self and other are blurred. Clearly, teachers do make such distinctions, and the question of how teachers make decisions in the world will be explored in detail in chapter 9. The notion of grace in Buddhism seems to be related to a sense of what is called 'the mystery', which seems to be more in the Daoist sense of a natural flow in life, rather than the working of God. In the following extract, from another interview, this theme developed in an interesting direction, one which illuminates how this sense of grace might be connected with action.

> *Interviewer*: So when you are talking about mind and body falling away, what is left?
>
> Freedom! Liberation! It's an immeasurable mystery which communicates one's true nature for sure. But it communicates something which cannot possibly take birth, and therefore cannot possibly change, cannot possibly wither away, and that's what's left. So therefore it's not some misunderstanding of things in terms of

> no thing or nothing. Not at all. I repeat there is nothing to lose, the culmination of everything and realising nothingness. I think it would probably generate despair or negativity [if it were simply emptiness], but that's a thought. It doesn't do [that] because it's brimming full, and the natural outcome is happiness, natural organic daily actions. That's a natural outcome of it. (Interviewee 20)

It may be hard to make sense of the notion of a 'nothingness' that is 'brimming full', and the teacher reveals his awareness of common misunderstandings. The source of confusion around the terms 'nothingness' and 'emptiness' derives from Buddhism's different epistemological emphasis: where modernity seeks utility outside itself, Buddhism takes an inward turn, giving its terms a phenomenological meaning. Emptiness is thus the *felt sense* of lacking an abiding atomistic self, and, according to this teacher, it reveals itself as one's 'true nature', which has a sense of naturalness that is liberating and communicates our sense of self as 'an immeasurable mystery'. This is something very different from being someone special – more like not being apart from everything.

As noted earlier, insight doesn't necessarily have a causal relationship to action in the world; in the following interview the teacher discusses how he has created a practice to transform commercial transactions in line with his insight:

> Even in a store when there's transaction and it's just a commercial transaction, what I take, what I pick up, whatever that item is, I lift it up a little bit. Even if it's only an inch, whatever item it is, I pick it up. It's not so that anyone can see, but it just raises it for me and this changes transaction in my heart and changes how I perceive the other. It no longer is just a commercial interaction. There's two people are doing something together.
>
> In Korea, I noticed a guy in a train (I'm not sure what his job was), but each time he walked into the car and it was everywhere that I went in Korea, he'd step in and he would bow his head a little bit. That has to change how he perceived his job and how he perceived the people he was working with and I know it changed how I felt towards him, and then it changed how I felt towards the people I was sitting next to, which then changed how I felt about the whole train ride. That's what happens for me in these transactions of just lifting something just a half an inch. I noticed my wife does that too, and she clearly picked that up somewhere in the same sort of practice. We've talked about that, too, and it just shifts a little bit. No longer is this just material, this is now a matter to practice. (Interviewee 3)

The practice of raising the object as an offering transformed the experience of each transaction; it points to the need for a deeper epistemology, more subtle than the behaviourist foundation so prevalent in economic thought. We need to recognise these symbolic embodied dimensions, which Bourdieu (1990/1980) claims that 'objectivist'

analyses fail to account for. In raising an object, the teacher recalls that everything is connected to this immeasurable mystery as a practice and as an insight.

8.3.5 Insights into decision-making

Mindful attention is yet to be fully appreciated in the West for its potential as an epistemological tool. Mindfulness relates to the monitoring, observing capacity of consciousness. Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, Carlson and Anderson (2004) regard mindfulness as a heightened or sustained attention to, and awareness of, current events and experience. When such a developed skill is applied to everyday life, an advanced practitioner might notice things that ordinary people miss. This different view was addressed in the following two extracts:

> Well, what I feel like I'm trying to do is work with just that same kind of process – to look at states of mind, to be aware. Sometimes even to stop for a moment and consider, in an ordinary moment, not in a moment of amplified emotion, but an ordinary moment, to consider what state of mind I'm in, what it feels like. Then, move on from there. If it's a state that's more heightened, then I may have to put more attention on it, so that the attention is such that I can act in a considerate way to people around me; to not leak, or not act out my impulses, but to act out of somewhere, in which I have some area of choice. Particularly when feeling some aversive emotion, it really helps me to step back and really not act. (Interviewee 18)

This process of skilled attention is something that this next teacher goes to some length to explain.

> Awareness is a capacity that we all have, but it just gets covered over by all these things that are going on in the mind. Most people think that they're pretty aware, everybody thinks they're pretty much aware, and when someone tells them awareness is a skill, this surprises them. I don't know if anybody has ever measured it, but I would guess that people are less than half [or] 50% aware. We do things so blindly, without reflection, without seeing what we're doing; we get swept along by our emotions and therefore we are at risk for advertising campaigns to hook us into behaviours that aren't in our best interest. (Interviewee 17)

It needs to be emphasised that this sort of awareness is not something that happens naturally, but comes through cultivation of a mindfulness practice, which, like any skill, develops over time. These observations highlight a potential new tool capable of bringing new light on the process of decision-making. One of the most interesting

findings is that many teachers observed that they were not conscious of their own decision-making.

These teachers are able to find a very different place from which they are able to operate and be. This can be seen in the following teacher's discussion:

> That place that I was talking about before, when I was talking about the conditioned and the unconditioned, which is when something arises and I am finding equanimity with it, and I'm no longer reactive to it essentially dissolves. And when it dissolves, I am back on some level, that place of pure awareness, rather than in discursive mind and ego mind, being reactive. In that moment, I really am in touch with my heart and able to respond from a different place than if I'm caught in the ego's reaction to what's happening in my conditioned mind. (Interviewee 23)

This is an essentially new way of relating to the world, one in which new knowledge is generated. It is also a new ontology, as the normal sense of self is changed; this does not mean that something supra-natural is occurring; rather, there is a reconfiguring, a new way of categorising self, that is not intellectual. It works at the level of unconscious processing in which we 'feel' or 'know' we are no longer what we first thought. These results do not challenge cognitive science, but reflect what we already know, that consciousness is something we construct. They are accounts of what it feels like to shift that construction, and this shift, at least subjectively, has an impact, as we can see in rest of his account:

> So when I do that, I have more spaciousness with what's arising within myself, and therefore more spaciousness in the interaction that is happening. Then I have a choice. Do I want to respond in a skilful and kind way, or compassionate way and understanding way? The answer is always yes! (Interviewee 23)

The notion of the gift is intimately tied up with choice, as a gift is not something we choose. The value of a gift comes from an appreciation of its intention, rather than its function. Since gifts are not necessarily commodious, we may find they do not suit our sense of who we are, but rather require of us some accommodation to what the giver intended. The power of a gift is related to the giver's intentions. For example, when I asked this teacher about why he disrobed after being a monk, and returned to the world, he said:

> Well, there's a couple of reasons why [I didn't just stay in the forest monastery]. First of all, as a monk, a lot was given to me so that I could address the pain in my

> life, and I needed to give something back. It would not have felt right for me to stay in the forest. You know, it's give and take. Yeah, I didn't realise it at the time, but as I have taught, I realise that a lot of what was given back was given to me or was given to me as a way of addressing my suffering, so I have to give back – it's the only way I can explain it. (Interviewee 23)

This teacher went on to declare, with tears streaming down his face, the deep appreciation he has for the poor people of Burma and Thailand who supported him as a monk. The path of a monastic appealed to him because of his experience as a victim of childhood abuse, leaving him the only survivor, having lost his brother and sister to suicide. Through his diligent integration of the practice, he was able to find healing. While he is still not free of suffering, he has learnt to skilfully address it and help others. This relational aspect is not present in the possessive rationality of *homo oeconomicus*.

The findings revealed a common theme of being able to make choices with clarity. Clarity leading to compassion was experienced time and time again. For example:

> I look at the fundamental principle, expressed in the precepts: there is a foundation in one's experience of non-harming, it has to emerge out of the insight, that no beings cherish suffering, all beings wish to be and feel safe. From that understanding, that the self of my self, so to speak, and the self of yourself, actually there is not much difference, the commonality is so strong. So therefore I don't want other people to harm me and obviously I don't want to harm anybody else, so in that simple ethic comes the reminder and motivator to organise. It intrudes into my political thinking, it's all based on interconnectedness people, animals and their environment all matter because they are all related, and all three need each other, and that's got to be the underpinning of economic and political decisions. (Interviewee 20)

In his discussion of moral character, Varela (1999: 30) points out that such clarity is essential to adroit human interaction, noting: 'Those people who act from habitual response patterns rather than with intelligent awareness fail to perceive situations accurately. Those people whose actions are generated by adherence to rules are like beginners learning a motor skill.' Drawing on the work of the Chinese Taoist philosopher Mencius, Varela highlights the value of the cultivation of this clarity. According to Varela (1999, 30), 'Such a person does not act out of ethics, but embodies it like any expert embodies his know-how; the wise man *is* ethical, or more explicitly, his actions arise from inclinations that his disposition produces in response to specific situations'. Several interviewees suggested that close observation of their own decision-making revealed a similar wisdom and that many decisions just arise out of life. The following dialogue with the above teacher captures this:

> The way my brain cells function, I hardly think along the lines of making decisions. Often I don't think of myself as a decision-maker. In other words, the decision is – sounds a bit bizarre – made after 'I have done it'. So [I notice that] something is happening, inwardly or outwardly, together, and out of this a new direction emerges. Afterwards, I'll say to others, because others will ask me 'When did you decide to do that?' And I will say I decided such and such. So decisions are made later.
>
> *Interviewer*: It sounds like retrospective sense-making.
>
> Yes, I can't recall ever making a decision, as it were in the moment; it seems like things just happen, and in an active way not in passive way. I am not a passive person.
>
> *Interviewer*: Would you say that if, when you really pay attention to the moment, choices arise out of the moment?
>
> Other people tell me that.
>
> *Interviewer*: But it sounds like you don't even notice the choices, you just ...
>
> It's extremely rare, and I know it tends to go a little bit against the culture, insofar as the culture is always talking about choosing, about optimum choices about everything. I tend to think from the standpoint of *samadhi*, I tend to think of choices as a movement that's gone on at a deeper levels, that's it much more, as if sending up a ripple out of the unconscious mind comes 'Oh shall I do this, shall I do that'. Eventually I've got to make a choice, but I think it's just these waves that produce a movement of some kind, some formulation of shall I do this or shall I do that. If inside is steady, choices seem very low key. The discomfort, dilemma or confusion of going back – shall I or shan't I – is all movement of the mind, which is quite unsatisfactory. So if we've done our practice, and there is mindfulness, steadiness and *samadhi*, then it's just responding to what's appropriate. I don't get much sense of my life as making choices and I am, in no sense, any prisoner to circumstances. So as a small example: today at 2.15 there was a conference meeting scheduled. I didn't know that and I had an important appointment. When I rang up, I found I was due to be at this meeting at 2.15, and I was told 'Oh, you've really got to be here, you can't miss this. Everybody expects you to be here.' So I rang up the accountants and found they were actually coming two hours later, so I could attend the conference meeting. Now, it could be said that I had made the choice to go and changed my mind and thus made a fresh decision and to choose to go to meet with the accountants later. So perfectly fine, I will not say that, at the time, it feels like I make choice, but it felt like I was responding to what is appropriate. One feels good about it. (Interviewee 20)

This reply presents a model of decision-making that is heavily located in the unconscious workings of the mind. Mindfulness at this level reveals how moments of decision are not as clear as rational models assume. This sense of decision-making seems to dovetail with existing theories on emergent decision-making (Falconer, 2002).

A great deal of economic thought, however, is predicated on the rational economic actor, and yet an increasing literature, particularly in marketing, suggests otherwise. These results suggest that, from a Buddhist perspective, decisions largely co-arise contextually, although the significant choices we make in our lives, such as choosing to enrol at university, may involve some deliberation. Skilled introspection, using mindful attention, may be a valuable new approach to understanding decision-making, and, while these results should be viewed as tentative, further study might reveal a different picture to the rational model. Already, close inspection of everyday choices has revealed them to be far less conscious than we recall; this view has increasing support in the psychological literature (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

CHAPTER 9

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

If you want truly to understand something, try to change it.

Kurt Lewin (1951)

9.1 Introduction

A dialogical space implies that, through discursive practices, new knowledge can be created. This final chapter seeks to continue the dialogical encounter by bringing into the conversation the understandings established in chapters 2, 3 and 4, with a discussion of what the western Buddhist teachers had to say about their insight experiences and their relationship to action. Thus, the following sections will explore the implications of their learning for both Buddhism and economic thinking.

Section 9.2 reviews the findings on the nature of insight set out in chapter 6. Recognising that that these experiential accounts present a unique and relatively untapped source of material for understanding Buddhism, the implications for new theorising are explored. It is argued that, through engaging with the empirical data of these experiential accounts, there is a potential way out of the interminable speculative debates that seem to have mired much of contemporary religious studies. Clearly, there is much to be learnt from the accounts of Buddhist teachers (and practitioners) as sources of data. The number of teachers interviewed provides a broad enough sample of new data to propose potential new ways of resolving some basic debates that seem to have entangled the literature regarding Buddhist religious experience, and potentially that of other religions.

The findings of this study have already highlighted some potential new understandings. The first is the recognition that Buddhist insight might be better understood as higher-order learning, a view which shifts the emphasis away from specific experiences, which are relatively ephemeral and possibly ineffable, to a more enduring mental construct. The cultivation of Buddhist practices results in greatly improved access to these experiences; it allows for a reflective learning, which results in lasting knowledge that is underestimated by the literature on religious experience. There is a dearth of studies that

simply ask ‘experienced’ Buddhists about what they have learnt. This may seem odd, but upon reflection it is a manifestation of the wider distrust of subjectivity, which characterises modernity. This research takes a significant step forward by shifting the focus away from the phenomenological moment of the actual experiences to what was learnt from that experience. This adds a new perspective, which is far more robust, our knowledge through learning is stronger than simply one experience. Learning involves the development of specialised neural patterns, and relies on different types of memory. This distinction exists in the literature on phenomenology and education, but is underexplored in terms of religious experience and may be useful in opening up new territory by qualifying different types of accounts.

The results confirm the general thrust in traditional Buddhism that the common, everyday sense of self is an illusion. This was what Buddhist teachers regarded as their most important learning. Serendipitously, while in the field I was able to personally co-experience such an experience with a particularly adept teacher. My own experience added to the results, in that I could confirm this general theme of interconnection and fuzziness of the self which the vast majority of teachers had described. As with these teachers, the experience proved to be vividly accessible for me – something I am able to recall as I write. There is a way in which I learnt to re-experience it as before, and to use this as a method to reflect on my relationship to the world – a relationship that, when closely examined, reveals an intimacy in which the distinction between self and other is, as Derrida (1980) aptly suggests as, ‘undecidable’.

These findings point to basic misconceptions driving much research on Buddhism, as well as parallel studies into altered or alternative states of consciousness. Research programs which seek something abnormal or other-worldly, based on a literal interpretation of ‘oneness with the universe’, as something godlike, fail to recognise simpler and potentially natural explanations. While it may be possible that the human mind is capable of supernatural feats, it is more likely that such interpretations of Buddhist enlightenment are simply erroneous. The findings do not suggest a need for extreme or alternative states of the mind, but rather the recognition that, like being a fish in water, our ordinary consciousness, when examined in the light of sustained and purposeful attention, reveals itself as already deeply intimate with all things. We are fooled into, as David Abram (1997: 8) suggests, ‘the modern, civilized assumption that

the natural world is largely determinate and mechanical, and that that which is regarded as mysterious, powerful, and beyond human ken must therefore be of some other, non-physical realm above nature, "supernatural".'

Contemporary physics is painting a new picture of the universe, one which is growing in complexity and becoming stranger and stranger. The universe may be more a dynamic whole, made up of changing processes, than something of substance. Similarly, this research suggests that what we regard as ordinary states of mind are not so ordinary. Why should human consciousness, something that is a recent development in evolutionary history and has only relatively recently developed a sense of autonomy, reflect an independent and separate existence? From a biological perspective, it is doubtful whether human interests can truly diverge from those of the ecology in which they are interdependent on other-than-human beings. The separate and distinct unitary self of an 'I' may simply be an illusion that has no basis, but may have developed as an accident of evolutionary history along with cognition, as a construction which gave members of the species certain survival benefits. Like Richard Dawkins' 'god delusion', the 'self delusion' may also be a valuable mechanism that protected us at some point from extinction. While it might seem far-fetched to extrapolate this logic, it may be that breaking out of this delusion might prove to be the next evolutionary step, as it is clear from the findings that the recognition of the 'self delusion' does have some profoundly valuable survival consequences.

Drawing on the work of Gregory Bateson (1972) on higher-order learning, a new interpretation of Buddhism is possible, one which regards it as simply an existential insight into the natural cognitive construction of consciousness. This view is not an attempt to modernise Buddhism, but recognises that, in this regard, Buddhism transcends culture, in the way that the natural transcends culture as both a constructor and construction of culture. Terry Eagleton (2000) reminds us of the link between culture and cultivation. An explanation of the diversity of Buddhist traditions might thus be that each Buddhist tradition cultivates a culturally distinct view of its insight into the natural state of the self. While there is some reason to be sceptical of purely narrative views of the self, ordinary self understanding seems to be intertwined with narrative, which, as Wittgenstein (2002/1953) suggests, might otherwise suffer from a lack of grounding outside of convention, custom, context and social practice.

The implications for economic theory are discussed along with the results in this section. The findings challenge the traditional economic view of self, which can be recognised as a derivative of the ordinary sense of self, which emerges instinctively and remains the common sense of who we think we are. While the Buddhist view implies a complete revision of the central notion of the individual in economic theory, such a revision contains these two aspects: the view of the grasping egoistic self, which somewhat coincides with existing economic models, as illusionary; and the expanded view, in which it is interconnected. These two views open up the horizon for economics (the broader theoretical implications of this are discussed in section 9.6).

Section 9.3 examines the transformative consequences of this learning and reveals that that these experiences shifted Buddhist teachers' experience of life enormously. Recognising the self as a construction opens up a deep sense of freedom and liberation, and, as Bateson (1972: 304) suggests, 'any freedom from the bondage of habit must also denote a profound redefinition of the self'. It also meets with profound existential questions, such as the question of the distinction between life and death, examined in chapter 3. This dimension gives new meaning to Derrida's (1974) deconstruction, which points to the instability of grammatical categories and the distinctions that we take for granted. A key consequence of Derrida's understanding is the demise of the centred subject, which involves a certain level of abstraction in its relationship to the undermining of 'subject-object opposition'. Buddhist practices of self-inquiry bring this undermining to the experienced sense of self, thus going beyond Derrida's own project. Loy (1992b: 250) suggests, 'Derrida shows only that language cannot grant access to any self-present meaning' and thus fails to meet its potential of radical transformation of the narrative self. The experiences of Buddhist teachers provide some clues as to what it is to experience what Derrida is pointing to. The most salient is liberation, and the great reduction in suffering from the egoistic grasping of the self.

Section 9.4 reviews the findings on how insight influences action, and examines how Buddhist teachers engage with the modern world. This section explores the findings in chapter 8 and begins to suggest a commonality which, given the diversity of the sample, is suggestive of something more fundamental than a cultural artefact. Many Buddhist practices have a function that goes beyond obtaining insight to be enabling skills for actualising that experience and its impetus into action. They link to the important

contribution of traditional frameworks for being in the world which both reflect and support the insight view and are cultivated to form a habitus of Buddhist practice. In this regard, this forms a new perspective on economic motivation which is liberated from the old motivation of lack. This suggests a new foundation for rationality which recognises how our assumptions of choice imply a freedom we don't necessarily have. Buddhist liberation, however, is no magic bullet, and the Zen phrase 'Ordinary mind is the Way' points to a natural existential conundrum. It challenges us to follow through the true ontological implications of the hard problem of consciousness, and to examine how our biologically conditioned way of making sense of the world may be another aspect of life that we can understand through disciplined cultivation, just as mathematics and measurement opened up new doors. This is not a naïve call to religious belief, but a call to revisit its existential questions in new ways, recognising that there are problems and that the finding also convey that Buddhist insight is mediated by social, cultural and individual processes. It is also opens us to the mysterious nature of the universe, which, as Lewis Hyde suggests, comes to as *a gift*.

Section 9.5 returns briefly to examine questions of validity of subjective thinking. Section 9.6 concludes by provide the foundation for the opening up of new horizons for both contemporary Buddhism and economic thinking.

9.2 Contemporary Buddhist insight

The focus of this research is on the experience of western Buddhist teachers who have gained a unique and distinctive understanding through the lived experience of applying Buddhist practices in modern (late capitalist) western societies. While two of the teachers interviewed were born in Asia, all had spent most of their lives in the West or had done their training in distinctly western traditions. Many of the sample had access to previously unavailable frames of reference, such as a western tertiary education, and in this way their understanding is likely to differ from Buddhists in many parts of Asia. This unique view of western Buddhists, as Prebish and Baumann (2002: 4) observed, translates into 'innovative, non-Asian, derived forms' of practice. The view taken here is that Buddhist teachers are not simply repackaging Buddhism, as McMahan (2002) suggests is the case with Zen, but are in a unique position to challenge the orthodoxy from frames of reference outside it. The habitus of these teachers' lives is the

intersection between these two worldviews, and their choices enact the process of this dialogical space.

9.2.1 Western Buddhist experience

The contrasting views of western Buddhist teachers to traditional Buddhism are likely to be partially derived from their different cultural backgrounds, but it is doubtful that this is, as Mellor (1991) suggests, simply cultural transmogrification. Mellor (1991: 76), in a somewhat dubious interpretation of Buddhism, argues that '*rejection* [italics added] of self' is one of the major defining characteristics of Buddhism, and observes that certain Protestant characteristics are present in English Buddhism. However, he makes the important point that there is an obvious cultural interaction between western versions of Buddhism and western culture. He reiterates Jacob Neusner's (1988) view that 'a major problem in the study of religion is that Protestant perspectives have combined with a post-Enlightenment scientific tradition to present religion as essentially a personal, private matter rather than an issue of culture'. Mellor (1991) disputes that Buddhism can be simply transferred into a western context free of cultural baggage. His view acknowledges the enabling role of structures and systems in a culture; ones that allow for new developments such as Buddhism to occur also constitute part of this development. Arguably, there is a dynamic interplay between the host culture and the embodied practices of a religion, but an interplay which does not conform to established categories. In the case of Buddhism, the goal of freedom from suffering is a contingent effect of practice that results from an experiential deconstruction of self – not a discursive construction of a *rejection* of self as Mellor (1991) understands it, but the *experience* of *anattā*.

The previous chapters set out a range of interview material which provides evidence for the existence of such a distinctive form of experience. This suggests an explanation of Buddhist insight which is not some mystical transcendent reality, but rather is best regarded as a phenomenon that relates to the actual nature of the cognitive construction of the self. This is a view which has gained increasing currency; for example, Owen Flanagan (2002) suggests that we should abandon supernatural conceptions of ourselves and replace them with a naturalised view, one which complies with the growing body of scientific evidence. The accounts of Buddhist teachers fit with Flanagan's (2002)

perspective, adding considerable detail to how this recognition impacts on the perceivers.

This view suggests a different interpretation of Nāgārjuna's argument, as set out by Garfield (1994), which suggests that no phenomena exist independently, whilst at the same time appearing as conventionally real. Clearly, the teachers experience a conventional view of reality was transformed by their insight. The difference from Garfield's (1994) interpretation is that the view of the phenomena shifted, not the phenomena themselves. Old distinctions between an independent world and an independent self are subjectively challenged. The teachers subjectively experienced what it feels like to have the self, just fall away. The vast majority of teachers, in response to a variety of non-directive questions regarding insight, consistently described experiences of shifts in their view of their self in the world. These experiences were not random one-off events, as one teacher explains:

> I think, for me, insights are happening again and again, and they are always unexpected. A lot of things come during retreats, but lots of them come in unexpected situations. (Interviewee 15)

While these experiences have some of the correlates with what are called mystical experiences, there are also differences. The findings suggest that these experiences occur somewhat randomly, which might explain the difficulty psychologists have found in capturing and measuring such experiences, particularly when their subjects are wired up to record neurological activity. For most teachers, experiences, in themselves, did not appear to fulfil the goals of the practice. As one teacher explains:

> Somehow the big flashes are flashes, just flashes, and if one invests too much in that I think one has trouble afterward. If these things aren't burned out, then there will be the flashes and it will be something actually got, and that will be sort of trying to live up to something! I am really wary of that, but that doesn't take away wisdom or anything from anyone, but I think specialness is really the biggest problem. (Interviewee 10)

This western insight teacher is cautious regarding the potential of the ego to grasp hold of being special and unique through having an insight. It is important to note that this suggests that there is 'someone' that *has* the insight (of not being someone), otherwise the potential for grasping onto one's insight would not occur. This presents a kind of paradox, in which meditation cultivates experiences which enable a person to recognise

that the self, with which they have identified all their life, is ephemeral and an illusion. The sense of this illusion is conveyed in the following playful exchange with a Zen teacher:

> *Interviewer*: So do you realise that you are the ten thousand things?[47]
>
> I wasn't there [laughs].
>
> *Interviewer*: Perhaps the ten thousand things realised you?
>
> I wasn't there.
>
> *Interviewer*: So, who realised you weren't there?
>
> I am realising now, that I wasn't there, maybe I was. If you can find some witness ... (Interviewee 6)

This experience of no-one there was reiterated in the following interviewee's dialogue:

> You know it is not even an experience when there is no-one there to experience it. It is only on reflection that it is an experience. This experience can be expressed and explained in many different ways, which are all metaphors for the experience. (Interviewee 5)

The metaphors for expressing such an experience manifest themselves in Zen texts in a variety of colourful ways. We find they are not simply described as an experience of *no-self*, but rather, for a person carrying out their daily tasks, such as chopping wood, it is experienced as suddenly they are not there: there is just chopping wood. David Loy (1995: 18) explains:

> Having given up the love of self, and let go of the sense of self, we do not attain some other reality but realise the true nature of this one, which is all we need. That is why the essence of Zen can be 'chopping wood and carrying water'.

Another example (Aitken, 1990: 226) is the famous reply: 'Oak tree in the garden' given by the revered Ch'an master Chao-Chou in answer to being asked about the true nature of Zen. For Chao-Chou, there is nobody but the oak tree creaking in the gentle breeze.

---

[47] In a Zen context this means the universe of things.

It is impossible to really understand these experiences unless one has experienced something like it. For most of us, we do not doubt there is 'someone' there, a gap between observer and observed, but it is conceivable that if we were to experience a moment with such attentiveness, that we were able to recognise that there never was a self in the first place, then ontologically our view of ordinary reality might shift. This is because we view the world from a personal perspective: 'I' view 'the world'; but if there was just 'the world' which is consistent with the notion of anattā, we might get a different sense of who we are. This experience for Interviewee 5 (above) eventually involved some form of comprehension, as his memory traces allowed for a cognitive representation of it. Cognitive processing does not stop; even if such alternative states convey oneness, the mind is quite conceivably capable of simultaneously constructing an 'I' that is having an experience of oneness. Nevertheless, it was found that only after a number of such experiences, depending on how significant they were, did Buddhist teachers begin to 'have' a new relation to the world.

This appears to be quite a complex process, however, as Bucknell (1983: 116) explains in the following idiographic account of insight – that after a great deal of practice he was able to maintain what he called 'awareness' in which he was able to uninterruptedly observe his thinking:

> It seemed natural to describe awareness with the statement, 'I am observing the mental processes'. But at the same time, that statement was self-evidently misleading. It suggested a situation analogous to that of a spectator watching a street parade, which was not at all the situation that existed in awareness. It was not a case of an observer, 'I,' engaged in observing a spectacle, 'the mental processes'. Rather – and this was the central insight of awareness – the observer was the mental processes. Instead of saying, 'I am observing the mental processes', one ought to say, 'I am the mental processes'. In fact I verbalised this startling revelation in more or less the following words: 'Good grief, this is me! I'm all this!' The supposed observer was identical with the object being observed. And the same was true of the supposed act of observing: the observing of the mental processes was nothing other than those processes. Observer, observed and observing were all one and the same.

Bucknell (1983) appears to have awakened to what seems to him a phenomenological fact: through the cultivation of a capacity for unaffected observation he found his identity dependently arising with his mental processes. When this awareness broke down, he found the split returned, along with the sense of being 'I, the thinker'. This is clearly something other than the ineffability that James (1902/1985) suggested was a

defining characteristic of the mystical experience. In this regard, as Wright (1998: 48) points out, 'utterances can only be understood within actual speech situations where shared assumptions enable interlocutors to make sense of each other'. Unless there is a shared understanding regarding the taste of tea, we would find that the experience of the taste of tea is ineffable. Wright (1998) argues that in Zen the shared context of practice and its experiences allows for a dialogue that can shift the conventional, common-sense relations of words, thus breaking the hold of ordinary language meanings on the mind. 'The experience eludes objective representation by overturning the foundations from which representation proceeds' (Wright, 1998: 99). In this situation, the language only makes sense in the context of the practices; as the practitioner begins to understand the practice, so too does the language begin to make sense, allowing the practitioner to share meaning with others as they proceed.

Bucknell (1983) believes that 'beyond doubt' his insight is dependent on learning to perfect his awareness. The cultivation of such a capacity for awareness seems to be an important aspect of the practice, but the above findings include spontaneous recognitions of the same thing. These are not always as aware of the basis of thought in the experience: where Bucknell (1983) finds 'the supposed observer identical with the object being observed', Interviewee 11 finds just 'letting the world rush in and make me up'.

9.2.2 Cultivating insight

The sense of cultivating insight is a theme in Buddhist writing. Having an insight experience does not necessarily in itself imply a shift in understanding. It is possible to unconsciously grasp onto the self, and, according to Buddhadasa (1996), the last defilement is ignorance. Interviewee 26 comments on this:

> Unconsciousness is delusion; it's one of the poisons and it does poison. Maybe the most important thing I'd want to say is how do you keep making conscious what is happening. You keep noticing, it is a kind of mindfulness practice where you notice what's going on, what's occurring, how does it feel inside of me, what do I notice the effects of it are, ask, inquiring what is this? What is this? What is this about? What are the intentions and motivations going into this event? Enquiring of other people, well what are you doing? How do you feel about this? What is this for you? You just keep asking questions until it does rise into consciousness, and there's some ability to articulate and then make clear decisions based on that articulation.

There is clearly an ongoing need for cultivation in which there is development of the insight through practice to recognise how subtle (perhaps unconscious) thoughts seep in. Case seven of the Ch'an classic the Wu-men Kuan (Aitken, 1990: 54) deals directly with this:

> *A monk told Chao-Chou, 'I have just entered this monastery. I beg you to teach me.'*
>
> *Chao-Chou asked, 'Have you eaten your rice porridge?'*
>
> *The monk replied, 'I have'.*
>
> *'Then', said Chao-Chou, 'Wash your bowl'.*

This seemingly mundane dialogue within a Zen context has a profound meaning. Chinese language is known as the language of ambiguity, and Chan masters used it to create special meanings. 'Have you eaten your rice porridge?' in the context of being spoken by a Chan master can be understood as 'Have you seen into your true nature?' We can infer that the monk's reply was suggestive of clinging to a personal view of his achievement, and Chao-Chou's response is poetically instructive: don't get caught up in thinking 'I' am enlightened, because this line of thinking is counterproductive to that understanding. Obviously, even in the 'sudden enlightenment' tradition of which Chao-Chou is an exemplar, there is an implicit recognition of the potential to slip into egoic thinking. This paradox raises questions about the nature of enlightenment. How can anattā be realised? Who realises that there is not a self? One interaction explored this in detail:

> *Interviewer*: So, if you're not who you think you are, who are you then?
>
> Right. You're seeing it [laughter], you know. In Zen training, that's the core. The way that I have experience, and the koan study training is the honing of that experience. The education of that experience and the balancing between form and emptiness, between phenomena and noumena, between me and not me. Zen addresses that ... I mean if there's anything Zen addresses, it's just that, isn't it? Not one, not two! And that's what I think is our practice. I mean it never ends. It's like walking on a razor's edge – one side is nothing but phenomena, the world of differentiation, and the other side is just vast emptiness. And that realisation that I mentioned earlier that this, just this, this is it, right here, this is the world. (Interviewee 28)

If Zen training centres on this paradox, how can we understand this from outside of its frameworks? There is little guidance beyond the Buddhist literature, and, as far as I am aware, this is the first systematic survey of Buddhist teachers' experience. The closest

work to date has been that of Kennedy (2004), who conducted a study of sixteen Buddhists in Leeds, from a wide range of traditions. Kennedy (2004: 152) found that: '[o]ne-half of the interview group described experiences that were extraordinary'. Kennedy similarly concludes that it was not mystical experiences, but rather a transformation of ordinary experience that occurred.

There were striking similarities between this research and Kennedy's study, even though his subjects were not drawn from a select group of senior practitioners. They reported states in which they felt 'no boundaries' and 'no separation', corresponding to the descriptions set out in chapter 6. These experiences seemed to be shorter and less common than in the teacher sample, and, as Kennedy (2004: 153) found, '[n]one of those interviewed claim that their consciousness has been permanently transformed'. In a strikingly similar observation, Kennedy (2004, 152) adds that:

> [a]ll but one of those who had extraordinary experiences … thought of them in terms of immanence rather than transcendence. 'Transcendence' has become a term of broad and varied reference, and any change of category might be so described; the participants in this study were referring to transformations in their consciousness of ordinary being, rather than a step-change to another reality.

The focus on altered or alternative states of consciousness in the literature is not commensurate with what these western Buddhist teachers have called insight. The term 'insight' was deliberately left undefined in this research, because I was interested in exploring what each teacher called insight. I was wary that the process of defining some predicated view of the state would bias the findings. Thus what emerged was far less based on particular states of consciousness, but rather on the cumulative effect of a range of experiences which added up to a learning beyond any singular experience. No doubt one big experience might leave a lasting impression of insight into the nature of self – and there are examples of this in Zen history. But the picture that seemed to emerge throughout the interview sample was one of continuous practice and life-long learning. Nagel (2001) and others may be placing too much weight on idealised views; Goleman (1972: 16), for example, draws on canonical texts to suggest that 'only one person in 100,000 or one million will achieve the prerequisite level of mastery' to achieve the final stages of nirvana. As set out in chapter 2, there is significant potential for misunderstanding which can arise from an East-West dialogue. Kennedy (2004:

154) also entertains an idealised view, discounting what his subjects had already experienced:

> None of the testimonies gathered for this study refer to the complete transformation (Skt. Parāvṛrtti) of ordinary experience into stable enlightenment, but they do suggest that that gradual alterations to ordinary consciousness, along the way, provide some practitioners ... with therapeutic and immanent experiences, which provide sufficient motivation for continued practice and renewed engagement with the world.

9.2.3 Rarity or idealisation of insight

In a recent review of experimental studies of meditation, Shear (2000: 283) argued: 'It is clear, of course, that both the subjective and the objective states referred to in such traditional claims are highly unusual ... so unusual that philosophers often hold it to be an impossibility, and writers on mysticism often refer to it as "the central mystical experience".'[48] The findings of this research suggest that Shear's assumption may be erroneous, particularly given the growing testimony of hundreds of Buddhist teachers, who might concur with the title of Sylvia Boorstein's (1997) book: *It's Easier Than You Think*.

In this regard, Shear (2000: 291) recognises the limits of only anecdotal evidence of insight experiences, and notes: 'Very little [research] seems to have been done here to date, however, whether from lack of interest, funding, or enough subjects reporting such experiences'. Nevertheless, Shear (2000: 293) is generally optimistic, and concludes:

> In sum, it appears that the research on meditation lends support for claims that meditation can enhance important psychological and phenomenological aspects of what may be called the religious life, lived with growing equanimity and deepening mystical experiences. But it also throws into sharper relief the lack of corroboration for ontological claims central to the doctrines of the world's major religions. Research giveth, and it taketh away.

Shear (2000) questions the reality of transformative experiences, but whether there is a complete transformation of ordinary experience into a stable enlightenment requires

---

[48] Shear (2000) defines this as 'pure consciousness'.

more research. On the other hand, the reality of the transformation in Buddhism may be something less magical and more ordinary than the texts suggest.

If insight experiences extend the notion of self to include the world, the findings of this research suggest that this is not always the complete transformation suggested in canonical accounts; rather, what is permanently changed is the subjective identification of the practitioner with the egoic self. Jack Kornfield (2001: 109) quotes Chinese Master Hsu Yun, who, at the end of an exceptionally long life of 120 years, explains: 'There are many minor satoris[49] before a major satori, and many major satoris on the path of genuine awakening'.

The findings support the view of a long path to 'genuine awakening', and suggest that, while insights or experiences are brought about by the development of Buddhist introspective practices, these are not in themselves enduring. Through the development of an ability of the practitioner to visit and revisit such experiences, he or she is able to develop enduring higher-order learning about the nature of self. Kornfield (2001: 110) explains that enlightenment is not an end state but an ongoing process:

> Like satori or kensho (a profound awakening) in Zen, stream entry[50] brings a breathtaking change of understanding. In this first enlightenment a person sees through the illusion of separate self, releases identification with body and mind, and awakens to the timeless peace of Nirvana ... But even though we have seen the truth, the Elders say, further purification remains necessary for us to transform our character and embody this new understanding in our life.

According to Kornfield, this is a long process which has discrete stages. The second stage is called 'Returning Again', and involves learning to understand and release our habitual and ingrained practices which recreate that earlier limited and fear-driven sense of self. This stage is largely focused on working with the natural tendency to grasp and hold on to desires and fears and conditioned ways of being in the world. After years of practice, a few practitioners progress to a third stage, which arises when these habits are replaced and are forgotten. The old habits are replaced with the newly cultivated. The

---

[49] Satori is an insight experience.
[50] Stream entry is the first stage of awakening according to traditional Theravadin suttas.

fourth stage, called 'Great Awakening,' is, according to Kornfield (2001: 111), a 'most extraordinary' stage in which 'the last traces of subtle clinging – even to joy, freedom, and meditation itself – fall away ... we are freed from the vestiges of pride, judgment, restlessness, and separation that veil pure being. The radiance of our true nature shines unhindered throughout our life.'

While this research did not focus on the latter stages of Kornfield's framework, it is clear that insight experiences do not simply translate into transformation. The interviews support this view and add that insight works to sharpen that process. The interview results also support his observation that 'a person can give genuinely inspired teachings on realisation and illumination, yet still not be living them' (Kornfield, 2001: 111).

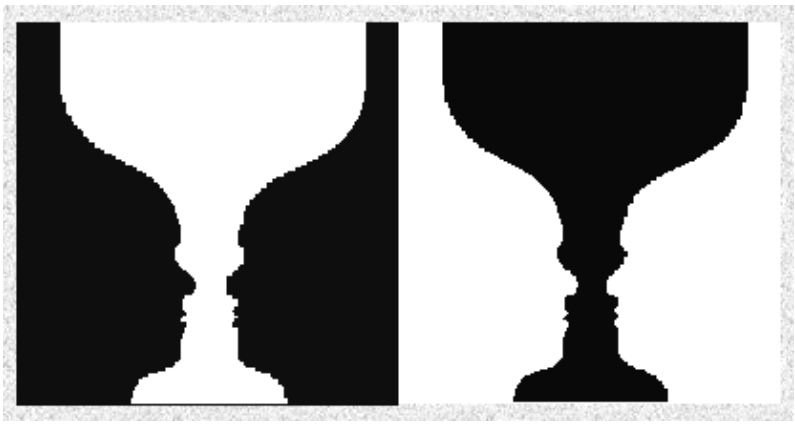
Kornfield (2001: 112) observes that '[o]ver the years I have not seen a single westerner for whom this was not true, and it seems to be true for most Asian teachers as well'. Furthermore, he asserts that there is considerable disagreement as to what constitutes stream entry, which he suggests has led to the doubting of the commensurability of various experiences. In comparing the various insight experiences across teachers in this research, the findings suggest that, while no two experiences were identical, there were strong commonalities. In fact, during the writing of this chapter, a graduate student came to visit me to discuss her thesis on spirituality in the workplace. She described to me an almost identical experience to the Buddhist teachers, one which occurred in a moment of extreme stress at work. She suddenly experienced herself as her workplace and identified with patrons as herself. As with several of the teachers interviewed, this vivid experience was life-changing and brought her to seek a spiritual practice.

9.2.4 The illusion of self

A seemingly apt metaphor for this is the wine glass illusion (see Figure 2 below). If we consider the self to be a gestalt of our experience, we may look at the pattern and only recognise a wineglass. In many ways people may spend their entire lives only seeing a bounded self, just as some people may not realise that there is another view of the wineglass. Once a person observes the lovers, even if it is a flash, and the wineglass returns, the spell is broken. They have insight into the fact that they are looking at something other than a wineglass. Different Buddhist practices may create some odd states of mind, but in practical terms it does not matter what those states are as long as

they engender an experience of open consciousness. Once an opening is made it can be explored, and eventually the seasoned practitioner learns to recognise the dual nature of their consciousness.

Figure 2:
The wine glass illusion



Braud (2002), in an analysis of the ineffability of mystical experiences, including his own, develops another useful explanation similar to the gestalt process described above. He explores the possibility that a mystical experience involves an attentional shift from figure to ground, one which is extremely rich and extensive. He suggests that such a shift enhances, and would explain, what William James described as the characteristic of mystical experience, of 'a tremendous muchness'. This complexity, according to Braud (2002), could explain the sense of the experience as ineffable. He finds support for this hypothesis in Pavlov's (1927, 1928) work on stimulus discrimination under abnormal conditions, such as stress and fatigue, in which stimulus response paradoxically reverses, so that the subject appears to only respond to the previously weak stimuli rather than the strong stimuli. Braud (2002: 149) characterises this phenomenon manifested in human subjective experience as 'a major attentional shift away from the discrete figures that ordinarily occupy attention and toward a much larger, encompassing (back)ground, and could the "tremendous muchness" of the latter prevent the articulation of this novel and extensive "object" of attention?'

The construction of the self may not be something more than simply a perceptual process. It would seem plausible that everyday self-constructions might also be subject to a reversal and that the development of attentional processes, such as mindfulness, may play an important part in this process. This sheds light on Dogen's Genjokoan:

> To study the Buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self; to forget the self is to be actualised by myriad things. To be actualised by myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away. No trace of realisation remains, and this no-trace continues endlessly. (Tanahashi, 1985: 70)

The taken-for-granted self of normal cognition through Buddhist practice becomes forgotten; forgetting is a kind of cessation, and – as with the wineglass – when the foreground becomes the background it disappears as if 'snuffed out' (nirvana). The background of a self is a phenomenological experience which consists of the 'myriad things' that make up the universe of our experience at any one time, and this becomes the new view. As Varela et al. (1991) point out, it is widely accepted in cognitive science that our normal self is cognitively constructed. We can recognise that such a construction of self is a sort of gestalt of experience. It may be, that our identification with the self as distinct from what we regard as not-self is similar to many perceptual illusions and capable of flipping. When this happens, we suddenly identify the world as 'I' and what we normally identify as self or 'I' becomes relatively 'empty'. This new sense of relationship with the world would also allow us to recognise that our natural tendancy to make the distinction between self and world is not inviable, rather it is something that is ambiguous. This notion also fits with the view of the socially constructed self as unstable and constantly being deconstructed, as suggested by postmodern theorising in the social sciences (Gergen, 1991).

Social cognitive interrelations are complex, as our innate tendency to create a whole, separate person is likely to be a necessary survival strategy. Developmental psychology explains this as a stage of development, but there remains a lack of definitive explanation of what cognitive mechanisms are responsible for this change. The self, as Rom Harré (1991: 51) points out, has a dual identity: it is performatively presented to others by our actions, and thus includes the body and arguably its extensions; and it is the 'inner Self' which occurs 'inevitably with the growth of consciousness and with the capacity to act and to reflect upon that action'. The relationship between the two is

blurred, and, as Rom Harré (1991: 60) argues, 'The "I" who presents is created in the act of presentation'.

9.2.5 Insight and liberation

If Buddhist awakening is an ongoing process, as Kornfield (2001) and the above results suggest, then the transformations are gradual alterations which form the basis for what might be a learned reorientation of how we might identify ourselves in the world. Given this, we are dealing with two substantially different aspects of Buddhist experience. The first is what Austin (1988) would view as based on alternative rather than altered states of consciousness. The second is the reorientation around our identity that comes from prolonged reflection on this alternative experience. Given the neuroplasticity involved in learning processes, there is likely to be an ongoing development towards a state of being that has realised the new sense of self. This new 'I' presents itself through natural familiarity, which does not slip back consciously or unconsciously to grasping and recognises at all levels the paradoxical statement in the Prajnaparamita sutra: there is no old age and death and no ending of old age and death. This paradox is possible through the ontological learning which it reminiscent of Bateson's third-order learning. We learn that the very notions of self and not-self are, as Derrida (1974) points out, undecidable; but that this very realisation places us in a peculiar position. The self/other distinction continues to be generated naturally, so we can still function in the world, but we know that the very premises of self are no longer fixed. As Bateson (1972: 304) puts it:

> Certainly (Learning III) must lead to a greater flexibility in the premises acquired by the process of Learning II – a freedom from their bondage[51] ... But any freedom from the bondage of habit must also denote a profound redefinition of the self. If I stop at the level of Learning II, 'I' am the aggregate of those characteristics which I call my 'character'. 'I' am my habits of acting in context and shaping and perceiving the contexts in which I act. Selfhood is a product or aggregate of Learning II. To the degree that a man achieves Learning III, and learns to perceive and act in terms of the contexts of contexts, his 'self' will take on a sort of irrelevance. The concept of 'self' will no longer function as a nodal argument in the punctuation of experience.

---

[51] Bateson (1972) sets out a taxonomy of learning. Zero learning is random behaviour. Learning I is where there is the development of a specific response to a choice situation. Learning II a more complex level in which a corrective change in the choice of sets of alternative responses is made.

The teachers' statements set out in chapter 6, particularly where they are reflections based upon numerous experiences, fit well with third-order learning, and as such challenge simple explanations based only on cultural reproduction. A culture view might frame how some western Buddhist teachers make sense of their personal experiences, but such an explanation falls short of encompassing the depth and particularly the novelty of their encounters. Whatever the explanation, however, there is also a pragmatic dimension, as the result is considered liberating. For example, the following excerpt shows this pragmatic side of how teachers evaluated their insight:

> It is freeing. I think that is the bottom line of concern. And I have just spoken about understanding, yet understanding is only significant if it makes a difference. If it is just a sense of thinking one knows how things are, it is useless, really. So, it is only of value if it really allows for a sense of ease in life, that it feels freeing, that one feels less bound, that one sees that, where there was a problem before, there is no problem now. And one can't really identify what it is that has changed within that, and yet the capacity for living with things, untroubled by them, is significantly changed, and then one knows that that is an authentic understanding, and authentic seeing, because it has clear and tangible results, of freeing. (Interviewee 9)

This is not to downplay the importance of narrative sense-making in the process, but there seems to be more to it than that. In cross-cultural studies of sexuality, Vance (1991) suggested that 'social construction theory' (the notion that sexuality is constructed differently across cultures and over time) might be usefully contrasted with a 'cultural influence model' in which certain biological aspects of sexuality are universal, but mediated to greater and lesser extent by cultural context. The distinction between what is cultural and what is biological suggests that the two can be separated despite the variety and complexity of both human physiology and behaviour.

9.2.6 Interpreting insight

In the case of insight, the general sense of these interviews indicates that there is something more fundamental than cultural narratives operating and it is more akin to the level of biological functioning and operates at the level of consciousness. Insight, while a profound and deeply moving experience, might not be able to transcend cultural explanations, but as with the experience of an orgasm, biology and not culture lies at its foundation. It, therefore, follows that understandings of insight do not require the traditional explanations of religion. It also might explain why several of the teachers stated that they did not see their experience as exclusively Buddhist. One teacher who

regarded himself as both Christian and Buddhist explains how his experience could be interpreted using both frameworks:

> Everything became quite clear, and my experience was, at that time, there is nothing outside from this! It made a big difference in my attitude, and feelings about everything. There is no outside whatever; Christian mystics realised this too. One of the great medieval mystics said one of the proper names of God is 'Nihil'. The apophatic tradition, the way of the negative, just denies everything. It is sort of like the Buddhists the way of deny everything until it becomes affirmative. God is not separate from this. I am not separate from this, I am God and God is me, but not in the sense that someone thinks he is God.
>
> *Interviewer*: Not in the egoistic sense.
>
> Yes, that is the great danger for any contemplative or meditative tradition – that the experience will be taken over by the ego and inflated, that 'I' did this, rather than the loss of the individual ego as one's sole identity. As Aitken Roshi would call it, 'the Soul of the Self' – there is no such thing. So, I found them to [be] quite compatible. I have never had any problem in living in both traditions. (Interviewee 5)

This view can be found in the writings of other Christian Buddhists; for example, Habito (2004: xiii) describes the Zen experience of *kensho* as seeing clearly 'the reality of everything as not separate from oneself, of everything as it really is'.[52] Two other Christians in the sample also found no essential conflict in their understanding, although one stated that, because of his interest in Buddhism, 'the Vatican wouldn't consider me a very good Catholic'. Nevertheless, both believed that they were able to deepen their appreciation of Christianity through Buddhist insight, both traditions providing valuable wisdom. A sample of three is an insufficient basis to draw too much significance from this finding; however, it signals a potentially interesting line of inquiry which might also disturb the horizon of traditional Christian thinking, particularly its reliance on doctrinal authority. It is likely that all religious practices evoke a variety of religious experiences, including some that are simply disturbed psychological states and some that are delusional. However, it is difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff, and much research has conflated religious experiences in unproductive ways.

---

[52] *Kensho* is the term used in Zen Buddhism for an initial awakening experience.

These responses also suggest that sense-making frameworks are important and do mediate how different teachers understand their experiences. The implication of this is that such experiences, in themselves, do not necessarily bring certainty regarding deep metaphysical questions. On the other hand, not all sense-making schemas are appropriate. When the teachers had spontaneous experiences before encountering Buddhism, they were initially unable to find satisfying explanations. The view that there is a common experience that relates to both religious traditions (Christian and Buddhist) is suggested by the perennial philosophy thesis shared by Aldous Huxley, Swami Vivekenanda and John Hick. While this has been dismissed by Smart (1993) on the basis that the differences between religions are too significant, it has not prevented an increasing number of theologians, who are open to the potential for interreligious dialogue, from taking a major inclusive turn. This is particularly so, given the findings on rebirth and reincarnation, which would appear from this sample to be less crucial to western Buddhists than to their Asian counterparts.

Given that these experiences are not self-explanatory, the variety of religious explanations could come down to differing doctrinal interpretations of what is essentially a natural phenomenon. In itself of scientific interest, this fact of human consciousness seems a plausible consequence of systematic exploration of the nature of a self that is a cognitive construction. The existential nature of such experiences suggests an important nexus between science and religion. The cognitive construction of self brings us to the question of consciousness; in which contemporary research suggests a very tenuous distinction between self and *not-self*. This is exemplified by the illusion that a rubber hand can be experienced as one's own (see page 86). Loy (2000) claims that we instinctively repress any sense of the existential precariousness of the self. Thus we react in fear to experiences which point to this emptiness. We naturally associate this vacuity or lacking in a negative sense, such as alienation, nihilism and desolation. Loy argues that this repression feeds a complex of behaviours which attempt to escape this existential uncertainty. Our gnawing feelings of lack feed a desire to ground ourselves in something concrete. This need for security extends itself into consumption of goods, as a concrete manifestation of our self, which defines us by the things we purchase – a partial solution which generates a vast economy of extensions to the self. The economy is increasingly driven by goods of symbolic value which are ultimately unnecessary and unsustainable. If, however, we turn around and face this

sense of groundlessness, the encounter is far from a negative experience; rather the teachers speak of it as a positive, liberating and pro-generative state.

9.2.7 The individual in economic thought

In the context of the dialogical space between Buddhism and economics, there is potential to establish a common ground for understanding based on Varela et al.'s (1991) work on cognition, and linking it to fundamental economic assumptions. Varela's framework allows, if not supports, the notion of a self that subtends economic thinking, but it also requires the extension of its horizons to include not-self views. The disembodied liberal subject which lies at the foundation of much economic thinking needs to be replaced by embodied notions of the self. There are several benefits in cultivating this as a new foundation. The first is that economics has long been split by the two competing methodological traditions, discussed in chapter 4, namely methodological individualism and methodological holism. Davis (2003) makes it clear that assumptions regarding the self are pivotal to these views. The constructed phenomenological self may go some way to resolving this issue, and at the very least reopens the debate. If the locus of the self is merely an illusion constructed by cognition and can be 'seen through', then the self which economics recognises is only a partial view. It may be some time before cognitive science can explain how the self, which we identify with, is constructed; however, enough evidence has already accumulated to problematise existing taken-for-granted assumptions of social relations transforming them into a question. The act of problematising suggests that by challenging the assumptions of self we also challenge its commitments to how we understand the economy. This creates a new problematic for the discipline, which following Langer (1942) as discussed earlier, opens up the horizon for a new set of solutions.

This is not a lone call. Bourdieu (1990/1980) critiques the division between subjectivism and objectivism, which is inherent in the methodological split of economics, focusing on its neglect of the relationship of ordinary and everyday experience in human agency. He uses the term 'habitus' to explain the shared predispositions that people from the same cultural background tend to have towards habitual and non-reflective behaviours and thoughts. Bourdieu's habitus finds a correspondence in Varela's work in cognitive science; for example:

> Our lived world is so ready-at-hand that we have no deliberateness about what it is and how we inhabit it. When we sit at the table to eat with a relative or friend, the entire complex know-how of how to handle our utensils, how to sit, how to converse, is present without deliberation. (1999: 9)

Lau (2004: 370), with reference to Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, persuasively argues that Bourdieu's notion of habitus 'should be conceptualized, not as corporeal automatism, but as practical sense emergent, in the critical realist sense, from experience'. This might, however, be already implicit in Bourdieu (1977: 72) when he discusses reflexive dispositions to act, which appear 'collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor'. A more emergent habitus has an affinity to Varela et al.'s (1991: 217) 'enactive' view in which 'cognition emerges from the background of a world that extends beyond us but cannot be found apart from our embodiment'. This suggests circularity between the world and the processes of cognition, which is congruent with a Buddhist view of not-self because there is 'no subjective ground, no permanent and abiding ego-self' (p. 217). The self that ordinary people understand is, according to Varela et al., a 'designatum'. As such, it exists in the same sense as colour does. Colour has no 'real' existence in the world outside of our perceptual cognitions, and these can be shown to be highly susceptible to contextual and other factors, exemplified by colour illusions. Likewise, the self is not an absolute. However, while it is something that our cognitive systems conjure up, we nevertheless regard it as real. Thus, according to Varela et al. (1991: 228), it is possible to experience the self as open and unbounded because 'one has no independently existing mind and no independently existing world'.

'Who we are' at any moment is, according to Varela (1999), presented by what is given in any particular situation. For example, let us examine the situation of arriving for a luncheon meeting with a friend or relative full of pleasant expectation, only to find they are not there. In waiting it is possible that your mood begins to change to disappointment, and you can't help beginning to become agitated and thinking of an explanation; depending on the person, you might be worried about them or become annoyed, wondering whether to wait, or order your meal, or to leave. If they then arrive, immediately the concerns are forgotten and your state of agitation quickly diminishes and fades to normal. This is a contingent relationship with moment-to-moment events which, according to Varela (1999: 9), is what underlies the fact that we have no deliberateness about what it is and how we are in any given situation. We cannot

divorce ourselves from the events, people and things that we experience. These things might not even be real, but mistaken; for example, our friend might not have been late at all, but we ourselves had confused the time.

According to Lau (2004: 375), 'selfhood arises not through a Cartesian *cogito*, but emerges from the bodily being-in-the-world'. Emergent behaviour is exemplified in insect colonies; the individual bees or ants appear to act as what has been termed 'superorganisms', illustrated by a series of learning experiments done in the 1970s in which the collective behaviour could not be explained unless the entire colony was taken into account (Hofstadter, 1979: 311-355). While there is global behaviour, an insect colony does not have a head or a brain, and consists entirely of separate ants, which ostensibly are all individuals. Varela (1999) likens this to human cognition, arguing that there is no centre or localised 'self' although we behave as a unit and as if there were a coordinating agent present. Varela (1999: 61) posits that in 'our very immediate sense this central, personal self is the same kind of illusion of a center'. Arguably the not-self experience is an *experiential insight* into this paradox, which, according to Varela (1999: 61), is that that identity (what we identify with) is 'a nonsubstantial self which acts as if it were present, like a *virtual interface*'.

Varela et al. (1991) argue that Buddhist practices lead to insight into an innate cognitive tendency to constellate the self. In this regard the self, as suggested before, is like a gestalt, in which the 'I' is experienced as separate from the world. Such a view is consistent with traditional Buddhist doctrine, as Varela et al. (1991) argue, and accordingly the notion of unitary self is illusionary.

The accounts of western Buddhist teachers strongly support this view, adding important explanatory dimensions. The key point in regard to the dialogical space is not the specifics of one particular theory of consciousness, but, as Varela et al. (1991) recognise, that the liberal autonomous self that assumes an essential self is not supported by any of the major theoretical perspectives of cognitive psychology.

Cognitive science has established this abstract model of human cognition, but it is a vastly different matter to experience it and to know it at the level of being. Buddhist teachers clearly recognise that the 'I' who is acting is a construct; their experience is a very deep challenge to our paradigmatic ontological identity. This new understanding of

self, akin to the illusion in Figure 2 (in which the image is neither a wineglass nor two lovers, but rather that both of these are structures are aspects imposed by our minds on the one pattern), is that we too recognise that our cognitive processes construct a similar illusion of an 'I'. When a Buddhist practice results in the illusion of a separate self being seen through, we eventually move beyond the illusion to a higher learning in which the self and not-self are two sides of the one coin. As Dogen expresses it, in the resultant experience: 'No trace of realization remains, and this no-trace is continued endlessly' (in Tanahashi, 1985: 70). The whole notion of self and not-self is transcended; we see that the wineglass and the lovers are both constructs, and we cannot go back.

What is most significant about this research is that western Buddhist teachers are essentially the first sizable cohort of people who have gone to Asia and participated in a range of Buddhist trainings. It has only been in the last few decades that significant numbers of westerners have seriously made efforts to test the truth claims of Buddhism for themselves, and only a relatively small number have gained insight into the nature of the self. While not all the truth claims of Buddhism are experiential, most western Buddhist teachers in this sample did not engage in supernatural explanations; they seemed in the main to prefer natural explanations.

9.3 Insight and transformation

This second set of questions explores the effects western teachers' experience of insight have had on their relationship with their lives on three levels: the personal (section 9.3.1), the social (section 9.3.2) and the environmental (section 9.3.3). The key interest here is the potential transforming effect of insight. The findings are positive, and suggest that a range of transformative consequences may arise from the experiences described in section 9.2. Bateson (1972: 283) points out that the word 'learning' undoubtedly denotes change of some kind (manifest or not), and the picture of insight we developed in the previous section is consistent with Learning III. In this case western Buddhist teachers seem to have engaged in learning about the very premises of self, from a phenomenological perspective. It is this perspective that seems crucial to transformation; the accounts given by many of the teachers suggest a profoundly embodied sense of learning in which they felt deeply moved by their engagement with Buddhist practices, and that the role of insight in this transformation was crucial. This

point must be qualified by the complication that the Buddhist practices themselves specify a range of ethical behaviours, as well as self-cultivation, and it seems that the very design of these Buddhist practices is informed by the insights gained into the nature of self. The practices are designed to emulate and facilitate enlightened behaviour. As noted, the questions were designed to explore how insight transformed the teachers on the personal, social and environmental levels. Two other areas were also examined: the question of rebirth and reincarnation, and the unconscious aspects of insight.

9.3.1 Transformation at the level of self – liberation

Starting from the base of western teachers' experiences, the finding I identify as the most salient is their powerful sense of liberation from the problems of life. This stands out as one of the most important transforming consequences of the experience of insight. The interviewees conveyed a sense that this was more than a reduction of tension or stress, but a reflection of a shift in their entire relationship to the world. The key characteristics of this shift were reported as greater intimacy and openness. The experiences described were powerfully reminiscent of Maslow's (1971) notion of higher-order states or self-actualisation, a term which he described as the fulfilment of higher spiritual needs. In this sense, the accessibility of such experiences may not be limited to Buddhists, and, as one teacher suggested, these experiences are not far from the surface of modern culture, being present in the realms of the poetic and the romantic. Although few teachers related insight to poetry, there was a strong poetic theme in their words, and such connections are common in western Buddhist literature. Indeed, many interviewees conveyed the sense that the experience of insight had opened them to a far deeper and richer communion with life. The teacher who recalled the poem 'In the Waiting Room' (see Appendix 1) recognised how she found this experience was available, albeit in different forms, in the arts and literature.

There was a sense of ordinariness in these answers which contradicts the transcendental 'magical' notions of spiritual experience. However, as with mainstream physics, there is a sense that close examination of the reality we live in *is* mysterious, and that an appreciative sense of the world finds it to be 'sacred'. Several authors, such as Berman (1981) and Reason (1993), have picked up on how modernity is flawed because it has no place for this sense of awe. Reason (1993: 274) suggests we confront a 'crisis' which

is ‘not only social and economic but epistemological – in the shift away from a participating consciousness to a mechanical worldview that took place with startling rapidity in Europe in the seventeenth century’. Reason (1993) suggests that each of us suffers from a sense of separation, which is a form of alienation from others and the world. He became aware of this in his own experience, and of the need to engage in ‘a process through which we live fully in our experience’ (1993: 275).

A common experience in beginning a meditation practice is to notice this sense of alienation. It is related to the sense in which Marx used the term to describe the effects of the mind-numbing work practices of the industrial revolution, and how people become disconnected from themselves and each other when they are powerless cogs in the production process. Marx’s concept of alienation – commodified labour-power – does not engage with what Skolimowski (1992: 24) calls ‘reverential thinking’, where ‘for the *appreciative* [italics added] and sensitive mind, reverence for life appears as a natural acknowledgement of the miracle and the beauty of life itself’. David Abram recognises interbeing when he opens himself to the non-human world. It is not the alienation which Abram (see London, 1997) finds described as ‘cut off’ by the poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1995; 191):

> Ah, not to be cut off,
> not through the slightest partition
> shut out from the law of the stars
> The inner – what is it?
> if not intensified sky,
> hurled through with birds and deep
> with the winds of homecoming.

The sense of being at one with everything is profoundly satisfying; as one teacher reported: ‘I am in the right place!’ This implies a completion that comes without supplementing oneself with material things, but rather just in appreciating being here, just as we are. There is a growing recognition that we have the ability to be at one with ourselves and the lives we have. This makes it possible to live more simply without ambition and desire. Most teachers lived relatively simple lives, mostly middle-class, and many had down-shifted careers from more lucrative, higher-status positions to more rewarding ones, particularly in the helping professions.

The encounter in which I was able to 'co-experience' a moment with one of the teachers (see page 202) added to my own understanding of this poetic sense. On reflection, that interaction was brought about by the teacher's powerful presence and his mindful attention to the moment in which we both became intimate – interbeing. This is a participatory experience, according to Reason (2005: 3), where:

> Subject and object are interdependent and all is interconnected in a cosmic web; Buddhist myth offers the image of Indra's net, where all things both reflect and are reflected in all. Thus participation is part of the nature of our being and thus is an *ontological imperative.*

Whether it was my own openness or the ability of the teacher to convey the clarity of that moment, it felt as though we were as intimate as lovers, which is not characteristic of most everyday encounters. Yet the sense of intimacy evoked is that which Rilke brings to life in his poems. As with poetry, there was a sort of aesthetic state of grace which made for a truly 'sacred' moment. It was also a moment that was held by the ability of the teacher to not wobble or be embarrassed, which I recognise as reflecting the maturity of his practice. Afterwards, even though I had intuitively learned how to bring about that openness and presence, I noticed that most people instantly and unconsciously avoided it. Kornfield (2001) has argued that it is not simply a matter of the gaining of insight, but rather how one handles this deeper intimacy with things. Kornfield (2001) recognises a natural outcome of an awakening experience is that we find that which is alien to us easier to tolerate, and accept what is. I have found that learning to be more accepting of what is, requires practice. Among other things, it allows others to overcome their fears when one is open. This shift facilitates a more harmonious life; it requires acting with integrity and attention, and there is an aesthetic difference, a new and more appreciative sensibility.

9.3.2 Transformation at the social level – love and compassion

Liberation comes out of this intimacy with all things, and a large percentage of the teachers noted how they had developed greater capacities for kindness, patience, forgiveness and love. These are in themselves valuable traits, ones often difficult to develop. The question of love, however, evokes the romantic side of life, and the romantic split with science in western culture, which denigrates romanticism as a kind of foolishness and a perennial human failing which needs to be overcome. This

ambivalent alterity depicts ‘romantic love’ in contrast to ‘true’, mature and post-narcissistic love — but at the same time romantic themes are found in many popular movies. Modernity has maligned and misunderstood this aspect of humanity, an opposition that can be linked to the threefold split identified by Latour and discussed in chapter 4. This split must ultimately find its way into the hearts and minds of people, as it demarcates so much of life. Romanticism was not necessarily naïve, and was defined in part by its opposition to modernity, which it regarded as the source of the cold, mechanistic and calculating rationality of utilitarianism and political economics. This opposition has endured, particularly in the arts, in which can be found a trenchant source of opposition to the homogenising impact of modern globalisation.

For these reasons the discussion of love is rarely considered an easy topic in the social sciences. Although most would agree that love animates much of social life, it is, along with religion, viewed with suspicion. Science has a tendency to understand love by reducing it to its elements; for example, Fisher (2004) explains what we experience in terms of its neurochemistry, as three different types of chemical responses corresponding to lust, romantic love, and long-term attachment. Yet these explanations are rarely satisfactory to someone who is experiencing love.

Love is not easily categorised, but it is generally recognised that there are many different types of love; for example, normally people can distinguish familial love and patriotic love. Sternberg (1986) suggests that love can be characterised by three aspects: commitment, passion and intimacy. These define six different kinds of love depending on the presence of each factor, ranging from liking to consummate love – for which all three are necessary. The Buddhist teachers’ experience of insight suggested a new sense of intimacy with the world which fitted with Sternberg’s (1997: 315) definition of intimacy as ‘feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness’. The romantic tradition links love to the divine in a way that includes both Christian and pagan dimensions. Christianity recognises a concept of pure love which is untainted by moral failings, such as lust or jealousy. Purity in this sense has a spiritual connotation. Love of God is a pure love, and in the romantic literature true love is, according to Haule (1992: 2), something that:

> passes right through the outer envelope of appearances down to a riveting core. Some of us are mad enough to believe that there is divinity in the spark that animates our beloved’s soul. We find ourselves in the presence of God. The fabric

> of the everyday world is suddenly rent, and through its gap we glimpse a vision of something wholly other.

Similarly, the love of God in Christianity brings us into his presence. In Islam, the Sufi poet Rumi finds his nights filled either with God's presence or God's absence. Haule (1992: 14) draws on Robert Johnson (1983) to argue that true love brings about a 'we' that 'comes to presence through our beloved – we glimpse the oneness of the world and all the beings that comprise it'. Haule (1992: 2) argues that love can bring us into relation with the divine; the romantic notion of true love, he suggests, is recognised in western culture as 'a spiritual and experiential knowing of the heart'. This is a love which may fit with the opening of the heart described by Buddhist teachers; it is 'pure' in the sense that it does not cling to any notion of self.

Love in economics is a neglected topic, and, according to Elster (1996: 1386), '[n]o economist to my knowledge has considered the emotions in their main role as providers of pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, or utility. To put it crudely, *economists have totally neglected the most important aspect of their subject matter*' [italics in original]. Elster (1996) elaborates on the methodological reasons for this neglect, including emotions' lack of measurability and interactivity, as well as incommensurability with existing theory. The fact that this critique could apply to virtually any subjective dimension of which emotions are but one, however, suggests a methodological blindness.

Many teachers found the practice opened them and made it possible for them to relate to others more appreciatively. One highly successful teacher, who was also a manager, noted how before he took up the practice he was a very driven, high-powered and performance-orientated person. The practice changed him. While it must be recognised that many people experience such changes with maturity, there was a significant component in the personal change which the teachers attributed to their practice.

This sensitivity seemed to many teachers as being in harmony, through an awareness of their natural way of being. This shift allowed them to be more integrated with the person they felt themselves naturally to be. This sense of a natural compassion may be normally be outside humans awareness as a result of cultural mediation and interactions with other social factors. This view fits with Ridley (1996) who extrapolates our compassion from biological foundations. This research found that some teachers discovered their natural impulse towards compassion to be underdeveloped, as it may be

in many people, which suggests that we may have significant unused capacities for compassion. Buddhist-inspired cognitive scientists, such as Evan Thompson (2001: 1), argue that 'the individual human mind is not confined within the head, but extends throughout the living body and includes the world beyond the biological membrane of the organism, especially the interpersonal, social world of self and other'. Empathy plays a crucial role in this regard, according to Thompson (2001: 2), because '*one's consciousness of oneself as an embodied individual in the world is founded on empathy* [italics in original] – on one's empathic cognition of others, and others' empathic cognition of oneself'.

Historically, consciousness has been understood as characterised by categories of inside and outside the mind. This approach fails to understand how human consciousness and experience can be manifest in both the living body and the interpersonal social world. Our interactions in the interpersonal world are characterised by involuntary responses: when we experience an emotion our bodies automatically communicate this through blushing, a furrowing of the brow or perhaps a smile. While not all experiences are expressed in this way, and many experiences are limited to the first person, Thompson argues that explanations of experience do not need some special interiority in the metaphysical sense. Rather, he suggests that these automatic empathic responses are clues that a better framework for thinking about human experience and consciousness would depend on the dynamic interplay between self and other. This interplay is crucial to any sense of self-identity in the world, because it is dependent on recognition by another and the reflective ability to perceive that recognition empathetically. According to Thompson (2001), Buddhist practices aim to transcend ordinary experience, not by leaving it behind but by helping us to understand ordinary experience.

9.3.3 Transformation at the environmental level (nature) – appreciation

The findings suggest that our relationship to goods and 'resources' is profoundly connected to our relationship to self. Our identification with the body has some obvious problems; as Evernden (1986: 40-41) suggests, if we take a systems perspective, we see that, as with a tree, our own being is very much interdependent on the natural environment:

> A tree, we might say, is not so much a thing as a rhythm of exchange, or perhaps a centre of organizational forces. Transpiration induces the upward flow of water

> and dissolved materials, facilitating an inflow from the soil. If we were aware of this rather than the appearance of a tree-form, we might regard the tree as a centre of a force-field to which water is drawn. The object to which we attach significance is the configuration of the forces necessary to being a tree. The visible structure is the indicator that life is happening, just as a dog's bark is an indicator of the existence of that animal. The bark is not the dog any more than the visually delineated object is the tree.

Like a tree, our own bodies encompass many components, some of which are independent in themselves, such as intestinal bacteria. If we view ourselves as a process, or a constellation of interdependent components within a larger biological system, then we get a very different view of where we stand in the world. Yet, while we might intellectually understand this interconnection, between ourselves and the world from which we arise we tend to hold to the perceptual view in which we are the owner of an independent and autonomous body (like a tree). This perspective gives rise to a sense of separateness and the inevitability that, as an individual component, we will die. If we break our identification with the individual construct, we can recognise that our being is not just the set of physical components but also a relational one which is interconnected with the whole. Recognising that our being is a construct which reflects these interconnections suggests the boundaries we have constructed to separate out a self from the material and social world are ontologically blurred. While we might be able to understand this intellectually, however, to *feel* it requires a new learning. This can be developed through careful observation of the self in everyday life; paying moment-by-moment attention to what occurs in our immediate sensory experience reveals a confusion of borders and boundaries. This confusion of boundaries has already attracted the interest of postmodern scholarship, which rightly recognises that self, identity, personality and language all contain supra-individual components. Buddhism, however, diverges from postmodern thinking because it is not interested in abstract understanding about this, but rather a cognitive and felt shift to a new way of being.

Economics has neglected to fully account for this insight, a failure that opens it to the critique that it is clinging to modernist notions and quantifiable models of reality. The acknowledgement of such interactions would immediately add degrees of complexity to economic models, setting up what other disciplines have already realised (with a wry smile) is impossibly complicated – and in response to which they have developed alternative methodologies.

The phenomenological sense of non-separation is different from identification, as was made clear in the discussion earlier. Buddhist phenomenological experience recognises an interconnected world, and, while there is already a bias towards this perception through the teachings, we also find the opposite bias in economics. Through practice Buddhist teachers have found that their sense of relation towards things becomes increasingly appreciative.

Thus an interesting shift occurs from a self-enclosed sense of the individual to an open experience of being a non-dual person in the sense of not knowing who one is. This is a theme that runs through romantic literature and is an affinity with life. The experiences of insight do not transform consciousness, but remain as an understanding which colours one's life in profound ways.

The final theme of transformation as a result of insight is a deep sense of oneness, an appreciative stance which arises from Buddhist practice as a gift of intimacy and profound loving of life. It should be noted that this appreciation incorporates individual predispositions. The constellated self which we construct appears to be the vehicle for this experience, and through it each teacher has their own view that frames their relationship with the world. Thus if one already appreciates nature prior to an insight experience, this will colour how one relates to nature after insight. In classical doctrine, this is referred to as 'residual karma'. No amount of insight will change behaviours that are reflexive, such as a phobic reaction which is an automatic response and will not necessarily change, unless there is some special intervention. The question of the nature of the relationship between the constructed individual and a vast sense of oneness is one that has intrigued Buddhist practitioners and scholars.

Statements about 'being one with the universe' are easily misconstrued to imply that the person is writ large onto the universe as an autonomous individual of universal properties, including attributes such as omniscience, omnipresence and *siddhi* (Sanskrit: 'magic powers'). In this context it would appear that such readings of Buddhist practices are confusions. Non-duality occurs at the level of being. It is possible that significant misunderstandings of Buddhism have developed, particularly in traditions which emphasise uncritical approaches to doctrine that are not based on experience.

9.3.4 Critical reflections on rebirth and reincarnation

One salient issue that sits outside western natural scientific notions in Buddhist doctrine is the concept of rebirth and reincarnation. There are many references to the Buddha having knowledge of all his and others' past lives. The scale of such knowledge of human history would suggest that this is only possible through supernatural means. Many westerners are sceptical of such claims, particularly when the entire Buddhist written discourse contains little evidence of any supra-individual sources of historical or prehistorical knowledge, and little evidence of knowledge could be identified as derived from other civilisations. From a cognitive science perspective, Lakoff and Johnson argue that our consciousness is embodied in the neurological architecture of our brains and reflects our evolutionary development in the shaping and forming of our minds and bodies. There is substantive evidence that our consciousness is 'tuned' to the particular needs and conditions of the various evolutionary developments that we incorporate, including such details as five fingers, which we hold in common with virtually all mammals. This question was specifically designed to enquire about the actual experiences of Buddhist teachers regarding these claims. The findings cast doubt on the claims made in Buddhist doctrine about rebirth and reincarnation.

The interviews supported such views, as the majority of respondents reported no experience of past lives or reincarnation at all. For those who had some experience, they suggested complex explanations of rebirth in which there was no continuation of a person in any coherent way past their current life; rather, their experiences evoked a sense of the mysterious interconnected nature the universe. These teachers reported having experienced strange interconnections in deep states of meditation or while sitting with dying people. These were experiences they could not explain, but they regarded them tentatively as an expression of a greater process involving a strange mirroring of other lives, as in the Hwa Yen image of the net of Indra, referred to earlier, or of our biological relationship to the 'evolutionary process'. Only one teacher, whose tradition strongly supported rebirth, reported coming to accept the traditional view after special training.

9.3.5 What insight does not transform

This question came out of a number of trials of the questionnaire, and the final format was developed in consultation with one of the teachers as to the best way to relate to insight to shadow issues. The concept of 'the shadow' was developed by C.G. Jung (1990) and refers to aspects of one's personality that one may find unpleasant or negative and are thus minimised or hidden in the presentation of self to oneself or others. While some traits related to the shadow can be easily recognised by an individual, there are others which may be subject to a great deal of denial and are difficult to control even when recognised. They typically express themselves in avoidance behaviour or projection of fault onto others. These 'deeper' aspects are said to reflect unconscious needs that can influence perceptions, and may be built on structures developed in early childhood which frame how we understand them. For example, children from violently abusive families often do not recognise some behaviours as aggressive, but rather see them as 'normal'.

Butler (1990) explores the shadow side of Buddhist communities, citing two cases in which Buddhist teachers in the US sexualised their relationships with students, which would seem inconsistent with the notion of enlightenment. What characterised these situations, according to Butler (1990), was 'patterns of denial, shame, secrecy and invasiveness reminiscent of alcoholic and incestuous families'. These issues are highly complex and contested; as Butterfield (1992) points out, the 'victims' were consenting, and such encounters do not necessarily lead to harm. Clearly, however, issues of power arose, and, while the dynamics of power are poorly understood, most Buddhist communities have subsequently opted for precautionary approaches (Kornfield, 1993: 340-343).

The claim that enlightenment is a form of perfection can be found in almost every tradition, but, given the spate of scandals in western Buddhist communities, it may be that, as Caplan (1999) suggests, many contemporary teachers make premature claims to enlightenment. Her suggestion begs the question as to what enlightenment is, and what the claims are that western teachers are actually making. If enlightenment does not have a direct moral consequence, then some important questions arise about what its effect actually consists in. The interviewees have expressed how their insight experiences have opened them up to a compassionate perspective.

In seeking to explore what is transformed by insight, we need to examine whether ordinary everyday action is structured from what is within or what is without. According to Durkheim (1938: 1–2), there is an arena defined externally to 'myself and my acts in law and in custom' that is made up of rules, obligations and duties which 'constitute a new variety of phenomena that the term social ought to be applied to'. Durkheim's agenda was to highlight the reality of such rules in limiting choices and moulding action, and to show how personal choice explanations are inadequate explanations of social action. In this respect, a role can be defined as the actions and activities assigned to or required or expected. There are, however, two aspects to a role, reflecting a dualism between structure which is externally set as the actions required by the role through the customs and practices of a group or culture, and the agency of the individual actors who make choices about how those actions are played out. Giddens (1984) suggest that these two interact, as the actors' choices are bounded by structures and the structures in turn constitute actors' choices. Thus, for example, a breech of expectations will carry consequences limiting the degrees of freedom available to the actor to perform in a role. For example, a police officer who breaks the rules may be stood down. This also applies to symbolic actions in which the action itself becomes signified, and what is required or expected is open to interpretation. If we examine our role in life, this role also has this dualism. The teachers suggested that their role was something that they needed to 'figure out', which fits with the view that roles are co-structured and can never been specified outside of a particular context and setting, which unfold in real-time. Yet, where the old framework of being an individual has shifted, the new framework suggested by insight is an opening of the referents from the social to being an expression of life itself. This sense brings living closer to art, through *Gelassenheit*, which Heidegger (see page 84) suggests is an open place 'whose openness everything is other than usual'. It is an open space in which, as the data suggests, choice that are actualised depend on the degree of integration between one's insight and habitual ways of doing things, recognising that one's social world is also interacts with this process. For example, when enlightenment is deeply integrated we may make ethical choices when we are tired or stressed, it might simply be, a choice in our mind not to speak badly about someone at the end of the day after they have insulted us. In some social contexts, such as a monastery, situations might not arise as commonly as it might in some occupations, where conflict is common.

What may be an appropriate way to act from the point of view of insight may, in a social context, be subject to powerful sanctions. Enlightened action, in some traditions, is regarded as a sort of 'crazy wisdom', and describes teachers who operate outside of the norms of society, in accord with their transcendent logic or insight. Some traditions provide an explicit role for crazy wisdom teachers, who are accepted within their particular social context. However, in relatively diverse western societies, where the existence of any transcendent logic is likely to be challenged, such a teacher may attract powerful censure. She or he may have trouble reconciling their role informed by insight with the role we are all expected to play in the social context of western society. Rather than a transcendent view of crazy wisdom, the interviewees suggested that their actions are more likely to arise out of the particular context and setting, in which any 'craziness' derives from exigencies which are peculiar to it, or an intuitive response, rather than a transcendent knowledge. In such a situation teachers have to make their own judgements about how to act, in view of the needs of the situation and the consequences of their decision (defined by society). Most teachers suggested the precepts were useful guides which also fit with western social mores. The lack of a transcendent view, however, means that some teachers may make inappropriate decisions about how to act, based not on their insight but perhaps on acting out of old habits, patterns, addictions, etc, or ignorance. The insight described by the teachers is learning about the premises of self, but how they behave in the world is mediated by human cognition and therefore insight alone is not a guarantee of impeccable behaviour. Although most teachers felt that their insight predisposed them to more compassionate action, most acknowledged their potential to err.

9.4 From insight to action

In the previous section we explored how the development of insight transforms a person on three levels or relationship: to the self, to others and to nature. This section explores the impact that insight had on teachers' actions in the world, in particular their relationship with the world of money and commerce. Market exchanges, which once constituted a minor and infrequent part of human relations, have become almost an omnipresent mode of relation in our lives. The pervasiveness of the economy challenges Buddhist teachers living in this context to integrate Buddhist practices and insight into the modern world. How they do this requires a range of adaptations, which provide

important clues for how new understandings gained from Buddhism might benefit the society.

We have learned how the Buddhist insight into the self opens up a new ontology for economics. At its heart lies a paradox: the self recognises its own deconstruction. In this respect, Buddhist practice is letting go of old ways of thinking about self, in particular egotism, which implicitly includes notions of individual gain taken for granted in economic thinking. Logically, this must impact on how an individual functions rationally in society. The theoretical implications of any change in such central assumptions to a discipline suggest a radical transformation. Examining the implications of the data, this section will consider how Buddhist teachers have worked with the learning they have developed from insights to engage with the practical demands of everyday life.

9.4.1 The habitus of practice and insight

Many teachers were reluctant to trace the genesis of their actions to insight specifically. The complexity of their lives meant that choices and action were informed not only by their Buddhist practices but by many other aspects of their lives, such as their history and education. This complexity is perhaps why the Buddha chose to speak little about what happens after enlightenment.

Learning from insight experiences is a reflective process in which these new experiences cannot be separated from the context of all the other experiences of an individual. Buddhist insight, however, is distinct from other learning, because it is learning about the premises of the self. As one teacher commented, it is like seeing a snake and then realising that it is just a branch; afterwards you just carry on. In the same way, we naturally make distinctions between self and not-self until, through various introspective practices, we learn that this distinction is simply a reflexive illusion. Most people are capable of understanding a synthetic view – of a unity of all things. Humans can be deconstructed into the same molecules and atoms that constitute the world, and humans have evolved from and in response to that world into our present form over the course of millennia. The sense of self, which separates us, however, has evolutionary benefits, and even if we can intellectually understand our interconnection we do not *feel*

it. Since most reflexes can be overcome with training, so too can the sense of having some individual and separate existence.

Thus if we are able to learn to *feel* that this self is just a branch of the world, nothing much changes apart from our perspective, and with that we may experience a sense of relief. Similarly, after such an insight, a Buddhist teacher might continue to enjoy sex, chocolate and sports cars. The findings support this, but show that, while these things do not change and old habits remain, there is a shift in perspective. This change in perspective had a significant effect on how the Buddhist teachers related to the world. They were able to recognise how much of their actions were based on fear and projections, as illustrated by Interviewee 27: 'I was a very ego-centred, self-absorbed person, and I know it doesn't bring me joy any more; I've pretty much given up fulfilling that need.'

While the understanding of insight experiences changed the very premises by which they understood their ordinary self, integrating this understanding into the edifice of their knowledge took time and did not always transform how they acted. This process of integration seemed to form in the dialogical space between their Buddhist insight and the practical level of living in contemporary capitalist society. Bourdieu uses the concept of the habitus to highlight the messy and pragmatic nature of social life. For Bourdieu, habit or disposition forms a convincing basis for a theory of agency because so much of our action is non-reflective, and because, without knowledge of social practices, prescriptions and rules insufficiently specify action. Bourdieu (1990/1980) argues that action is formed through an agent's habitus, which is more than simply habits, but is acquired from the cumulative effects of our interactions with significant people, cultures and institutions in our particular historical environment, and which, through its engagement with the present, shapes perception, thought and thus action. According to Bourdieu (1984: 466), 'the schemes of the habitus, the primary forms of classification, owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will'. In other words, we just do them – not as automatons but because our social experience, which forms our habitus, predisposes us in certain ways.

This notion of habitus provides a useful description of how teachers thought of the relationship of insight to action, particularly as many teachers regarded the practice of

mindfulness and meditation as both a means and an end in itself. According to John Kabat-Zinn (2003: 145), mindfulness is 'the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment'. The purpose in mindfulness is an intentional engagement with the present moment, which includes the context of our habitus. The practice of mindful action brings awareness to bear on this habitus, of which we would otherwise be mindless. Although much of what forms one's habitus is learnt and automatic, Bourdieu's concept might be opened up to a swathe of cognitive processes that go on without our awareness.

The findings suggest that teachers had great difficulty in linking any specifics of a particular action directly to insight. They were, however, able to link their choices in a more general way, which sheds some light. There were two issues that arose. Firstly, while their insight might inform their action, it is mediated by their general understanding about life. Secondly, through mindfulness many realised that their decision-making occurred largely unconsciously, in ways that do not conform to the rational model that economics assumes.

9.4.2 Towards a new perspective on economic motivation

Buddhist insight comes from a growing understanding of insight experiences, and these come from working with the variety of meditative states that are described in the literature. These experiences may come about through a variety of causes that are not related to meditation, such as spontaneous or drug-induced states, and there is growing consensus that such experiences have neurological correlates (d'Aquili & Newberg, 1993; Newberg, Alavi, Baime, Pourdehnad, Santanna & d'Aquili, 2001). A key finding in this research is that, while an insight experience is an important component, Buddhist teachers are more interested in the reflective process that induces a new understanding.

In exploring the phenomenon of 'self-loss' in mystical experience, Baumeister and Exline (2002: 15) ask: 'are these experiences temporary alterations in how the self knows and understands itself, or are they permanent, involving some fundamental and lasting change in the self?' This research supports the first view, that the experiences are temporary; however, maturation in Buddhist practice goes beyond temporary experiences, and is best explained as relatively permanent higher-order learning about

the very underpinning of the ontological construction of the self. This is not 'self-loss' or 'an escape from self-awareness', but an enduring new understanding.

The result of this learning is consistent with Baumeister and Exline's (2002) observation that so-called 'mystical experiences' seem to bring a change in the motivational relationship with self rather than a change in cognition, so that we are not as driven to think well of ourselves. This different motivation towards the self was clearly reflected in the interviews, and its key effect is exemplified by Interviewee 5's observation that 'it has given me confidence to accept the way I relate to others and not worry about trying to fix it'. It seems plausible that, if the self is understood as ephemeral and lacking in concrete substance, the corresponding reduction in self-based impulses and desires is liberating.

Baumeister and Exline (2002) compare this to a related finding (Baumeister, 1988, 1991) that certain forms of pleasure seem to be facilitated by a temporary loss of self-responsibility, such as in the sadomasochistic behaviour of submission, or in alcoholism. Obviously, this parallel needs to be qualified, as acts that evoke relief from the self through imaginative role-play or drugs are very different from a deep understanding of the construction of self. The understanding of Buddhist teachers is an enduring understanding that comes about without interfering with the brain's functioning through the use of drugs or through engaging in extreme fantasy to experience a sense of liberation from one's conditioned role.

Yet all of these methods underline the inherently burdensome nature of such a perspective on the self. Baumeister (1988) points out that many sadomasochists are highly successful people who find imaginative role-play a powerful, albeit temporary, means of relief from their high-level self-awareness, which can become onerous. Loy (1992a, 2000) picks up on this burden in a different sense, tracing Ernest Becker's (1973) observation of the tendency in people to deny or repress their sense of death; a similar process operates against the sense of emptiness or ungroundedness of the self. Loy (1992a, 2000) calls this a sense of lack. The origin of this sense of lack is our inability to cope with the emptiness of self; insofar as we deny it and shy away from it, we experience it as a painful sense of lack.

Higher-order learning about the nature of the self reorientates Buddhist teachers' relationship to their attributes, which are normally connected with identity. This is an important conceptual distinction, as Baumeister (1998: 682) recognises – one which distinguishes between the attributes connected with identity and 'the being of the self'. The findings suggest that Buddhist teachers recognise that the latter does not necessarily have direct bearing on either their identity or their actions in the world. Although teachers continued to do the ordinary things of life, clearly they were changed in ways that they reported as liberating, and they felt much freer from the demands of the ego.

These changes affected motivation. However, the teachers baulked at making a direct connection between their actions and insight. This finding makes sense in the context of new developments in psychology which suggest that how we act is an embodied process rather than something that is conceptually and rationally driven. Hubert Dreyfus (2005) argues that cognitivism – a view that mind is largely derived from computational processes based on symbolic representations of reality – is an idea that 'seems to have run its course'. It appears that human cognition is a contextually based non-linear dynamic system that constantly arises as an open system in interaction with the world; as such, it has evolved a form of rationality which is distinctly human (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). In this way, as, Varela et al. (1991) suggest, we enactively engage with our world; knowledge arises from acting in it, and our habitus is partially moulded by our own doings, and partially by the unique interaction between our biological history, personal history and culture.

The gradual process by which Buddhist teachers learn to integrate their insight experiences into a new general sense of self seems consonant with this enactive engagement. From this perspective, Buddhist teachers develop modes of action in the world which are informed by their learning from insight experiences, not in a rational sense but in how they enact this new perspective through continuous engagement with the world. For example, from my own small experience, I encountered my discomfort with being fully open to the ever-present potential of interbeing. While this experience is not unusual, having recognised its relation to insight I have begun to embody this learning and relate more openly. To be embodied fully, these reflections would have to become automatic to form the habitus of future interactions, at which point the genesis of the learning may be forgotten, and it is likely that part of it may never have entirely

reached awareness – one is naturally more open. It might also arise through behaviours learnt through observation of others; for example, we might unconsciously mimic those around us who embody these traits.

In the Zen tradition, this reflexive terminus of learning is exemplified in a koan built around a dialogue between the famous Chinese masters Yunyan and Dao Wu. Yunyan asks: 'How does the Goddess Kanzeon (the archetype of compassion) act?' Dao Wu responds: 'an out-stretched hand adjusting a pillow in the middle of the night'. My interpretation of this is that Dao Wu is saying the motivation is spontaneous and natural; one's hand and heart automatically reach out in compassion. Action from this perspective fits with Dreyfus's (2005) view that much of human behaviour is not based on rational deliberation but responds to the exigencies of any particular situation without much thought.

One reason that Buddhist ethical practices are founded on this enlightened perspective is the intention of transforming the practitioner's habitus: firstly, to create the conditions for insight through right action and, secondly, so that upon the gaining of insight there is a convergence of habitual behaviour and intentional behaviour – in other words, cultivating a reflexive way of being by reducing bad habits so that they do not get in the way of insight and so they do not interrupt its expression after it has been achieved. This in turn will change how a person relates to their world. Thus, their motivations will not necessarily make sense from the traditional economic way of thinking because their intention is developmental in ways that are not self-oriented. Economic motives seen from this perspective are far more complex and open to cultivation than contemporary economic theory suggests.

9.4.3 Types of rationality

The question of choice is a crucial issue in economic theory, but it was not specifically addressed in the research questions. It was anticipated that the open nature of the questions would capture emergent themes, and the findings on intentionality and choice emerged in this way. Two differences in the type of choices that the teachers made became apparent. The economic assumption of rationality does not distinguish between types of choice decisions in the same way, although marketing separates out a range of buying behaviours, such as impulse, habit and anxiety; but in the main, the emphasis on

rationality negates non-reflective modes of decision-making. Bourdieu (2005:3) sums up the problem with universalising assumptions about the rational agency:

> It is not 'decisions' of the rational will and consciousness or mechanical determinations resulting from external powers that underlie the economy of economic practices – that reason immanent in practices – but the dispositions acquired through learning processes associated with protracted dealing with the regularities of the field; apart from any conscious calculation, these dispositions are capable of generating behaviours and even anticipations which would be better termed reasonable than rational, even if their conformity with calculative evaluation tends to make us think of them, and treat them, as products of calculating reason.

The findings suggest that there are different *types* of decisions or rationalities. The first type of choice is largely deliberative, and for most of the teachers these centred on major life decision, including their choice of lifestyle. This was reported, by some, as being something that they spent time thinking over. Teachers generally chose occupations which suited their temperament and were conducive to Buddhist practice. What was distinctive about the choices that teachers pursued was that they commonly involved financial sacrifices for other people. The diversity of their activities added to the difficultly of categorisation, but there were no teachers who chose occupations that, from a traditional Buddhist perspective, constituted wrong livelihood. Moreover, there seems to be an unusual movement from high-powered occupations to a simpler lifestyle, regardless of pay, particularly from occupations that were not felt by Buddhist teachers to be conducive to their practice. How much weight can be placed on these finding is difficult to say, and certainly it would be difficult to directly connect this to insight without a comparative or control sample. For example, it would be interesting to compare a group of long-time practitioners who were not teachers, to control for the effect of teaching.

One major factor behind these choices was that most teachers directed a large part of their activities towards the infusion of Buddhist practices into their lives. Most teachers regarded it as an imperative to 'walk their talk'. They set up Buddhist doctrine as a goal they worked towards, and for many this did not come easily. Most found themselves swimming against the stream of western culture. A major aspect of being a dharma teacher was that is was generally not well paid, and the lack of remuneration for large amounts of time had a significant impact on their lives. Lifestyle choices which freed up time for teaching were a major consideration. In a sample of 34 respondents the number

of professionals was relatively high, yet many had quit demanding careers such as psychiatry, pharmacy and the law for simpler and more flexible lives. It seemed that the pathways available to combine teaching and work were limited, and many teachers were aware that this and made decisions which affected their career choices accordingly.

Many felt that their insight opened them to finding ways to help others in the world. One teacher, for example, risked her life savings in a social action campaign by engaging a top legal company in an environmental action which involved a major lawsuit. One experimented with a new type of 'Buddhist organisation', which failed, and others chose to live off the charity of their students, in the tradition of *Dana* or voluntary donation. A consistent theme in the interview material was a general orientation of compassion, which arose out of their practice and insight, permeating into their lives and influencing both their small and large choices. For example, in meeting new people or being a leader they felt they were able to be fully open without boundaries, less susceptible to being swayed by narcissistic desires and greed.

The second approach to decision-making adds a new dimension to Nisbett and Wilson's (1977) finding that introspective reports are not very accurate in finding out why people make decisions. Several teachers suggested that their own introspections on decision-making revealed that, phenomenologically, much of the process was not open to mindful and conscious observation. In other words, the findings of Nisbett and Wilson (1977) may not have been related to the accuracy of the introspective method, but rather point to the fact that ordinary people are not capable of the levels of sustained attention needed to recognise that many decision-making processes are unconscious. Most Buddhist practitioners quickly come to understand how easily the mind can run off into a fantasy. When asked to reflect about a decisional process, most people are likely not to be able to attentively notice what arises in their field of consciousness with sufficient mastery to recognise how a particular thought arises, and instead will retrospectively construct reasons.

The teachers' observations suggest that decision-making is largely transacted in the unconscious workings of the mind. This sense of decision-making seems to dovetail with existing cognitive theories; however, a great deal of economic thinking is predicated on the rational economic actor who makes conscious and deliberate decisions, despite an increasing literature that suggests otherwise. These results suggest

that the economic model of the self, which rests on a discursive rationality, does not accord with the view of mindful introspection. Moreover, while the Buddhist perspective might sound mysterious, as decisions and events seem just to happen – as if they co-arise – this corresponds with emergent and embodied views of consciousness. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1988) make the important observation that perceiving and acting may not depend on internal representations, but rather action emerges dynamically from the relation of a particular situation to the activation of stored cognitive traces of previous encounters. Although the significant choices we make in our lives, such as choosing to enrol at university, may involve some deliberation, it is possible that skilled introspection using mindful attention will reveal a different picture in which we find that our choices are not choices in the rational sense at all.

9.4.4 Ordinary mind is the Way

While mostly associated with the Zen tradition, the idea that enlightenment is 'nothing special' has been a theme in many Buddhist traditions. In a way it is a paradox: by letting go of our clinging to specialness, our relationship with the ordinary everyday reveals it as something special despite having been always there. Wright (1998) warns us that Zen language is often playful and its meaning dependent on a social and historical context that no longer exists.

The iconoclastic perspective manifested in early Zen, or more accurately Chan, needs to be understood in the context of what was then mainstream Buddhism. Mainstream Buddhism in China around the time Chan Buddhism developed was probably Theravadin, although Indian Mahayana schools are known to have existed. Early Chan Buddhists were critical of the mainstream and depicted it as largely oriented towards rote learning of suttas, neglecting was they regarded as crucial experiential practices in favour of scholarship. The famous story of Deshan Xuanjian, who was considered a leading scholar of the Diamond suttas, following his enlightenment experience burnt all his notes and commentaries, declaring to all:

> Even though you have exhausted the profound doctrines, it's like placing a hair in vast estates. Even though you have learned all the secrets of the world, it's like letting a single drop of water fall into an enormous valley. (adapted from Cleary and Cleary, 1977: 25)

This view places experience at the core of Zen practice, to which the koan "Ordinary mind is the way" is intended to elucidate. Modern literal interpretations can easily miss the mark by assuming that ordinary mind means any mind. The emphasis on experience in the accounts given by non-Zen teachers; may reflect shifts in Theravadin practice which Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988) outline, or may reflect ecumenical incorporations characteristic of its Western variations. Clearly, Theravada discourse has emphasis on experiential practices, which suggests that Chan may have been a reaction to a period in which scholarship predominated in what then was mainstream Chinese Buddhism.

Modern literal interpretations can easily miss the mark by assuming that ordinary mind means any mind. The findings suggest that teachers found a depth in the ordinary – that when they found that their thoughts were no longer grasping they developed a powerfully appreciative view of the ordinary. The view that comes from insight into the self also recognises how we create much of our own suffering, as Interviewee 16 suggested:

> I wouldn't say that I don't hold my old assumptions about who I am anymore, but I think that much of the source of pain and sorrow in the world, at the individual and also at the institutional level, is a profound sense of separation and isolation. That can be dissolved through opening the heart and having a clear mind. It is the same heart-mind that recognises that even though you, David, are sitting there, and I am sitting over here, essentially what is happening is that these minds are intermeshing in this moment …

In retrospect, there *was* an intermeshing of minds, but it was not until after the later experience (see page 202) that I recognised that the two interviewees in question were pointing out the same experience. This earlier situation did not strike me with such clarity, but in both instances I felt particularly comfortable with the teachers. I realise now that with insight this connection is always available, the difference being that in the first situation I was not open to it at the time.

What in one situation was a special experience, in another situation was relatively ordinary because I was unable to meet it with an open heart and mind, which is exactly the nature of institutional suffering that the teacher was trying to convey. The lack of depth of relationship and community is so endemic that few people know that anything else is possible. David Riesman may have been wrestling with this lack of openness in

his classic *The Lonely Crowd*, which struck such a chord in the collective psyche during the 1950s. In the book, the stereotypical other-directed person seemed to reflect an aspect of the modern mass society in which intimacy became so diluted that ordinary connections lack attention. Moreover, inner experience was displaced by the intensity of this lifestyle, so that many people lost the sense of connection. This sense of isolation from others is recurring, and has again found popular attention with Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000); it also seems an ongoing theme in the so-called 'men's movement'.

Buddhist insight suggests that we miss many opportunities for fulfilment and satisfaction in the ordinary aspects of life. This theme underlies a great deal of Buddhist economic writing, but seems to enjoy little airplay in economics. Through the recognition that so much of what we need in life is relational and readily available, there may be hope of finding a way to reduce our ecological footprint on the world. Most of the Buddhist teachers sampled here experienced a sense of interconnectedness, non-clinging, and a natural sensibility towards harmony, which came about through the integration of insight and practice, and they felt satisfied.

9.4.5 Voluntary simplicity

In the story of the Buddha, he leaves his life of luxury in search of an end to suffering. A shift away from a hedonistic lifestyle is an extremely important issue for a world in which consumption is spiralling far beyond sustainable limits (Carolan, 2004).

A widely advocated solution is finding a life that is fulfilling without modern material luxury (Elgin, 1993; Sen, 1999; Etzioni, 2004). Etzioni (2004) outlines a wide range of approaches towards a simplification and reduction in consumption, from moderate changes (where people choose to reduce their consumptive lifestyle) to strong simplification (which is a quantum reduction by restructuring their lives), to holistic simplification (enacting a coherent philosophy of simplicity). Breakspear and Hamilton (2004) estimate that almost a quarter of the Australian population, in the past ten years, have chosen to downsize in some way. The same phenomenon is occurring across Europe, although estimates are substantially less, at around 10% of the workforce, according to research by business information and research company Datamonitor (2003). Qualitative interviews by Breakspear and Hamilton (2004) suggest that the four

main reasons for this choice are a desire for a more balanced life, conflicting workplace and personal values, greater fulfilment, and ill health (often due to accumulated stress).

These trends indicate a potentially significant shift in social values; however, other figures, including consumer spending, have experienced long-term growth patterns which are not consistent with such a change. It is also possible that the 'greying' of western populations has amplified the shift towards voluntary simplicity; nevertheless, the dominant cultural ethos remains driven ego-centred gratification. Breakspear and Hamilton (2004) observe that the decision to downsize seems to go against powerful social forces, and described it as an 'act of defiance'.

The key question is whether alternatives to material consumption are feasible, acceptable and sustainable. Buddhism is not alone here. The famous Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy came to a similar conclusion and advocated a life of voluntary simplicity. Epicurus espoused a similar view and, according Alain de Botton (2000: 57), believed that:

> True friends do not evaluate us according to worldly criteria, it is the core self they are interested in; like ideal parents, their love for us remains unaffected by our appearance or position in the social hierarchy, and so we have no qualms in dressing in old clothes and revealing that we have made little money this year.

The ordinary person might be able to imagine an Indian prince giving up his palace for the begging bowl in pursuit of spiritual knowledge, but the hedonic mindset of the consumer culture which has spread across the world is likely to ask 'What's in the begging bowl?'

One distinctive characteristic of western Buddhism is that the vast majority of practitioners have chosen not to take up the life of an ascetic. This shift has prompted a range of criticisms which cast doubt on the veracity of western Buddhists' attainments in terms of freedom from suffering. Some believe that this has produced a kind of 'Buddhism Lite' or 'Boomer Buddhism' (Prothero, 2001). Many of these critiques fall into the hermeneutic problems discussed in chapter 2, using contemporary Asian sources to challenge their western counterparts. The nub of the criticism, according to Bridle (2000), is that it is 'cake-and-eat-it-too spirituality'.

Mellor's (1991) observation about the 'Protestant' character of modern western Buddhist movements suggests that western Buddhists have retained much of this modern ethos, including the aspects which Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988) suggest are derived from Weber's (1958) Protestantism. Three key aspects of Protestantism can be summarised as: spiritual egalitarianism; individualism, in which the essential aspects of a religion occur privately; and universalism, in that truths hold irrespective of time and place. This cultural context, as Weber tried to suggest in his use of the term 'elective affinity', implied a complex relationship between systems of ideas and social structures in which causal connections went in both directions.

Western Buddhism has arguably shown an elective affinity towards Buddhism that suits a western lifestyle. Kornfield (1993a), in *A Path with Heart*, poignantly illustrates the difficulty of being a monk in New York, when he visits his sister in a hair salon dressed in monk's robes, only to be greeted by its clientele with shrieks of amusement and mouths agape. Yet from the insights of western teachers we can see that insight does not provide a set ethos in the sense prescriptions, but rather a way to be. Unfolding what that means would clearly involve some incorporation of Buddhist practices into everyday life, but it also challenges the teachers to reflect on what they have learned. While it is impossible to untangle the cultural elements from the experiential foundations of their actions, as Rorty (1989) suggests, a pragmatic approach may be the best. In this regard we can use western Buddhist experience as a foundation to reflect on Buddhist practice in a modern context.

9.4.6 Flaws in the glass

If Buddhist wisdom can be understood in terms of higher-order learning, then conceivably such learning is subject to mistakes. In at least two interviews teachers revealed notions which may reflect errors of judgement. One teacher appears to have confused practices with the goal of Buddhism, believing that mindfulness was the same thing as insight. This is not such a gross misconception, as the two converge: in many ways, mindful engagement with the world is very similar to insight. On the other hand, it seems clear from what the teachers reported in chapter 6 that there is a breakthrough with insight, a sudden recognition of a truth. This was a very vivid and powerful experience for some, and for others it took a long time to understand, but there was some change in the felt sense of self which did not seem evident in this teacher's

experience. The second case, however, highlights the potential for a narcissistic reading of insight experiences, and while this teacher was not speaking personally, it was possible to recognise how some experiences of insight may be interpreted in ways where there is something awry. The sense of everything being perfect lacks a certain openness and inclusiveness of being that might, in comparison with the other descriptions, be potentially narcissistic, leading to insensitivity to the suffering of others. Another teacher's understanding of their insight seemed to have been accompanied less by emotions than a practical/intellectual perspective, which may not have impacted much on how they acted in the world, but suggested that insight may be mediated by other life experiences and perhaps that early psychological trauma may result in a form of emotionally disconnected insight, just as some people are disconnected or split in ordinary awareness. Several teachers recognised this as a danger in the practice.

These findings point to an interesting possibility, suggesting additional complexity in the previously set out account of Buddhist insight as a process of higher-order learning into the premises of self. Thompson (2001) argues that a dynamic interrelationship between self and other constitutes individual human consciousness, and thus it is inherently intersubjective. This encounter of self and other must incorporate an evolutionary and developmentally defined capacity for empathy, which is simply a precondition for consciousness. According to Thompson (2001), human empathy is open to pathways of non-egocentric or self-transcendent modes of intersubjectivity. Drawing on the phenomenological tradition, he argues that to understand intersubjectivity a simultaneous analysis of the relationship between subjectivity and world is required. This is a radical new meaning which, Zahavi (2001) points out, should not imply that intersubjectivity is something that can be inserted into an already established ontology, but rather the three regions of 'self', 'others' and 'world' reciprocally define each other. In other words, the mind is both inside and outside, or, as Varela (2000: 79) puts it, 'the presence and reality of other is so intimately close that the pertinent question is how can we ever come to have the notion that we are that separate and distinct?'

A second aspect of Buddhist ethics might be a bias towards a non-egocentric mode of intersubjectivity which incorporates this empathetic facility. The finding that Buddhist

teachers experienced a compassionate opening following their insights might be explained as an artefact of their reorientation of the self-concept. This allows them a respite from defining themselves as an identity, which results in their being less outer-directed. Many Buddhist practices concentrate on reducing the strategic thinking that characterises an outer-directed personality. This particular mode of thinking might actually interfere with our capacity to engage with these innate empathic abilities. For example, a common theme in romantic stories is about a character (usually male) who is so absorbed in work or some rational activity that he fails to notice what's happening at the feeling level. Our capacity for non-egocentric modes of being may rely on non-linguistic modes of cognition, and meditative practices may be a natural way of being to connect with these empathetic structures.

A possible explanation of narcissism may be related to childhood developmental patterns in which empathetic structures do not fully develop by some critical age. There is a growing body of literature which points to significant neurological consequences of early childhood trauma and neglect. The role of insight may thus lead to a deep sense of oneness and connection to the world, and a relief of the burden of self, but such biologically based emotional disorders might remain. Thus such a person may not automatically feel the needs of others, even though they have a sense of oneness. In such a person, the very natural human distinctions, such as the crying of a baby discussed earlier (page 240), may not elicit the same response. This does not mean that such a person will not respond, but their immediate emotional response may be stunted.

A better understanding of the nature of insight might be useful in understanding scandals in Buddhist centres in which teachers failed to observe normal social boundaries in ways that harm others. My observation of one of these situations was that, at one level, it involved simple human frailty, but, on another, there were deep character flaws which were in fact coterminous with early childhood abandonment issues.

For most teachers, however, a natural desire to avoid harming and a sense of mutual care were powerfully conveyed in the results. This sense of naturalness was brought out in the finding that teachers felt a deep sense of authenticity; as something given, or what is – both inside and outside in an ecological sense, where no clear distinctions between self and other exist. In Zen there is a saying, 'when hungry eat, when tired sleep'. When the self is no longer at centre stage, the discursive constructive self more easily comes to

rest. At this point a clear sense of ontological interconnectedness arises, and not harming, which is at the root of all Buddhist ethical action, seems natural; it is just like not harming oneself.

Thus Buddhist ethical injunctions might best be understood as reflecting a natural empathetic intentionality, as Thompson (2001) describes, and a pragmatic approach to developing insight. This view converges with a range of work on the instinctive nature of cooperation, such as Matt Ridley's popular book *The Origins of Virtue* (1996). Evolutionary economics touches on this perspective, and attempts to bridge the gap between biology and human behaviour by examining the links between cultural and biological system and the emergence of social and economic processes. This view of Buddhism, which highlights its potential cognitive foundations, may eventually find a place in this body of work. If so, what a Buddhist perspective might offer is both the accumulated learning of a tradition, as MacIntyre (1984) explicates, and the phenomenological understanding of insight, which is what it means to embody the emerging neuro-scientific understanding of self as enaction.

9.4.7 The gift

As discussed earlier in section 8.3.3, Lewis Hyde's (1983) exploration of the gift distinguishes two types of economies: one in which accumulation of wealth is accorded the greatest status; and the gift economy, in which status is derived from how much one gives to others. In the *Leviathan*, Hobbes (1651/1975: 201) sets out a view which characterises economic thinking for centuries to come, "For no man giveth but with intention of good to himself; because gift is voluntary; and of all voluntary acts, the object is to every man his own good". In philosophical terms, in its strong form, this is psychological egoism which is the thesis that one is motivated by one's own interest or that one acts solely for one's own interest. In economics, this view takes a form of rational egoism which posits acting in a way that maximizes one's self-interest is rational. As discussed earlier, question of self-interest subtends a complex set of debates regarding human nature and economic organization.

The long-held notion, articulated by Hobbes, that behind a gift was self-interest was challenged by Marcel Mauss. Mauss (1950/1967) found that idea of the natural self-interest of humans was not the case in societies where a culture of gift exchange had

developed. In these societies, the exchange of objects between groups within a society had the function of forming and sustaining relationships between them. Mauss (1950/1967) argued that giving an object creates an inherent obligation on the receiver to reciprocate the gift. Thus gift-giving in these pre-modern society, was something other than a form of rational economic exchange. The assumption that market exchanges were a natural form of interpersonal transaction could not be upheld.

More recently, Lewis Hyde (1983) has extended Mauss's explanation, focusing on the context of the exchange. Hyde (1983) points out that nature of the gift depends on an interval of uncertainty before a gift is reciprocated. This interval tests the giver's intentions, which Hyde suggests distinguishes between a true gift and a false gift. If the interval is too short or too long then the exchange is tainted and the relations soured. According to Hyde (1983: 280), "a gift — and particularly an inner gift, a talent, is a mystery." He uses the term mystery as something which is outside an individual's understanding, as Hyde (1983) explains, quoting Neruda, it is more beautiful because: "it widens out the boundaries of our being, and unites all living things."

Several of the teachers specifically addressed Hyde's work, alluding to this deeper, relational view of exchange. These findings raise ontological questions about the nature of exchange. The notion of an exchange as a transaction between two separate entities, which is so fundamental to economics, is challenged on two grounds. The first challenge comes from the shift in the conception of human needs as essentially hedonistic. Teachers reported that they had became less competitive in their social outlook and more concerned for the well-being of others, and found that what they wanted for themselves was less distinguishable from what they wanted for others. Their outlook seemed more eudaemonic, in that their individual well-being was intimately tied up with the well-being of others. In this sense, the traditional economic view of a transaction as occurring between two separate and distinct entities does not make sense. The satisfaction of the needs of another person may be just as important, in some cases, as the satisfaction of the teacher's personal needs. The question of profit did not seem to fit well with the teachers' views, and the idea of an unbalanced exchange, from their point of view, was counterproductive; unless the proceeds were passed on for the common good.

This altruistic dimension has been a source of debate in contemporary economic theory. For example, Etzioni (1988) critiques economic theory for its failure to incorporate altruism and related ethical issues; this is particularly true of mainstream neoclassical theory. Titmuss (1970) critiques competitive markets as a negative influence in social policy. However, Altman (2005: 733) responds that 'critiques of economics largely focus upon one particular theoretical perspective that builds on a very narrow definition of rational economic behavior'. This defence draws on the infinite possibilities inherent in the *homo oeconomicus* abstraction, which, like any mathematical function, consists of variables and constants that can be changed to improve its fit. This ideal, however, is not useful in developing a working knowledge, because, as March and Simon (1958) argue, rationality is bounded. As the function approaches reality, the number of variables tends towards infinity. This conundrum has not been problematic for the physical sciences, as many physical systems are relatively simple compared to social organisations, as shown in Boulding's (1956) scales of complexity, which places human systems higher in complexity than even the most advanced computer. The dominance of the deductive approach to economics is an ongoing argument, and is briefly discussed in chapter 4. The results add yet another dimension to the critique of the assumption of the atomistic individual as the basis of rationality. It extends the postmodern view, which challenges absolutes and finds identity as not identical with the narrative identity of a concrete person (Ricoeur, 1992/1990). The findings seek to incorporate an embodied intersubjectivity which cannot be distinguished as an autonomous or essential cognising entity.

For the Buddhist teachers, altruism arose both as a practice and as a felt sense. For example, one teacher simply practised generosity by never questioning prices, tipping generously, and giving without expectation of a return; another overcame a lifetime of conditioning and gave a significant sum of money to a needy student. What the findings suggest is that, if an economic calculus was at work, then it would not be based on individual but collective interests. The transformative effect of insight imbued teachers with a deeply heartfelt compassion for others, and this was evident in the dedication of their time and energy to actions that would benefit others rather than themselves. This is not to paint Buddhist teachers as saintly, but there was evidence of choices to live simply, generously and compassionately. My general observations of their

circumstances revealed that they owned few objects that could be labelled conspicuous consumption.

The concept of the gift is based on circulation, and many teachers were strong believers in trusting that what was given would return, although not necessarily in a material form. These findings place a different light on doctrinal interpretations of *dana*, which place particular attention on the exchange, particularly between the laity and the monastic *sangha*, whereby material goods are exchanged for merit which was said to accumulate towards future rewards, including favourable rebirth. This doctrine of merit came to pervade Asian Buddhism, and continues to be the economic foundation of monastic Buddhist traditions. The findings show a very different view among western Buddhists teachers.

Most teachers were aware of the deeply seductive nature of the contemporary economy and noticed how they would, from time to time, entertain thoughts of greed. The practice of mindfulness and the general ascetic ethos of Buddhism might account for their attitude towards generosity; but several teachers were adamant that this came from clarity of insight.

This question crosses the notion of grace, so bringing an essentially Christian notion into view. Buddhist teachers, however, related to grace in a different way, as something that arose out of the mysterious nature of life, rather than God's will. In this sense, the world still operates in strange and mysterious ways, but this is not predicated on a personal relationship with a deity. It seems obvious how Buddhist-Christians insert God behind this mystery, revealing a perspective that opens up new possibilities for both religions.

9.5 Validity of interview accounts

Like any experiential accounts, the validity of these interview accounts is open to challenge: asking a large number of people about their experiences does not guarantee truth. This has been shown in perceptual experiments in psychology, and in consistent human biases in decision-making (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). These concerns are addressed in detail in section 3.1.6.

One concern is that Buddhist teachers are likely to have a significant investment in the truth claims of Buddhism. On this basis, it could be argued that the cognitive dissonance theory of Festinger, Riecken and Schachter (1956) applies, suggesting that the teachers simply adjust their experience to comply with Buddhist expectations. Festinger et al. (1956), however, have been challenged, and, according to Dawson (1999), it is difficult to put much faith in their evidence. He concludes, in a review of the literature, that the interpretation of the meaning of an event is usually complex, and that the observed persistence in a belief may be due to the fact that few events are free of mediating variables, and are thus difficult to definitively disprove. In other words, the persistence of a belief may be rational, although only remotely probable. My impression of the Buddhist teachers who were interviewed is that they did not fit within the categorisation of the obsessive and defensive stands of the 'true believer', and were clearly not a group of fanatics who simply followed a doctrine without question. When challenged, their responses did not reflect those of a person deeply invested in protecting their beliefs. They did not dogmatically defend their views; rather, what distinguished the teachers from such a stereotype was their openness to challenge and also the sense they conveyed that their experience was an authentic shift in their understanding of the self. These teachers tried to communicate the nature of their insights, pointing out the difficulty of describing subjective experience. Throughout the transcripts there was plenty of evidence to support the view that they were a diverse group of rational explorers of a new worldview, prepared to investigate and challenge critical components of given doctrine in their efforts to integrate this into their own western frames of meaning.

Religious experience has a diverse range of theoretical support; as Bagger (1999: 1) notes, '[w]ith all the more traditional avenues of theism's defense generally in disrepute, modern theologians and religious philosophers have repeatedly sought to justify religious belief rationally by reference to the individual's experience'. To defend this position, first suggested by James (1902/1985), it is also necessary to be able to meet some powerful objections. Two key objections raised by Bagger (1999) are, firstly, that justifications on the basis experience fail to pay attention to the epistemic context of the explanation and, secondly, how the best explanation for such an experience might be chosen. These points highlight the important relationship between the explanation and the experience, and the need to recognise the quality of the explanation. Bagger (1999)

doubts the possibility of a transcultural experience because it implies that the experience itself carries the explanation. While the primary aim of Bagger (1999) is to challenge supernatural explanations by disarticulating the relationship between a religious experience and its justification, he raises an important general question.

The results of this research suggest an alternative explanation which remains consistent with Bagger's (1999) disarticulation. The description of insight experienced by teachers prior to their exposure to Buddhism did not differ greatly from those teachers who were exposed to Buddhist thinking. The lack of a coherent sense-making explanation, however, was reported to result in fear and bewilderment, and for all the teachers who had previous insight experiences it triggered a search for 'answers'. The choices of explanation available through modern western thinking seemed to be lacking for these Buddhist teachers, despite their generally high levels of education. Despite their searches, none was able find a satisfactory explanation of their experience in either western scientific or religious discourse. Although it is likely that these searches were not exhaustive, the finding only provides qualified support for Bagger's (1999) view that an experience in itself does not provide explanation. These teachers, however, were clearly reflective regarding the nature of the explanation of their experience, and felt it was necessary for the explanation to fit the experience. Bagger's (1999) view may be confounded by the presence of strong and possibly rigid belief systems which if not present, as with western Buddhist teachers, may lead a different outcome. Western Buddhist teachers were aware of other religious views and some, who were Christians, regarded their experiences as also explicable from a Christian perspective. Since there is good reason to believe that western Buddhist teachers were not highly embedded in their tradition, as most had made their religious choices late in life, this allowed them to reflect on the epistemic context of their experience.

Explanation and validation are related; teachers are more likely to prefer explanations that best fit their experience. The response of most of the teachers was that they found the experience to be clear enough to use personal referents of validity, regarding their own understanding as being a sufficient foundation. But many confirmed the validity of their experiences in consultation with their teachers or texts. It would seem from the interviews that most teachers were confident that they had found a good explanation, and that their experiences were indeed real and valid. There was a predominant sense

that a pragmatic approach to hermeneutic confusion was taken – the teachers accepted what worked for them. What does appear consistent with Bagger (1999), however, is that some found the Buddhist experience capable of being interpreted through a variety of epistemic frames, including those of other religions and psychology.

The study of religious experience itself is also open to this critique, as it has mostly been predisposed to Christian frameworks, in which religious experience is rare and often interpreted to include supernatural elements. As James (1902/1985) contended, religious experience can also be regarded as part of the domain of psychology, and here the literature is wildly inclusive – historically including meditation experiences with the parapsychological and even UFO sightings. The sense of rarity and the sceptical orientation of psychology, with its anti-religious turn, to behaviourism may be the reason that studies of meditation seem predisposed towards the correlates of meditation rather than actual reports of practitioners' meditative experiences. It does seem odd that Buddhist teachers, as a potentially rich source of religious experience, have been so little studied in psychology. Few earlier studies have looked at Buddhist experiences. Fulton (1986: 255) interviewed nine subjects and found evidence that was suggestive, though inconclusive, 'that some essential core or essence of Buddhism may be separable from the cultural forms in which it is embedded and expressed'. Ling (1992) conducted a study of 53 meditators at three-month and two-week meditation retreats. A package of self-administered tests was used before and after the retreats to discern any changes in their experience of self. The findings suggested that important changes in the experience of self and world resulted from Insight Meditation practices among the three-month sample consistent with Theravadin Buddhist theory. Brown and Engler (1986a, 1986b) examined a sample of mediators interviewing them, and administered a set of tests, including the Rorschach test. The interview findings showed similarities between practitioners and the stages set out in canonical descriptions of each level of practice.

By interviewing a large sample of teachers it has been possible to establish a degree of intersubjective corroboration. There is 'face validity' for the results. Firstly, most of the teachers' accounts were about their changed sense of self. Secondly, the actual descriptions were each distinctly personal, and contained a high level of complexity. Thirdly, while the teachers were not a random sample, they could not possibly have

conspired to create these accounts of their experiences. Finally, most teachers appeared to be stable and grounded, and were, in themselves, satisfied with the fruit of their practice.

The results suggest a new view of human consciousness that, although recognisably Buddhist, is also distinctive enough to be something *other*. The findings support some core notions of Buddhist thinking, providing data which clarifies and adds weight to traditional Buddhist views, particularly regarding the self. The experience of western Buddhist teachers, however, challenges other major aspects of Buddhist thinking which are prominent in doctrinal accounts, particularly the notion of rebirth and reincarnation. This suggests that significant elements of Buddhist doctrine include cultural notions which may have been inscribed over time and perhaps have little substantive basis. The distinct lack of supernatural dimensions to western Buddhist accounts converges with recent cognitive science notions of consciousness.

Most significant is that the findings fit with the contention of Lakoff and Johnson (1999) that all experience, including spiritual experience, is embodied: it must be derived from the interaction between the body, brain and the world. The findings of this thesis suggest a new view of embodied spirituality is possible, as they potentially explain how a 'spiritual experience' can be embodied. This is more than the empathetic connection with all beings that Lakoff and Johnson (1999) suggest; it is a radical shift in ontology that becomes the basis of higher-order learning. Moreover, the findings support the more general observation of Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 565) that '[o]ur body is intimately tied to what we walk on, sit on, touch, taste, smell, see, breathe, and move within. Our corporeality is part of the corporeality of the world.' This resonates with the Buddhist view of interconnectedness of being to the world, but cannot support the notions of rebirth and reincarnation without significant qualification.

If we regard insight as learning that the self we cling to and our bodies arise as a pattern, cognitive and biophysical, in a seamless continuum with all things, we can explain the 'spiritual' dimension of such experiences as arising because the universe itself is awesome, and a sense of agape arises simply as a property of our minds. The realisation of this is not abstract, but is something immediate, felt and known, and is liberating. We would thus understand that if our body was to die, in one sense, we would not die because what we have called a self is only a non-enduring relationship of constituent

parts that formed and shaped us, like a wave is formed and shaped out of the ocean. Our identification with the self that most people believe would die no longer is absolute, as insight recognises that we can also identify with what is not born and remains outside of us. Through mindfulness and meditation practices it is possible to encounter the interbeing of the 'I' we take for granted as being fixed. This encounter opens us to understanding that where the 'I' begins or ends is uncertain, just as it is undecidable where a wave becomes the ocean and vice versa. The phenomenological knowing of this dual identity sets us free; the question of birth and death is resolved in the sense that, if a wave breaks, the ocean continues and we are subject to birth and death, as a wave disappears on reaching the shore.

9.6 Towards a fusion of horizons

Gadamer (2000: 383) suggests that 'No one knows in advance what will "come out" of a conversation'. And, as Linder (2001: 670) summarises:

> The horizon, determined partially by the past – traditions, memory and collective identity – and partially by one's own autobiography and current situation. Dialogue not only extends these horizons for each participant but, at the same time, helps clarify and extend the horizons of others. To come to a shared understanding, then, is analogous to a fusion of these horizons.

When the conversation between Buddhism and economics began, few could have guessed what would emerge from this dialogue. The encounter with the West has already seen the development of several new directions in Buddhism. In recent years we have also seen a number of developments which have challenged the purpose, methodologies and foundational assumptions of economics. This research points to steps in a new direction and identifies areas in which the horizons of both may merge. Before this is possible, both Buddhism and economics need to open themselves to rethinking. Without a radical reframing of both which goes beyond the simple gaining valuable insights about each other, there is little chance of recognising the potential for something that transcends both Buddhism and economics, as they currently stand.

For Buddhism, this new horizon can be traced to a cultural change that is already taking place. Already new narratives are bringing modern critical reflection to Buddhist thinking and practices. Contemporary developments of Buddhism are part of a broad cultural change that is not simply a one-way process of appropriation, but one that arises

out of an emerging new phase in western understanding of Buddhism as a dynamic and complex mixing of both western cultural imperatives and Buddhist traditions. The dialogue between Mellor (1992) and Kulananda (1992) on the question of western Buddhism's continuity with its Asian traditions reflects differing views of the nature of the mix. Mellor (1992) makes clear the impossibility of simple cultural transplantation and the inevitability of a fusion of some form. Batchelor (1997) also recognises that a culture of awakening is such a fusion, and points out that Buddhist practices can never remain a 'private affair' because who we are and how we act is inevitably mediated by broader cultural forces. This fusion has already seen attempts to differentiate itself from Buddhism altogether. For example, Varela (2000: 89) suggests a 'science of interbeing' as 'a Dharma implicit in science'.

Western Buddhist teachers, such as Stephen Batchelor (1990a, 1990b, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2004) and Jack Kornfield (1977, 1993a, 1993b, 2001), are contributing to this project by exploring Buddhist practices in a western context for themselves. Buddhist scholars, such as Faure (1991, 1993, 1997, 1998), Jackson and Makransky (2000) and Wright (1998), are also important contributors to this project; they take significant new steps towards understanding the social construction of Buddhist thinking. The findings of this study suggest that western Buddhist teachers believe they are exploring essentially the same experience of not-self, which brought a contented smile to the lips of the Indian nobleman sitting under a tree in ancient India – known as the Buddha.

Contemporary economics has suffered a continuous barrage of critiques which have questioned everything from its purpose to its methodology. These attacks have had limited effect. However, recently they have come from within the discipline. They have given rise to some new thinking, including 'green' and 'ecological' economics, as well as some applied developments such as the work of the New Economics Foundation on social responsibility. These new developments, particularly those which question its modern underpinnings, form potential bridges to new understanding which might be prepared to review the historic lack of real engagement with Buddhism. Critical to this dialogue is the accumulation of supportive evidence from the cognitive sciences, but also evidence such as that collected in this research, which moves Buddhism away from simple beliefs to provide it with an empirical footing. The following sections will briefly explore and outline these new directions for both Buddhism and economics.

9.6.1 A new perspective on Buddhism

In the 1960s, an unprecedented number of westerners flocked to Asia enthused with romantic notions of oriental religion. Many engaged with Buddhist practices with great zeal, and a few persisted enough to be allowed to teach. Almost unnoticed, a critical turning point in the dialogue between Buddhism and the West had arrived. The teachers returned to the West with knowledge of the fruits of Buddhist practice, and what they brought back was a radically new understanding about Buddhism. Hitherto, western studies of Buddhism had always been plagued by the lack of an articulate emic (insider) viewpoint of expert practitioners.[53]

This research has focused directly on this emic point of view. The findings provide support for central aspects of Buddhism, particularly the Buddha's liberating experience of self and world. The experiences of this diverse group of western teachers are recognisably similar to core elements identifiable in the original experience of the Buddha. As mentioned earlier, there is little to be gained from comparisons with historical (and perhaps mythical) accounts of Buddhist experiences in order to establish authenticity. Not only are there cultural and linguistic barriers which distort such comparisons, but even living exemplars in Asia carry institutionally embedded barriers to comparison. Specifically, as Batchelor (1997) points out, a crucial assumption for many traditions is the view that nirvana is remote and extremely rare, requiring a long and arduous life of renunciation. Traditions that rarely confer descriptions of the highest attainment on their own exemplars are even less likely to confer it on others. There are social, political and institutional reasons for this. As Smith (1968: 207) notes, in Sri Lanka this view had the effect of:

> stratifying men according to spiritual attainment. This is ordinarily depicted as the distinction between monk and layman, but there is, in actuality, a four-fold division among men, based essentially upon increasing withdrawal from the life of society: ordinary householder, pious lay devotee, village monk, and hermit monk. Advancement from one level to another during a specific lifetime is rare indeed.

---

[53] This persists; for example, Prebish and Bauman (2002), in a recent and prominent review of western Buddhism, cover the gamut of Buddhism from geographical expansion and ritual innovations to lifestyle differences, but fail to include an article addressing the experiences of western Buddhist teachers.

In the context of the dialogical space between Buddhism and economics, the experiences of western teachers are sufficient foundations in themselves for opening discussion. And while these may not be the last word, there is a strong sense that their accounts represent highly significant experiences, exemplified by this teacher's description:

> it is such a freeing experience! Each insight brings a certain sense of liberation or freedom. This it might not be the total liberation, but there's a sense of freedom of some burden falling away. It is freedom from a sense of identification or ego, and it *feels* like a freedom. (Interviewee 15)

It is difficult to convey the enthusiasm and sense of deep satisfaction exuded by the teachers interviewed. This was not only evident during my discussion of their experiences, but also in how they embodied them – it was manifest. The intensity of this liberation and its significance were clearly profound for many interviewees, and conveyed a sense of the life-changing; for example:

> I have a powerful feeling of gratitude for having been given something that I never knew was there ... a practice that I really feel saved my life. (Interviewee 18)

These very strong statements convey a sincerity and intensity which implies that these teachers may have stumbled on something of importance to humanity in general. While these experiences are extraordinary, they were not a rarity in the sample, and this finding adds considerable weight to the conclusion that some enduring form of liberation is possible through Buddhist practices. For a western understanding of Buddhism, such experiences provide a new baseline for inquiry. Most Buddhist traditions privilege learning *through* experience. Practices such as mindfulness and meditation form a methodology (Petitot et al., 1999; Varela & Shear, 1999) which is distinctly different from what is privileged in modern scholarship, in which learning is *about* things. A salient finding was the sense of intimacy that this experience evoked, and for Buddhism intimacy is epistemology par excellence. This view is epitomised by Zen with its embodied dialogues that point directly to this intimacy, such as 'Show me the sound of one hand!' Other traditions, however, focus on different aspects, such as manifesting this intimacy as compassionate action, or *bodhicitta* (the mind of enlightenment).

The dominant epistemology of modernity approaches knowledge very differently, in ways which are instrumental, detached and abstract. This approach is blind to an intimate connection with life. Such a lack of relational engagement leads to a certain impotence in modernity, which is nicely illustrated in the allegorical science-fiction fantasy *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, written by the late Douglas Adams (1995). Adams playfully takes science to the very extremes of possibility, and in doing so shows us the limitations of its project. To do this he extends calculative thinking to an excess. Thus, by inventing another world where a highly evolved race of hyper-intelligent pan-dimensional beings has built a super-computer of power unparallelled in the history of the universe, he imaginatively amplifies this tension. This colossus of a computer is asked to answer to a very human philosophical question, a question of meaning which Adams calls the ultimate question for humans: 'about life, the universe, and everything'. According to the story, after seven-and-a-half million years of processing, the computer warns the assembled biological inhabitants of the galaxy that they may not like the answer, but after being pressed, it reluctantly states that the answer is *42*. Hugely disappointed with this essentially abstract answer, the assembled crowd disperses.

Adams' penchant for parodying science intended the joke to fit with his theme – exploring human pretension – by contrasting it to the enormity of the universe, and his narrative moves on to identify the *question* as being at issue. Thus, his story continues as a search for the 'Ultimate Question', although the ludicrousness of asking a computer about life lingers. Nevertheless, his joke has implications beyond the absurdity of *42*, and shows, through its allegorical parallel, the inability of all logico-rational answers to fulfil our subjective needs. It is the very nature of the trans-subjective or abstract explanations, which are, arguably, fundamentally separate from our experienced reality. This renders them of no value outside of the instrumental realm – it is a computer's answer – and leaves us unsatisfied because it is disembodied and we do not feel it. Philosophers have not overlooked this problem, as Gadamer (2000: xxii-xxiii) points out:

> scholarly research pursued by the 'science of art' is aware from the start that it can neither replace nor surpass the experience of art. The fact that through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way constitutes the philosophic importance of art, which asserts itself against all attempts to rationalize it away.

Similarly, there is no other way to meet our true ontological foundations than to embody them. The primary contribution of Buddhism to a new vision of economics is epistemological. Economics is rightly seen as a dismal science when it fails to engage with the embodied reality of our lives. In this sense, the project of modernity is cut off at the neck and has lost its feelings. This split was not of its own making, but, as discussed in chapter 2, was inherited from Christian history. Sherrard (1987: 15) argues:

> the worldview of modern science, which assumed a definitive shape in the seventeenth century, has its roots in certain prior developments in Christian theology that partially eclipsed the full Christian understanding of man and his destiny [and] resulted in an ever-accelerating dehumanization of man and of the forms of his society, with all the repercussions that this has had, and is still having, in the realm of nature.

While Sherrard's (1987) perspective on Christianity might be contentious, the dehumanising effects of modernity are a prominent theme in romanticism. As suggested earlier, the culture of art, which found voice in romanticism, represents a fundamental alterity in modernity. It speaks to an error in modern solutions, also pointing out its lack of intimacy and subjective foundation in relation to the human condition. This is not to suggest that we throw away the legacy of modernity; clearly a foundation of experience alone is not sufficient. As Herman Daly (1996: 216) suggests:

> To go from religious or spiritual insight to the concrete economic policies most in conformity with that insight is a big jump. We need an intermediate step: the formulation of ethical principles – general principles of right action in the world. Then we can ask what concrete economic policies in our specific historical context best serve these ethical principles, and thus indirectly serve the insight from which these principles were derived.

In chapter 4, I argued that the main thrust of the Buddhist economics literature prematurely sets out this intermediate step, formulating ethical principles from an uncritical acceptance of traditional doctrine. This brings such attempts under suspicion, as one of the central concerns of modernity is the power and influence of religion. A further critical issue is the problem of ethical pluralism. On what basis can a choice be made between differing ethical principles? Daly (1996) avoids this issue by focusing on environmental stewardship, where almost universal support exists, although little agreement about the specific actions. In modern societies, ethical pluralism is managed by institutions of democracy and tolerance, and relies on individual choices in ethical matters.

This leads us to the crux of this discussion, which is how contemporary shifts in understanding modernity are challenging its authority in ways that intersect with key Buddhist ideas. Economics as a child of modernity is situated in the very centre of these debates, as explored in chapter 4. These debates focus on economics' distinctive purpose of material progress, its methodology of positivism, and individualism.

Buddhism has an interesting place in critiques of modernity because it fits so well with their attempts to subvert its foundations, and it does this in two ways. Firstly, Buddhism represents a fundamentally different perspective on the subject, which is largely taken for granted in modernity as individual. Secondly, Buddhism is something of an undecidable that is claimed to be both a religion and a science. Contemporary critiques of modern approaches to knowledge undermine the historic distinction between the opposing views of 'scientific' and normative, or views based on romantic/subjective criteria. In economics, the contribution of McCloskey on rhetoric in economic theory, as discussed in chapter 4, is that this distinction is also blurred in economics. These critiques reveal the contested nature of the foundational assumptions upon which knowledge in economics is built, and undermine the grand narratives associated with neoclassical economic theorising.

This does not mean that all of economic thinking is flawed, and that anything goes. Rather, a critical examination of economics reveals artificial distinctions which reflect the tensions in modern thinking about the nature of self, human nature and rationality which Latour (1993) identified. In particular, chapter 3 built on the work of Wright (1998) to explore how the romantic/scientific split in modern thinking limits our understanding and becomes the source of misunderstanding of Buddhism.

9.6.2 Naturalising Buddhist experience

According to Badiou (2003), a problem underlying contemporary philosophy is that language has a privileged locus for meaning, and at the same time its meaning is bounded and contingent. This delimits the possibility of addressing universal questions, which Badiou (2003) believes is inhibiting and leaves us torn between competing voices which express subjective understandings or specialised and local knowledge. On the other hand, Wright (1998: 115) suggests that the desire for universals and identity hides from view 'complexity, difference, and disjuncture'. Badiou (2003) is not insensitive to

this contention, but argues that we must not give up on universal truth, even though we can neither return to the agenda of the European Enlightenment nor dismiss contemporary developments in postmodern thinking. To resolve this dilemma, Badiou (2003) argues, in an almost apophatic direction, philosophy must ground itself outside language. Truth is something that we do not know, but happen upon when something anomalous or nonsensical emerges in a power-knowledge system, something that does not fit with the rules of the established order.

Here we stumble into a gap in our understanding which Buddhism might resolve. Buddhism can be regarded as an ontological solution to the problem of suffering, a truth which the Buddha happened upon. The perhaps unintended consequence was not a meeting with Brahman or a merging with atman, but a phenomenological reconciliation with suffering through the loss of its subject. In this regard, the Buddha's experience has all the hallmarks of a discovery, rather than a divine revelation. This discovery can be interpreted as the recognition that a great deal of human anguish is the universal effect of a cognitively constructed sense of individual selfhood. The Buddha's innovation set him on an iconoclastic path which challenged the Brahmin orthodoxy of his time. Whether his understanding has been historicised to be something different or not does not matter – if the core experience can be replicated. This research has provided evidence that it can, and has been across a range of Buddhist traditions over the millennia. There are recurring instances of similar experiences, outside of Buddhism, and such experiences might potentially be encountered in the mundane, exemplified in Elisabeth Bishop's poem 'In the Waiting Room' (see Appendix 1). If the experiences these Buddhist teachers have described are an artefact of human consciousness, then they are more than just a religious curio – they are of central interest to science. They might reflect a deeper and more fundamental aspect of human existence which individually we have stumbled upon but collectively, at least in the West, we are yet to acknowledge.

Chapter 3 investigated the potential convergence of disparate areas of philosophy and cognitive science, showing that there is more than merely circumstantial evidence that Buddhism may have a scientifically verifiable foundation, which distinguishes it from other religions. If Dawkins (2006) describes religion as a peculiar predisposition to believe in the supernatural, then contemporary Buddhism does not fit this description.

There are a number of cognitive scientists who already see the self as illusionary, and who regard theories of an essential self as problematic. Such views (e.g. Varela, 2000) propose that consciousness is a form of interbeing, and hold that our sense of self is mistaken; a phenomenological view is essential to understand our sense of self. Our perceptual systems confer such a distinction, which is not the substance of what we are. If we can regain a sense of wholeness, we recognise that our self is not much different from the patterns created by a neon sign, and that, like any other pattern, we are both separate and not separate from our context.

As much as these new scientific views relate to Buddhist thinking, they contrast with the economic conception of the individual. They offer an entirely different understanding from that which Macpherson (1962: 3) posited as 'the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual [is] seen neither as a moral whole, nor a part of a larger social whole, but an owner of himself.' This conception of the individual links to contemporary debates in economic thinking, as set out by Davis (2003), regarding the nature of self. The problematisation of the self in economics, however, is yet to engage at the same ontological level as Buddhist thinking has, and continues to eschew a phenomenological epistemology. What a Buddhist understanding offers is an epistemologically distinctive ontological learning. It is a liberating knowledge that comes only through seeing through the illusion of self, and this is what Varela (2000) is suggesting as part of his 'science of interbeing'. Buddhist insight, however, is epistemologically distinct from the scientific view: it is not *about* interbeing – it *is* interbeing.

The accounts of the Buddhist teachers describe such experiences. These are impossible to understand intersubjectively, unless the reader has had a similar experience. It is like the taste of an exotic Australian native fruit: we can read that it has pleasant, slightly aromatic taste, but such a description falls far short of actually tasting it. The felt experience of interbeing is a richer, more fecund sort of knowledge than tasting a fruit – it goes to the very heart of our existential referents of who we are. It is a knowledge which is intimately concerned with the 'hard problem' of consciousness – our own embodied experience. It is thus an embodied epistemology. The importance of embodied learning was exemplified by Thomas Metzinger when he concluded his Foerster Lecture in 2004 with the statement: 'strictly speaking nobody was ever born

and nobody dies'. This provocative ending, although interesting, cannot be compared to the impact it would have had on the audience if they suddenly realised that they *really* were not born nor would they *really* die. In the light of the above interviews, it is clear that such a liberating experience is *how* the Buddhist teachers came to understand this view. It is a different way of knowing which is not unknown in the West, and in fact is pointed to in works of art and poetry. What this research shows is that Buddhist practices are another door to a profound and perennial possibility for humanity to understand itself differently. These practices, as Varela et al. (1991) suggest, reopen methods which have been largely repressed by western science – a repression that, in retrospect, seems to have emerged out of a rejection of any sustained inquiry into experience that had a relationship to religion or its questions. John B. Watson's (1928) fundamental concern with introspection was the 'the hold religion and superstition have upon our life'. While defence of modern psychology by Watson and others reflected the zeitgeist of the social sciences, it inhibited other developments, particularly around the understanding of human experience. There is a positive side to all enduring human endeavours, according to MacIntyre (1984: 222):

> When an institution, a university, say, or a farm, or a hospital is the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices, its common life will be partly, but in a centrally important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine is. Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict ... A living tradition then is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition.

Modernity began through the dialectic opposition between Enlightenment reason and its Counter-Enlightenment opponents, mainly the dominant Christian orthodoxy. We have discussed other currents, such as romanticism, which also opposed the proponents of modernity, particularly for their dismissal of 'subjectivism'. Despite the pejorative implications of personal bias, prejudice and exclusiveness, subjectivism continued to be central in numerous areas of human life, particularly the arts. It is significant that many traditions which might be placed under the Counter-Enlightenment rubric were not erased, but have continued to evolve and in some cases grow. One reason for this is that they still provide 'goods', which, as MacIntyre suggests, 'constitutes their tradition'. It may be difficult for mainstream economists to accept, following this history of ideological hostility, that Buddhism too has something valuable to offer. The evidence assembled through these interviews, however, while by no means conclusive, suggests

that Buddhist claims are worthy of serious and sustained examination. Moreover, the centrality of such a view implies commitments which radically impact on western thinking, and perhaps, as Varela et al. (1991) suggest, rebirth ideas which profoundly shaped Asian civilisation.

9.6.3 Opening the horizon of economics

The problematising of self and the experience of this radically different sense of being also opens up a new horizon for economic thinking. The self that economics has built much of its theorising on is not the quasi-self that most people identify with, but an abstraction of an individualistic, utility-maximising, rational entity, or *homo oeconomicus*. According to Levine (1989: 1):

> In political economy, thinking about the consequences of self-interest or of preference driven choice does not ground itself in any real understanding of the agent whose self has interests, and who makes choices.

This model of the self has been subject to a great deal of criticism. These criticisms, as discussed in chapter 4, are a reflection of the deductive methodological approach so identified with economics. A major shift in this model potentially invokes a corresponding change in epistemology. For this reason, Foster (1998) reminds us that, despite criticisms, the *homo oeconomicus* abstraction remains dominant in economic discourse. The critical issue for economists is not that abstraction in itself is a problem, but whether it is useful to have a universalising logic of human behaviour. The abstraction of *homo oeconomicus*, according to Arnsperger (1999), reveals major commitments at the philosophical level on individual decision-making and on social order. There is a great deal of investment in this view.

The critique of the economic conception of the self is not limited to non-economists. Davis (2003), for example, suggests that many economic theories have been overly influenced by Locke's notion of the self as atomistic, where the world of outside influences, such as opinion or customs, are mediated by reason. This view presents the self as an autonomous agent constituted by first-person experiences, which is clearly delineated from an impersonal world outside. In view of recent developments in cognitive science, this view of the self seems increasingly difficult to defend. The clinging to such a self-concept is natural, however, and, according to Loy (2000: 11-12),

‘The basic difficulty is a sense of lack which originates from the fact that our self-consciousness is not something self-existing but a mental construct’. As Harré (1991: 53) suggests, ‘The unities which we present to ourselves and to others are human creations, emerging in the discursive practices of interpersonal and jointly forged conversations, and their analogues in the private conversations we call our thinking’. Despite the polysemous character of self, as a concept, there are persuasive arguments for doubting the economic model. Wittgenstein (2002/1953) points out that there is no private language; rather, language develops out of social practices, and thus the idea that there is a truly private subject ignores the social aspects of cognition. Varela et al. (1991) also take up this point when they explain that we learn to think through our embodied interaction with the world. These objections are gaining authority, and economic theories based on a predominantly logico-deductive view of the self appear to have less and less in common with the picture of a human being which other disciplines are unfolding. Such a view reflects assumptions that initially drove the cognitivist research agenda in psychology which, according to Pickering (1995: np), ‘emphasises structure over process, information over meaning and rationality over feeling’ and which, he concludes, is a clearly inadequate conception.

Whether orthodox economics is a degenerating research program based on erroneous assumptions, which attempts to explain human nature from a tradition that can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks, is becoming an increasingly pressing question. Plato and Aristotle, for example, tried to explain the nature of human knowledge as being underpinned by rule-based reason. Dreyfus (2005) argues that this view of knowledge has some important limitations, as human learning is not simply underpinned by the acquisition of rules, but is rather more holistic. This holistic sense of experience is taken up by Varela (1999) in his enaction view of human agency; it argues that human actions do not spring from judgment and reasoning, but co-arise with the situation which the person is confronting. From this perspective, economic actions in our daily life come about because the situation brings forth these actions from us. It is beyond this thesis to fully unfold this perspective; however, the results add phenomenological data to what has hitherto been a theoretical debate.

From the accounts of Buddhist teachers’ mindful explorations of their own decision-making, they are unable to recognise any specific decision-moments. Such a finding

supports Varela's contentious view that action is brought forth out of a situation. Varela (1999: 5) does not discount other modes of thinking about action, but argues that the preponderance of the former mode in ordinary everyday decision-making contrasts to the less usual mode 'in which one experiences a central I performing deliberate, willed action'. This less common mode of decision-making was also evident in the findings and regarded by teachers as outside the ordinary. According to Varela (1999: 7):

> At the very center of this emerging view is the conviction that the proper units of knowledge are primarily concrete, embodied, incorporated, lived; that knowledge is about situatedness; and that the uniqueness of knowledge, its historicity and context, is not a 'noise' concealing an abstract configuration in its true essence. The concrete is not a step toward something else: it is both where we are and how we get to where we will be.

In other words, who we are and how we understand the world is a co-arising of things and being. One situation primes us for the next and so, as Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) point out, how we operate in the world is very different from the claims of the rational reflective model. In the organisational context, this view has evolved into a practice-based understanding of business strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2004). This view is part of a major new current in the management literature which challenges the economic assumption of rationality in organisational decision-making.

Why does economic theory persist with rationalistic views? Foster (1998: 148) suspects that the attachment to this particular abstraction cannot be understood in isolation from social and political structures:

> A possible explanation is that an abstraction is favoured when it conforms to a central socio-political belief system. Methodological individualism and market clearing analysis fit very well into the underlying capitalist version of postenlightenment materialist beliefs. As with religious beliefs, it is an advantage to remain in the abstract and to engage in tautological exercises to interpret the meaning of events. Furthermore, mathematicians, like all skilled illusionists, are free to use their sleight of hand to play tricks with our perception and preconceptions. When economic theorists are viewed as more akin to clever illusionists, rather than scientists, we can begin to understand why there is so much resistance to the infusion of entirely reasonable cultural, sociological and psychological modifications to homo oeconomicus.

The hegemony of the *homo oeconomicus*-centred worldview, established through the social and institutional structures of the economics discipline, perhaps maintains its allegiance to an increasingly faltering foundation. The aim of this thesis is not to attack

economics on those intellectual positions which its exponents feel it necessary explicitly to defend; rather I suggest, as does Buddhism, that the self of *homo oeconomicus* is better understood as a constructed self which is caught in a network of dynamic relationships in which its referents are always shifting. This view simply adds the concern that the self in economic thinking is not a real self, but a virtual or constructed self. This view has already been raised in contemporary debates within economics, and new thinking is already revisiting these key assumptions, although in a limited way.

These contemporary debates subtend a growing array of alternative economic theories, which raise similar issues to those discussed. A range of alternative theories have arisen over the years, each highlighting a range of concerns about the dominant view of economic thinking regarded as orthodox economics. Many alternative economic theories have been influenced by the work of Schumacher, and their critiques, despite their lack of critical dialogue with Buddhism thinking, do much to extend the dialogical space. This is precisely because they share assumptions which are linked to the theoretical implications of the current findings. In turn, this exploration of the dialogic space could extend and support many of these alternative economic positions, particularly those related to ecological economics, which places human well-being in context of the wider biological system. Ecological economics writers have begun to map out a new horizon for economics based on different views of the self suggested by ecological notions of the self (Devall, 1988 Matthews, 1991), arguably there is a direct link between the ecocentric self and Buddhism.

Alternative views are more open to interdisciplinary incursions and given the corresponding shift in cognitive science on the nature of the self, an interesting discussion can be opened around the experiential interface with this new conception of self. The epistemological implications of the findings have already been canvassed in the work of human and social ecologists, and we find a powerful concordance with Leopold's (1949) notion of 'thinking like a mountain' and Buddhist ways of seeing and knowing. The findings of this thesis lend credence to these views, many of which have often been regarded as simply based on romantic assertions. The idea that the self co-arises with a particular state of mind has important teleological implications. If we consider the self as less stable, then the goals of economic rationality need revising. If we are not separate from nature, then economic growth based on the exploitation of

natural resources may be considered a zero-sum game. Moreover, these implications suggest that mindful ways of being are themselves an end, in that how we experience the mind is what counts. Many forms of consumption in this regard are counter productive to clarity of life experience. Whilst this perspective is largely unique to Buddhist economics, the general thrust of finding less materialist ways of living are evident in many economic theories and are crucial to a sustainable future. Finally, Marxist economic perspectives might be fruitfully revised in the light of the findings. The failed centrally planned economies of the Soviet Union, leave much to be desired; however, while some claim this was a perversion of Marxism, drawing from the dialogic space an new engagement with alternatives to the materialistic culture that pervaded its agenda, regardless of the lack of democratic processes, could be valuable.

From a dialogic point of view, the results give weight to an additional epistemology which provides a means of gaining knowledge that is human, lived, and a knowledge we can existentially relate to. This adds to Schumacher's suggestion of an economics in which people really matter. The findings open the horizon of economic thinking in three broad ways: phenomenologically, epistemologically and sociopsychologically.

a) Phenomenological assumptions

The phenomenological contribution raises questions about how economics describes and accounts for human interiority, in particular the sense of 'I'. Economics has generally claimed the self-enclosed ego associated this as the centre of intentionality – the source of control and ownership. Many economic theories implicitly subscribe to the common phenomenological notion of the self that most people ordinarily assume is the source of their actions. The not-self view, derived from the first-person accounts of the Buddhist teachers set out above, challenges this assumption, but also suggests the potential for a liberated sense of being in the world. This phenomenological view can be triangulated with a variety of other research in philosophy and psychology, and we can build on theories reviewed in chapter 3.

While the academic inquiry about the nature of self continues, a vast literature has developed which spans several disciplines. Gaining an interdisciplinary perspective on the literature on the self is, as Baumeister (1998: 681) warns, 'like trying to get a drink from a fire hose'. Yet the very size of the literature alone tells us several important

things. Firstly, as Seyla Benhabib (1992) suggests, questions of the self are inseparable from most central aspects of human life. Secondly, we are still a long way from any definitive position by which we could summarise the literature into a digestible package. Given the sheer scale of the enterprise, its lack of progress suggests a certain futility in continuing with current methods, and this points to the limitations of gaining knowledge about ourselves through abstraction. The very groundlessness of our preoccupation with abstraction leaves us absent from what is present.

According to Loy (2002), this groundlessness of self lies behind a sense of lack that has driven much of western history. Loy (2002) identifies an underlying existential anxiety behind western civilisation which he regards as being related to our lack of essential self. It also may be related to an inability to satisfy our desire for self-knowledge, so that, like mythic hungry ghosts, we fail to realise that abstract scientific knowledge, no matter how much we accumulate, will never satisfy us.[54] We will suffer the same dissatisfaction that arises when the meaning of life is revealed as 42. We fail to be satisfied because we fail to recognise that the key lies in *how* we understand ourselves. We are embodied, and thus 'the human effort to move from appearance to reality (from egoistic illusion to a vision of the good)' (Antonaccio, 2001: 311) falters, leaving us unable to attain what is possible, and indeed latent, in every person.

The Buddhist teachers' sense of interbeing was not an abstraction about something, but rather a profound embodied ontological shift in how they understand themselves in the world. It is through the shift in the subject of birth and death that the liberation, as presented in the words of the Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra, becomes possible.[55] There is no self that is subject to birth and death, and yet there is always an individual that *is* subject to birth and death. When the illusion of self and not-self is seen through, as these teachers report, the foreground and background, self and other, are recognised as different aspects of the whole. In chapter 3, I discussed Derrida's notion of the phantom,

---

[54] Hungry ghosts in Buddhist mythology are cursed by having a large belly swollen from malnourishment, but such a tiny mouth and throat that no matter how much food they obtain they are always desperately hungry.

[55] The Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra states that 'there is no old age and death and also no ending of old age and death'.

which the Zen Buddhist term *Unsuii* encompasses, where presence or no-presence are undecidable.[56] Buddhist teachers found that it required sustained practice to integrate both these sides of their being into their lives. At the heart of this task is a practice of learning to let go of the old ways of thinking about the self, a learning that is of a different order, in that the very premises by which we cognitively construct our sense of being are opened to reconfiguration.

This new view arises out of paying close attention to the present – something which is lacking in the modern sensibility. Buddhist practices suggest a new model which moves away from the logocentric outlook that blinds a culture to the knowing itself. Meditation, according to John Kabat-Zinn (2005: 4), is 'a way of seeing, a way of knowing, even a way of loving'. The term 'way' highlights the processual aspect of Buddhist meditation practices, should not be viewed as a means to an end, as any attempt to get to another state of mind is a movement away from the present moment. Kabat-Zinn (2005: 6) explains: 'Meditation is a way of being, not a technique'. While there are myriad techniques of meditation, it is essentially a means of orienting towards ways of being or, specifically, 'ways of being in relationship to the present moment and to one's own mind and one's own experience' (Kabat-Zinn, 2005: 5). Insight usually comes about through the development of a meditation practice to the point where we learn to stop trying to make something special occur, and learn to let go of our natural tendencies to strive towards something other than what is already there. The emphasis is on the very ordinary, real aspects of experience and may not be in opposition to some interpretations of Christianity, which sees the world as reflecting divine omnipresence (though with Buddhism there is not the same theistic focus). Kabat-Zinn (2005: 4) suggests that through letting go 'we can realise that something very special is already occurring, and is always occurring, namely life emerging in each moment as awareness itself'. Questions of divine purpose, which have roots traceable to Plato's notion of the 'good' in *The Republic*, are considered speculative in Buddhism.

Who we are ultimately remains a mystery, and while Buddhist practices point to a view of life as aware of itself, accounts by the Buddhist teachers also recognised that at some

[56] Japanese term for a monk, meaning 'cloud'.

point we encounter undecidability. Recall the deconstruction of Maturana and Varela's (1998) conceptualisation of life, in chapter 3 (see page 79), where, in seeking the distinction between life and death, they make a choice to avoid undecidability. If life at the biological level is undecidable, this would change how we understand what it means to be alive. Similarly, through the disciplined practice of awareness there is the realisation, as for Bucknell (1983), that the distinction between observer and observed is no longer clear, and such moments are encounters with undecidability and this changes how we understand who we are. At such a time, what is identified as the self disappears as a mirage-like illusion, leaving just the stillness of the present moment.

The recognition of this experience as way of knowing is not unique to Buddhism. It was a key aspect of the romantic reaction to the grey world of enlightenment rationalism. It speaks profoundly to the human condition today. I have tried to draw out this epistemological dimension of romanticism because it seems to represent a deep split in western sensibility. Why is it that we place so great an emphasis on individual subjectivity and embodiment only in consumerism? As Campbell (1987) suggests, behind these motivations is a romantic imagination.

A merging of horizons as a result of this dialogue offers new possibilities. Firstly, economics could open its horizon to include new types of data. There are already several new developments in economics along these lines. The development of General Progress Indicators is an important step in this direction, and research into happiness includes subjective measures of how people really feel about their lives. These studies, as discussed earlier, suggest that many of the assumptions that economics makes about the relationship between wealth and well-being are erroneous (e.g. Nickerson, Schwarz, Diener & Kahneman, 2003; van Boven, 2005). In 1972, the King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, reflecting a Buddhist orientation and perhaps influenced by Norberg-Hodge's (1991) concerns about the negative consequences of economic growth, set the new measure of his nation's progress as GNH ('gross national happiness'), as opposed to the orthodox measure of GDP (gross domestic product).

The opening up of measurement is having a profound effect, as Zadek (2001: 169) states: 'Measurement is clearly an important element of any attempt to make issues more visible, effectively managed and integral to performance assessment'. In order to be useful these measures need to be meaningful, and traditional economic measures, by

virtue of their abstraction, fail many stakeholders in this regard. Zadek (2001) points out that measures must relate to the lives and lived experience of the various stakeholders they describe, as well as influence.

Schumacher's (1993) work is so instructive, not because he has 'the solutions' but because he points to the general failure of the economic system to meet its ends, particularly its lack of ability to address what matters to humans. Economics can learn from revisiting more phenomenological approaches, and that knowledge (as in Buddhism) is not merely abstract. The knowledge that counts for human beings needs to be embodied, and, by incorporating new and alternative ways of thinking, economics might be able to meet those needs more fully.

b) Epistemological assumptions

Assumptions at the epistemological level have been the locus of a sustained debate that has changed the landscape of the social sciences. The 'linguistic turn' of 20th-century thinking has brought about a powerful shift in how we understand knowledge. For Foucault (1980: 93), discourse plays a prominent role in the constitution of action: 'There are manifold relations of power that permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse'. It is through discourse that power exists within social structures. This relationship is mutually enhancing, so that the production of knowledge and of power are intertwined.

Similarly, Latour's (1993) depiction of modernity, as an unfulfilled and fragmented project, stems from the awareness that social, cultural and political dimensions in the construction of knowledge also apply to science. Economics, having modelled itself on the natural sciences, reflects the modern political agendas of the 19th and 20th centuries. Chapter 4 discussed how economic decisions are inextricably bound to both human nature and society. The phenomenological experience of not-self, as constituted intersubjectively, is an important knowledge, but one ignored by economic thought.

Economic thought's foundation in the unitary, rationally calculating, self-interested, atomistic entity of *homo oeconomicus* sets out an abstract model of motivation and

decision-making that is narrowly bounded. It is difficult to understand economic intentions without reference to the embodied complex whole actor. For example, bees do not act like rational self-interested economic agents, but rather they act in a cooperative fashion. One solution is to say that each bee's goal is the collective goal; however, attributing rationality in this way potentially infers goals from actions. Dawkins' (1989) 'selfish gene' theory makes this error, by suggesting that we are genetically driven for survival of our genetic structure, rather than our survival as an individual. Dawkins' attribution of agency to genes is ironic, particular given his more general critique of the human tendency to attribute divine agency in *The God Delusion*.

The tendency to attribute rational agency to humans is a constant theme in economic thought. The observation that rational agency only explains market behaviour inspired a spate of attempts to explain why people organise into economic firms rather than markets, and has been the source of some interesting gymnastics in economic thinking. Oliver Williamson (1975; 1985) has suggested that organising through hierarchical structures allows a firm to reduce transaction costs in completing the numerous exchanges to make a complex product. This approach upholds the rational perspective view, explaining why firms are created in terms of efficiencies gained through reduced transaction costs. A key transaction cost is the problem of opportunism, in which an economic actor takes advantage of opportunities which may arise out of a transaction. This rational mode of thinking assumes that economic choices are made entirely on the basis of cost-efficiency, and may not explain the actual histories and intentions of the actors, nor the historical genesis of any particular real-life firm.

The privileging of this special kind of reason in economics has been the source of numerous critiques, the most potent being those that question the very ends that economic rationalism pursues. It also neglects how organisations and economic structures limit choices, so that true choice is not possible. For example, the mechanism and structures of the labour market create careers and jobs in ways that, as Schumacher (1993) suggests, imply that people do not really matter, arguably because there is little accountability for the social and human costs of how firms actually manage people. In many ways it appears as if we have fallen into what Ricoeur (1970) calls 'secondary naïveté', which simply exchanges one faith (in God) for another (in reason).

Problematising reason springs from recognition of a plurality of human ends, an incomplete knowledge of means, and dynamic contexts which complicate human decision-making and action. Omerod (1998) posits a gulf between theory and reality in economics. Economic thinking assumes the exclusion of influence of context, which would otherwise add a quantum leap in complexity. These interactive effects foil pretensions to rationality: but if, as these findings suggest, the very vehicle of rationality is interconnected, then such interactive effects cannot be ignored as externalities or 'noise'. Zadek (2001: 111-112) suggests that:

> Stressing the interdependent nature of these three spheres [social, environmental and economic] signals the need to understand the ways in which these dimensions affect each other ... Interdependence is therefore about the potential for mutually reinforcing effects, but can equally be about trade-offs between and within each sphere.

Latour's sense of the inextricably linked nature of the human world with the non-human world redefines these epistemological and ontological assumptions.

The engagement with the other-than-human world and intersubjective ways of knowing opens us to a new reflection on 'where we are going', as much as how we might get there. For economics to engage with a new epistemology and conception of the self requires, at least initially, new ways of thinking. Flyvbjerg (2001: 2) suggests that we should abandon the rationalist project begun in the Enlightenment, and re-examine Aristotelian phronesis, which is 'variously translated as prudence or practical wisdom'. This type of knowledge was important, according to Aristotle, because it balanced instrumental rationality with value-rationality, which he believed crucial to the well-being of citizens in any society.

The wisdom of Buddhist traditions represents something different again, and to being aware that the radical challenge to economic assumptions outlined above impacts on virtually every aspect of economic thinking. A comprehensive rejection of these assumptions is inadvisable, and we need to recall the power imbalance between Buddhism and economics. In this context it might seem futile to attempt to get orthodox economists to think outside the abstraction of *homo oeconomicus*. While Foster (1998: 150) suggests that such a change is necessary, he believes it requires three conditions:

> First, they have to be persuaded that capitalism has evolved into a form where the *homo oeconomicus* abstraction has become sub-optimal as an analytical construct. Second, any new abstraction will have to contain the old one as a special case. Third, the new abstraction will have to be definably economic in the sense that economists can still focus on 'economic' problems from the perspective of the belief system that they uphold.

The implication of this suggestion is that the prevailing belief system held by economists is unlikely to shift voluntarily unless, as Forster (p. 150) suggests, they are 'persuaded to accept a "helpful" modification to the belief system itself'. The resilience of this construct to sustained criticism from within and outside the economics discipline bears witness to the intransigence of this view. As discussed earlier, Davis (2003: 6) points out that neoclassical economics appropriated the Lockean conception of the individual (atomistic, disengaged from the world, free of any influence from opinion, custom and desire) and, as a consequence, economics eliminated any subjectivist account from its theorising through the *homo oeconomicus* abstraction. The elimination of human subjectivity leaves the atomistic conception of the individual founded in abstract formalism that has, according to Davis (2006: 81), 'no essential connection to human individuals'. As discussed in chapter 4, this lack of empirical connection has drawn criticism from other social sciences, which find economics contradicting their own view of individuals as embedded in social systems. The assumption of the *homo oeconomicus* abstraction has also opened economics to critique by postmodern thinkers who regard the self as a fiction. As set out in chapter 3, both critiques reflect a growing number of tensions which place economics increasingly out of kilter with other disciplines.

This suggests that the first of Forster's (1998) three conditions can be met and that *homo oeconomicus* has become suboptimal as an analytical construct. The notion of not-self represents a foundational shift in our understanding of self. The problematisation of the self has only emerged in the last 20 years, but, given its radical nature, its widespread acceptance would significantly challenge the established economic view. Already it would appear that a significant body of evidence has accumulated which places the *homo oeconomicus* abstraction on notice as a suboptimal analytical construct.

Since the findings support that a new view of the self is possible, there is good reason to believe that this view informs ways of living that provide a new ethos which may have

an evolutionary effect on capitalism. If the first of Forster's (1998) three conditions is that the independent autonomous human agency is becoming an increasingly untenable position for economics and a distinctive revision of the economic abstraction *homo oeconomicus* is required, then the second condition, that a new view must contain the old one as a special case, can also be met. The findings offer a dual understanding of the economic agency which, at least partly, explains *homo oeconomicus* as a special case – the ordinary egoist self – that Buddhist practices are designed to see through. One caveat is the problem of abstraction; however, the exclusive focus of economics on abstract models is simply not necessary, and already new developments have occurred in economic thinking as a result of the multidisciplinary nature of business management education.

Moreover, the idea of economists, as a collective, recognising the error of their ways and revising their positions suggests, in itself, recourse to the rational modern sensibility that has been critiqued. An enaction view of human behaviour sees change as emergent – co-arising out of circumstances. The influence of these various new ideas discussed is already recognisable, but how these new ideas will unfold is impossible to predict. One strand of influence that may come from Buddhism is what I call a mindful engagement with habitus as a mode of being in the world differently. Two important consequences of mindfulness are a certain degree of neuro-plasticity which occurs as a result of practice, and what Deikman (2000) calls 'de-automation'. The growth of influence of Buddhism is bringing the technology of mindfulness into the everyday lives of many people, and, as several teachers suggested, it is a way of allowing a reflective pause which expands the capacity with which we can reflect on what causes us to suffer in the world. As more and more people begin to consciously experience how their mental processes, through clinging to a self, create their suffering, they will be able to make different choices about their lives. The cumulative effect of these small changes in the habitus of a people will significantly change how they interact, potentially bringing about real changes in how we engage with our habitus in a collective economic sense. These changes do not necessarily have to occur under the rubric of 'Buddhism'.

Thus the final condition Forster (1998) suggests – which seeks to maintain the status quo, where the new direction embraces 'abstraction' in a way that is 'definably economic', essentially allowing economists to focus on the old questions which define

their discipline – is unlikely to be achieved. This is because his vision encompasses only changes at the periphery; however, the new conception of self suggested by this research is something more radical, and implies a reconception that potentially changes everything. If economists are not prepared to abandon their particular distinctive logic and worldview, then they might find that they are ultimately ignored. Bourdieu (2005: 15) sets out this inclination:

> There is no critique of the assumptions of economics, no challenge to its shortcomings and limitations, that has not been expressed somewhere or other by an economist. This is why, rather than follow so many other writers and indulge in ineffective, sterile questionings of economic principles that are certain in the end to appear either ignorant or unjust …

Following Bourdieu (2005), we can establish the foundation of an alternative project within the field of economics, rather than simply question the basic notions upon which orthodox economics has developed. There is, however, some value in comparing points of difference. Primary among them is the notion of self. There is a radical divergence of core notions such as freedom, ownership, choice and happiness, all of which are derived from understandings of human nature. Economics in the last century has developed, according to Loy (2002), an almost religious faith in the mechanisms of the market to solve human problems. The key questions dominating economic discourse in the last century did not, as Levine (1989) suggests, explore the nature of the self-interest that markets mediated, but rather focused to a large degree on how much governments should intervene in this process. It was a century in which capitalism and socialism vied for ascendancy, a century that McCloskey (1985) suggests has as much to do with rhetoric and ideology as reality.

c) Sociopsychological assumptions

The final category of understanding brings us in line with the psychological question 'Is there a neuropsychological or subpersonal account behind these new understandings of the agent and our subjective awareness and insights into its ephemeral nature?' While this question was not specifically addressed in the research, the findings arguably recognise that a viable explanation of Buddhist insight as a natural rather than 'mystical' phenomenon is possible. This suggestion opens up a greater pathway for Buddhist thinking to draw on the powerful discourses of science and social science, and perhaps in an unprecedented way to explain their foundations. Moreover, the

explanations of Christian-Buddhist teachers are suggestive of a more sophisticated understanding of religious experience that seems to be missing from the literature. The exploration of religious experience as an insight into the groundless nature of the self may provide a vital clue to understanding deeper and more traditional philosophical issues.

The question of the self in economic thinking spreads itself across a spectrum of views that range from those that assume the individual is an atomistic locus of decision-making to those that argue that this centre is merely a nodal point in which social and cultural norms manifest as a person. The research findings contribute to this debate, not only by suggesting that new and ancient understandings of the self are converging, but by asking who we think we are. The answer may be something ephemeral which, like Derrida's phantom, contains both sides of the spectrum. This encompassing view links us to the broader context of the non-human world. Ecological economics distinguishes two types of relationships to things – one anthropocentric and the other ecocentric. The latter, according to Anda (2001), reveals a close relationship between Buddhist thought and the ideas of early ecophilosophers, particularly the deep ecology of Arne Naess and Bill Deval. This view has been cause for significant debate in the literature; however, this research provides significantly more detail on the 'lived' sense of an ecocentric perspective, which the Buddhist teachers found to be simply 'what we are', and this is recognition of non-duality and our interconnectedness with nature.

As discussed in chapter 6, through Buddhist practices a different way of dealing with cognitions develops which allows for a more reflective relationship with identity construction of 'me' and, in particular, its extensions through ownership, through what is considered as 'mine'. This capacity, to be able to be detached from things, is often confused with the negative state of dissociation, where a person is emotionally cut off from the world, which is something different. The ability to let go of the habitual understanding of the self leads to a significant opening, and allows an insight into the nature of the cognitive processes of self-construction, which, as discussed earlier, lead to the liberating understanding suggested by Bateson as higher-order learning.

The experiences of Buddhist teachers of this learning challenge the view that the ultimate satisfaction in human life can be achieved through simple notions of the allocation of goods and services. It recognises that, historically, economics has

embodied a mindset that has been 'absentminded', as Nietzsche observed, about the felt world of human experience. The modern sensibility, which treats humans and nature as resources, reflects a world split off from religion where companies populated by 'the organisation man' dominate. According to William H. Whyte (1956), this creature:

> honestly wants to believe he follows the tenets he extols, and if he extols them so frequently it is, perhaps, to shut out a nagging suspicion that he, too, the last defender of the faith [the sacredness of property, the enervating effect of security, the virtues of thrift, of hard work, independence and the American Dream], is no longer pure. Only by using the language of individualism to describe the collective can he stave off the thought that he himself is in a collective as pervading as any ever dreamed of by the reformers, the intellectuals, and the utopian visionaries he so regularly warns against.

The impact of their practice and insight on the sample of teachers resulted in a significant and positive change in their lives. All but one teacher in the sample regarded insight as an achievable phenomenon. Exploring a dialogical space, we might continue to explore what this means for everyday economics, and more broadly for the philosophic context by which economic thinking is grounded. The core notion of the individual is clearly problematised. *Homo oeconomicus* may fit, albeit uncomfortably, with the teachers' understanding of the ordinary unreflected everyday self. Given that this mode of being is the norm in contemporary society, it might continue to be a useful model (critiques of its realism notwithstanding). What has emerged from this exploration, however, is that on a deeper level such an understanding of the self is only partial. Not only is a more complex model necessary, but also the very mode of analysis which ignores the phenomenological view might itself be limiting.

David Loy has most clearly recognised the importance of a two-tier view of human nature. Buddhism's distinctive conception of the self comes from awakening to its ungrounded nature. According to Loy (2002), to be conscious of the ungrounded nature of the self has considerable explanatory power in understanding the western psyche. Desire arises out of lack, and this sense of lack is a crucial and unacknowledged dynamic in western culture. This view proposes that it is possible to recognise the self as ungrounded and this is consistent with the results of this study. David Loy holds that the economic self is congruent with a partial understanding of human nature based on the constructed self. The interviews reflect the experiences of people who have studied their inner life in the disciplined way that Buddhism prescribes; their insights are the beginning of a reflexive process by which they existentially recognise that what they

had taken for granted as their self, on close inspection seemed to lack abiding substance, just as a cognitive construction might. The significance of this is often lost on non-Buddhists, but it means that who we think we are is really not a self at all, but rather a pattern of the universe, and as such non-dual.

9.6.4 An appreciative economic praxis

While the three above assumptions limit the horizon of economic thinking, the current economy is not something that is likely to be transformed by grand theorising. The global economic system is constantly evolving, and reflects a complex set of relations of which economic theorising is only one. Arguably, much of the development of modern economic theorising derives from descriptions of changes that have already happened. Nevertheless, economic theorising informs the praxis of economic action. In this respect, if the self that forms the foundation of so much economic theorising is highly problematic then changing this view may have radical consequences. The new view suggests that we need to understand ourselves as parts rather that wholes, recognising that our 'individuality' co-arises as a dependent part of this whole. It points to the potential for deep familiarity and interconnectedness which economics and modernity ignore.

In this respect, we have much to gain from the embodied insights of Buddhist teachers and their deep appreciation of our interconnectedness. Buddhist insight is not bound to economic theorising and already informs the praxis of ordinary everyday life with a sense of this connectedness, also experienced as sacredness, for a growing number of people. This sacredness is a human response, one that arises out of a deeply felt love. It is what makes us human. A sense of this simple, open attitude to the ordinariness of life is depicted in the following Zen story:

> A monk asked Master Sekito, 'What is the essential meaning of the Buddha dharma?'
> Sekito replied, 'No gaining, no knowing.'
> 'Can you say anything further?'
> Sekito answered, 'The expansive sky does not obstruct the floating white clouds.' (Uchiyama, 2004)

Like many Zen koan stories, the answer requires contemplation; however, a key aspect to this story, also reflected in the interviews, is how it depicts a *way of being* in the world, based on an appreciation of what is, just as it is. The master Sekito (Shitou

Xiqian) speaks about his experience of having nothing to gain, as appreciation of what is. In recognising his self as groundless, he has learnt that there is nothing special to be gained outside; in fact he has learnt an open 'not knowing' stance towards the world. Thus he is not caught up, as Nietzsche, in thoughts and reflections about himself, and finds himself fully present to the world, as the world. In this state, his ordinary sense of self, with its preoccupation with 'me' and 'mine', has faded to the point where there is little he could gain, beyond the world he is. In this state of appreciation, he has personally solved the economic problem – he has achieved the State of Eden in which Samuelson and Nordhaus (2004: 4) suggest 'economics would no longer be a useful subject'.

When the monk asks for further explanation, Sekito describes his way of being using the metaphor of a cloud drifting across the sky. The sense of freedom that this metaphor evokes is not a blithe mellowness, which is uncaring, nor the unworldliness that Weber suggested. The results of this research show that in their freedom the teachers responded to the world with a natural compassion, which Thompson (2001) suggested is a necessary component of human cognition. The possibility of a biological basis for Buddhist ethics cannot be discounted, fitting with the work of Ridley (1996) and others. Such views, however, ignore the circularity of phenomenal consciousness described by Merleau-Ponty (1962), and the ability for reflection, as illustrated by the findings, can be enhanced by Buddhist practice. So, while the basis of the very human ethics of Buddhist thought may be evolutionary dispositions towards cooperation, there is the additional possibility of mindful consideration of the consequences of such a disposition. The freedom that the Buddhist teachers describe involves appreciating the world as it is, including all its difficulties. The teachers' insight enabled them to realise that there is no gaining because there is no-one who really gains; at the same time, compassion naturally arises out of a genuine intimacy with those who are suffering.

Levine (1989: 2) argues that 'In political economy, thinking about the consequences of self-interest or of preference-driven choice does not ground itself in any real understanding of the agent whose self has interests, and who make choices'. This is a major flaw and ignores our natural capacities for cooperation, but more importantly our inability to resolve our sense of lack through consumption. An economy based on appreciative praxis may be the only way to deal with problems of overconsumption.

This research suggests that, when we explore who we really are, we find something radically different from what economics suggests. Buddhist exploration of the self opens up new ways of working with our relationship to things. Alan Senauke (1998) finds that in the practice of relinquishment what comes up again and again is our desire to cling to the small self. This self, which the teachers describe as chaotic and endlessly demanding of us, requires special training to overcome. Such training is usually based on mindful attention.

Rather than a grand blueprint for a new economics, this new horizon must begin at the level of praxis. We must also recognise that a praxis of self-interest was the vision of Adam Smith, who assumed that, at this level, individual self-interest was mysteriously and beneficially connected to the whole by an invisible hand. The vision which is presented here sees this connection differently: the parts are *also* the whole. Thus the goal of an economic vision, while also being an improved whole, is broader and not simply the material requisites of a healthy individual, but the inclusion of a methodology to achieve happiness, through mindful engagement with their habitus. This vision pays attention to the interactive effect of our minds and the importance of solving our sense of lack through managing our relationship to our minds. The understanding that this dialogue has uncovered is that it is possible to be fully satisfied with very little and that we need to be vigilant and learn to understand how we get caught up with the constructions of self. This cannot be enacted by edict, but rather by collectively and individually challenging our relationship to our constructed self and our habitual way of being in the world, through education and learning.

A crucial finding is that this cannot be achieved by intellectual learning, but by developed techniques for mindful engagement with our habitus. This requires the incorporation of another epistemology which is more poetic, embodied and aesthetic. I have begun to explore this in *Strategy as Fiction* (Bubna-Litic, 1995b), which looks at how business strategy can recognise poetic dimensions to engage employees to facilitate change to organisation culture and direction.

A truly dialogical engagement with Buddhism needs to open the Buddhist contribution to critical reflection. In this dialogue this has been a valuable step, because it highlights not just the social constructions of Buddhism but how these may obstruct the open path to encountering what is unconditioned and unconstructed. A new and appreciative

stance to economics will only be worthwhile if it provides real and tangible benefits. We can be sure that for at least a number of practitioners mindful awareness of their experience brings benefits, allowing them more freedom (a word which needs to be reconsidered in light of Buddhist thinking) – a freedom that Wright (1998: 135) recognises as coming from relinquishment or releasement (as in Gelassenheit). This freedom opens an important distinction in a dialogue with liberalism which I have not begun to unfold, and in a sense will unfold through enaction rather than prescription. This freedom is related to the financial independence Dominguez and Robin (1992) suggest; however, the discovery of an ability to appreciate our lives just as they are means that we may find liberation within constraints.

The centrality of these new understandings to economic thinking have been downplayed because they come from a context in which commerce has played only a very limited role. While this is cause for engaging with them reflectively, it is a pre-judgement. A fusion of horizons of economics and this new Buddhist thinking is the recognition that the self of *homo oeconomicus* is limited, and that a potential for liberation from the burdens of self exists in ways that are little understood by modernity, both in the East and West. As more people discover the benefits of such an appreciative stance, which comes from love rather than an acquisitive stance that comes from desire, a subtle but significant change will unfold.

REFERENCES

Abram, D. (1997). *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Vintage Books.

Adams, D. (1995). *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. New York: Bantam Books.

Aitken, R. (1979). *A Zen Wave: Basho's Haiku and Zen*. New York: Weatherhill.

Aitken, R. (1984). *The Mind of Clover.* San Francisco: North Point Press.

Aitken, R. (1985). *Taking the Path of Zen.* San Francisco: North Point Press.

Aitken, R. (1990). *The Gateless Barrier: The Wu-men Kuan (Mumonkan).* San Francisco: North Point Press.

Aitken, R. (1994).*The Practice of Perfection: The Paramitas from a Zen Buddhist Perspective.* San Francisco and New York: Pantheon Books.

Aitken, R. (2003). *The Morning Star: New and Selected Zen Writings*. Washington, DC: Shoemaker & Hoard.

Alexandrin, G. (1993). 'Elements of Buddhist economics', *International Journal of Social Economics* 20(2), 3-11.

Alexandrin, G. & Alexandrin, B. (1979). 'Toward a Buddhist economics', *Zero* 2, 124-50.

Alexandrin, G. & Zech, C. E. (1999). 'Ancient futures: Papal and Buddhist economics', *International Journal of Social Economics* 26 (10/11), 1344-1354.

Allport, G. W. (1950). *The Individual and His Religion.* New York: Macmillan.

Alvesson, M. (1993). *A Cultural Perspective of Organizations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Alvesson, M. (2003). 'Beyond Neopositivists, Romantics, and Localists: A reflexive approach to interviews in organizational research', *Academy of Management Review* 28(1), 13-33.

Altman, M. (2005) 'The ethical economy and competitive markets: Reconciling altruistic, moralistic, and ethical behavior with the rational economic agent and competitive markets', *Journal of Economic Psychology* 26(5), 732–757.

Anon. 'America's fascination with Buddhism', *Time* magazine, 13 October 1997.

Antonaccio, M. (2001). 'The virtues of metaphysics: A review of Iris Murdoch's philosophical writings', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29(2), 309–35.

Archer, M. (2002). 'The problem of agency', *Journal of Critical Realism* 5(1), 11-20.

Aristotle, *Poetics*, 9, trans. S. H. Butcher, http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/poetics/ (accessed 7 July 2006).

Arnsperger, C. (1999). 'Homo oeconomicus, social order, and the ethics of otherness', *Ethical Perspectives* 6(2), 139-149.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004). 'Table 12.19' in *2004 Year Book Australia* (ABS Cat. no.1301.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Baars, B. J. (1996). 'Understanding subjectivity: Global workspace theory and the resurrection of the observing self', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 3(3), 211-16.

Badiner, A. H. (1990). *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology.* Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press.

Badiou, A. (2003). *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return of Philosophy*, trans. J. Clemens and O. Feltham. New York: Continuum.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics.* Ed. & trans. C. Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bassui Zenji, 'The talk on one mind', in P. Kapleau (1967). (ed.). *Three Pillars of Zen: Teaching, Practice, Enlightenment*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bastick, R. (1997) 'Sustainable development a Buddhist perspective' in D. H. McMillen (ed.). *Globalisation and Regional Communities: Geoeconomic, Sociocultural and Security Implications for Australia.* Toowoomba (Australia): University of Southern Queensland Press.

Batchelor, M. & Brown, K. (eds). (1992). *Buddhism and Ecology.* London: Cassell.

Batchelor, S. (1990a). *The Faith to Doubt: Glimpses of Buddhist Uncertainty.* Berkeley: Parallax Press.

Batchelor, S. (1990b). 'Buddhist economics reconsidered', in A. Hunt-Badiner (ed.). *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology.* Berkeley: Parallax Press.

Batchelor, S. (1994). *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture.* Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Batchelor, S. (1997). *Buddhism without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening.* New York: Riverhead Books.

Batchelor, S. (1998). 'The Freedom to Be No One: Buddhism, Mind and Experience', unpublished essay written for a conference on Buddhism and Psychology in Los Angeles in May 1998.

Batchelor, S. (2000). 'The lessons of history', *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 10(2), 50-53.

Batchelor, S. (2004). *Living with the Devil: A Buddhist Meditation on Good and Evil.* New York: Riverhead Books.

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind.* New York: Ballantine.

Baudelaire, C. (1846/1992). 'Salon of 1846: What is Romanticism?', in C. Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Literature.* London: Penguin, 47-107.

Baumann, M. (2002). 'Protective amulets and awareness techniques, or how to make sense of Buddhism in the West', in C. Prebish & M. Baumann (eds.). *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp 51-65.

Baumeister, R. F. (1988). 'Masochism as escape from self', *Journal of Sex Research* 25, 28–59.

Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Escaping the Self: Alcoholism, Spirituality, Masochism, and Other Flights from the Burden of Selfhood*. New York: Basic Books.

Baumeister, R. F. (1998). 'The self', in D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske & G. Lindzey (eds). *Handbook of Social Psychology* (4th edn). New York: McGraw-Hill, pp 680–740.

Baumeister, R. F.& Exline, J. J. (2002). 'Mystical self loss: A challenge for psychological theory', *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 12(1), 15-20.

Beck, A. T. (1979). *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*. London: Penguin.

Becker, E. (1973). *The Denial of Death*. New York: The Free Press.

Beckert, J. (2003). 'How shall we conceptualize economic action?' *Journal of Economic Issues* 37 (3), 769-87.

Beggs, D. (1997). 'The interdisciplinary constraint on ecological reason', *Journal of the Society for Philosophy and Technology* 2(3-4), 47- 54.

Benz, E. (1966). *Buddhism or Communism: Which Holds the Future of Asia?* Trans by R. Winston & C. Winston. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Berger, P. L. (1967). *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Doubleday.

Berger, P. L. (1979). *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*. Anchor Press.

Berlin, I. (2000). *The Roots of Romanticism.* London: Pimlico.

Berman, M. (1981). *The Re-enchantment of the World*. New York: Bantam.

Berreby, D. (1994). 'That damned elusive Bruno Latour', *Lingua Franca – The Review of Academic Life* 4(6), 22-32.

Berry, W. (1990). *What are People For?* New York: North Point Press.

Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S. L., Carlson, L. & Anderson, N. D. (2004). 'Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition', *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 11, 230–241.

Bishop, E. (1979). 'In the Waiting Room', from *The Complete Poems 1927-1979.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc.

Blackmore, S. (2003). *Consciousness: An Introduction.* London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Blaug, M. (1992). *The Methodology of Economics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blaug, M. (1997). 'Ugly currents in modern economics', *Options Politiques* 18(7), 3-8.

Blaug, M. (1998). 'Disturbing currents in modern economics', *Challenge* 41(3), 11-34.

Block, N. (1995). 'On a confusion about a function of consciousness', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 18 (2), 227-287.

Block, W. (2005). 'Value Freedom, Laissez Faire, Mises, and Rothbard', *American Journal of Economics & Sociology* 64(3), 919-938.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu (1988) 'A look at the Kalama Sutta', *Buddhist Publication Society Newsletter* 9, 1-3.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu (trans.) (2000). *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Bolleter, R. (1991). 'Yunmen's bright light'. *Mind Moon Circle,* Summer, 6-10.

Bond, G. D. (1996). 'A. T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement in Sri Lanka', in C. S. Queen & S. B. King, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia.* Albany: State University of New York Press, pp121–146.

Boorstein, S. (1997). *It's Easier Than You Think: The Buddhist Way to Happiness.* San Francisco: Harper.

Borup J. (2004). 'Zen and the art of inverting Orientalism: Religious studies and genealogical networks', in P. Antes, A. W. Geertz & R. R. Warne (eds.) *New Approaches to the Study of Religion.* (Religion and Reason Series). Berlin & New York: Verlag de Gruyter.

Boulding, K. E. (1956) 'General systems theory: The skeleton of science', *Management Science* 2(3), 197-208.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P (1986). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste.* London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1990/1980). *The Logic of Practice*. trans. R. Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2005). *The Social Structures of the Economy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Bouvier, A. (2005). 'Comments on John B. Davis, The Theory of the Individual in Economics. Identity and Value', *Ethics and Economics* 3(1). http://Ethique-economique.org (accessed 23 December 2005).

Bové, P. A. (1981). 'Mendacious innocents, or, the modern genealogist as conscientious intellectual: Nietzsche, Foucault, Said', *Boundary 2.* Vol. 9, No. 3, Why Nietzsche Now? A Boundary 2 Symposium (Spring-Autumn), 359-388.

Bradbury, H. & Lichtenstein, B. M. B. (2000). 'Relationality in organizational research: Exploring the space between', *Organization Science* 11(5), 551-564.

Braud W. G. & Anderson, R. (1998). *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honouring Human Experience.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Braud, W G. (2002). 'Thoughts on the ineffability of the mystical experience', *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 12(3), 141–160.

Breakspear, C. & Hamilton, C. (2004). 'Getting a Life: Understanding the Downshifting Phenomenon in Australia', The Australia Institute, Discussion Paper 62.

Bridle, S. (2000). 'A call to mediocrity', *What is Enlightenment* 18, np. www.wie.org/j18/bookreview1.asp (accessed March, 2006).

Brown, D. P. & Engler, J. (1986a). 'The stages of mindfulness meditation: A validation study. Part 1: Study and results', in K. Wilber, J. Engler & D. Brown (eds) *Transformations of Consciousness*. Boston: Shambhala, 161-190.

Brown, D. P. & Engler, J. (1986b). 'The stages of mindfulness meditation: A validation study. Part 2: Discussion', in K. Wilber, J. Engler & D. Brown (eds) *Transformations of Consciousness*. Boston: Shambhala, 191-218.

Bubna-Litic, D. (1992) *Buyer Supplier Partnerships – A Case Study*, Masters of Commerce (Honours) Dissertation. University of NSW.

Bubna-Litic, D. (1995a) 'Buddhist Ethics And Business Strategy Making' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics: Online Conference On Buddhism And Human Rights*, 1-14 October 1995.

Bubna-Litic, D. (1995b). 'Strategy as fiction', *Proceedings of the 13th Standing Conference on Organisational Symbolism*, Finland.

Bubna-Litic, D. (1998) 'Buddhist ethics and strategy making', in D. Keown, C. S. Prebish & W. R. Husted (eds) *Buddhism and Human Rights*, Curzon Critical Studies in Buddhism Series, 203-221.

Bubna-Litic, D. (1999) 'Servants of greed: Post-industrial sub-culture(s) from a Buddhist perspective', in R. Goodman (ed.) *Modern Organizations and Emerging Conundrums.* The New Lexington Press, 203-221, 339-356.

Bubna-Litic, D. (2000). 'Buddhism returns to the market-place', in D. Keown & C. S. Prebish (eds). *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics.* University of Hawaii Press, 183-212.

Bubna-Litic, D. (2004). 'The bounded self in organisation theory', in R. Westwood & C. Rhodes (eds). *Proceedings of the Australasian Caucus of the Standing Committee on Organisational Symbolism.* University of Queensland.

Bubna-Litic, D. & Benn, S. (2003). 'The MBA at the crossroads: Design issues for the future', *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management* 9(3), 25-36.

Bubna-Litic, D., Kornberger, M. & Laske E. (2006). 'Fact or Fiction? Strategy at Work' Economy, in *Entrepreneurship, Science and Society in the XXI Century*. Book in honour of Prof. Dr. Santiago García Echevarría, Madrid.

Bucknell, R. & Kang, C. (1997). (eds). *The Meditative Way: Readings in the Theory and Practice of Buddhist Meditation*. Richmond: Curzon.

Bucknell, R. S. (1983). 'Experiments in insight meditation', *Australian Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 3, 96-117. Republished in R. Bucknell & C. Kang (eds). (1997). *The Meditative Way: Readings in the Theory and Practice of Buddhist Meditation*. Richmond: Curzon.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1996). *Handbook for Mankind*, trans by Ariyananda Bhikkhu (Roderick S. Bucknell). First Electronic Edition (accessed 6 August 1998).

Butler, K. (1990). 'Encountering the shadow in Buddhist America', *Common Boundary*, May/Jun, 14-22.

Butterfield, S. (1992). 'Accusing the tiger: Sexual ethics and Buddhist teachers', *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, 1(4), 46-51.

Cahoone, L. (1996). *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Camic, C. & Joas, H. (eds). (2004). *The Dialogical Turn: New Roles for Sociology in the Postdisciplinary Age.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Campbell, C. (1987). *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism.* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Caplan, M. (1999). *Halfway Up the Mountain: The Error of Premature Claims to Enlightenment.* Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press.

Capra, F. (1975). *Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism.* Boston: Shambhala.

Capra, F. (1996). *The Web of Life: A New Synthesis of Mind and Matter.* London: Harper Collins.

Capra, F. (2002). *The Hidden Connections: A Science for Sustainable Living.* New York: Random House.

Carney, J. H., Joiner, J. F. & Tragou, H. (1997). 'Categorizing, coding, and manipulating qualitative data using the WordPerfect® word processor', *The Qualitative Report* 3(1), www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-1/carney.html (accessed 5 June 1999).

Carolan, M. S. (2004). 'Ecological modernization theory: What about consumption?' *Society & Natural Resources* 17(3), 247-260.

Carruthers, P. (2002). 'The cognitive functions of language', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 25, 657–726.

Chappell, D. W. (1996). 'Are there seventeen Mahàyàna ethics?' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 3, 44-65.

Chalmers, D. (1996). *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Christensen, L. W. (1999). 'Suffering and the dialectical self in Buddhism and relational psychoanalysis', *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 59(1), 37-57.

Christopher, J. C. (1999). 'Situating psychological well-being: Exploring the cultural roots of its theory and research', *Journal of Counseling and Development* 77, 141-52.

Clarke, J. J. (1997). *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought.* London: Routledge.

Clarke, R. B. (1996) 'Verses on faith in the mind', trans. in J. Kornfield & G. Fronsdal. (1996) *Teachings of the Buddha.* Boston: Shambhala.

Cleary, T. (1990). *Transmission of Light (Denkoroku) – Zen in the Art of Enlightment by Zen Master Keizan*. San Francisco: North Point Press.

Cleary, T. & Cleary, J. C. (1997). *The Blue Cliff Record: Volume III.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc.

Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. (1996). 'Concepts and coding', in A. Coffey & P. Atkinson, *Making Sense of Qualitative Data.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp 26-53.

Colander, D. C. (2000). 'The death of neoclassical economics', *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 22(2), 127-43.

Coleman, W. O. (2003). *Economics and its Enemies: Two Centuries of Anti-Economics.* Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utslibrary/Doc?id=10046636&page=236 (accessed January 2004).

Collins, J. (1996). *Introducing Derrida*. Duxford: Icon.

Collins, S. (1998). *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cornelius, D. (ed.). (1964). *Cultures in Conflict: Perspectives on the Snow-Leavis Controversy.* Chicago: Scott, Foresman.

Costanza, R. (ed.). (1991). *Ecological Economics: The Science and Management of Sustainability***,** New York: Columbia University Press.

Crook, J. & Fontana, D. (1990). *Space In Mind: East-West Psychology and Contemporary Buddhism.* Dorset: Element Books.

Crook, J. & Osmaston, H. (1994). *Himalayan Buddhist Villages: Environment, Resources, Society and Religious Life in Zangskar, Ladakh*. Bristol: University of Bristol.

Cullenberg, S., Amariglio, J. & Ruccio, D. F. (eds). (2001). *Postmodernism, Economics and Knowledge.* London, UK: Routledge, http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utslibrary/Doc?id=10053825&page=20.

Dalai Lama & Cutler, H.C. (1998) *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Daly, H. E. & J. Cobb (1989). *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment and a Sustainable Future.* Boston: Beacon.

Daly, H. E. (1996). *Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Damasio, A. (1994). *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain.* New York: Avon Books.

Damasio, A. (1999). *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness*. San Diego: Harcourt.

d'Aquili, E. G. & Newberg, A. B., (1993). 'Religious and mystical states: a neuropsychological model', *Zygon* 28, 177-200.

Darwin, C. (1859). *On the Origin of Species.* London: John Murray.

Datamonitor (2003) 'Backlash against the rat race worth billions' www.datamonitor.com/~f270b09c0ce042c8ae8f9198af0af368~/industries/news/article/?pid=1488B8F8-DD46-40A2-A059-9E4A0CDC088A&type=ExpertView (assessed July 2004).

Davies, B. & Harre, R. (1990). 'Positioning: The discursive production of selves', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20, 43-63.

Davies, G. F. (2004). *Economia: New Economic Systems to Empower People and Support the Living World.* Sydney: ABC Books.

Davis, J. B. (2003). *The Theory of the Individual in Economics: Identity and Value.* New York: Routledge.

Dawkins, R.. (1989). *The Selfish Gene*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dawkins, R. (1998). *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion and the Appetite for Wonder.* New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Dawkins, R. (2006). *The God Delusion.* New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Dawson, L. L. (1999). 'When prophecy fails and faith persists: A theoretical overview', *Nova Religio* 3(12), 60-82.

de Botton, A. (2000). *The Consolations of Philosophy.* New York: Pantheon Books.

De Man, P. (1983). *Blindness and Insight*. 2nd. ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Dennet, D. (1995). *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*: *Evolution and the Meaning of Life.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Dennett, D. (1991). *Consciousness Explained.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. (eds). (2003). 'Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research', *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials.* Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1-46.

Depraz, N., Varela, F. & Vermersch, P. (2000). 'The gesture of awareness: An account of its structural dynamics', in M. Velmans (ed.). *Investigating Phenomenal Consciousness: New Methodologies and Maps.* Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company. http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utslibrary/Doc?id=5000245& g=121-138.

Derrida, J. (1974). *On Grammatology.* trans. G. C. Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Original work published 1967).

Derrida, J. (1980). 'The law of genre', *Critical Inquiry* 7.1. Rpt. *On Narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980-1, 51-77.

Derrida, J. (1981a). *Positions.* trans. A. Bass. London: Athlone Press (Original work published 1972).

Derrida, J. (1981b). *Dissemination*. trans. B. Johnson. Chicago, Il: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1972).

Devall, B. & Sessions, G. (1985). *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered.* Salt Lake City, Utah: Peregrine Smith.

Deikman, A. J. (2000). 'A functional approach to mysticism', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7(11-12), 75-92.

Dillon, M. (2000). 'Dialogues with death: The last days of Socrates and the Buddha', *Philosophy East & West* 50(4), 525-558.

Dominguez, J. & Robin, V. (1992). *Your Money or Your Life: Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence.* New York: Penguin Books.

Dopfer, K. (1986). 'Causality and consciousness in economics: Concepts of change in orthodox and heterodox economics', *Journal of Economic Issues* 20(2), 509-523.

Dreyfus H. L. (1999). 'Anonymity versus commitment: The dangers of education on the internet', *Ethics and Information Technology* 1(1), 15-21.

Dreyfus, H. L. (2005). 'Overcoming the Myth of the Mental: How Philosophers Can Profit from the Phenomenology of Everyday Expertise,' Presidential Address, *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 79(2) 1-24, http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/pdf/Dreyfus%20APA%20Address%20%2010.22.05%20.pdf

Dreyfus H. L. & Dreyfus S. E. (1986) *Mind over Machine: The Power of Human Intuition and Expertise in the Era of the Computer.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Durkheim, É. (1938). *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: Free Press. (Orig. pub. 1895).

Eccles, R. G. & Nohria, N. (1992). *Beyond the Hype: Rediscovering the Essence of Management.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Einstein, A. (1954) in H. Dukas & B. Hoffman (eds). (1979). *Albert Einstein: The Human Side.* Princeton University Press.

Ehrsson H. H., Spence C. & Passingham, R. E. (2004). 'That's my hand! Activity in premotor cortex reflects feeling of ownership of a limb', *Science* 305, 875–877.

Elgin, D. (1993). *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich* (rev. ed.). New York: William Morrow.

Elster, J. (1996). 'Rationality and the emotions', *The Economic Journal* 106(438), 1386-1397.

Engler, J. & Brown. D. (1986). 'The stages of mindfulness meditation: A validation study, Part I and Part II', in K. Wilber, J. Engler & D. Brown, *Transformations of Consciousness, Conventional, and Contemplative Perspectives on Development.* Boston: Shambhala.

Epstein, M. (1995). *Thoughts without a Thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist Perspective.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and Society.* New York: Norton.

Etzioni, A. (1988). *The Moral Dimension: Toward a New Economics.* New York: Free Press.

Etzioni, A. (2004). 'The post affluent society', *Review of Social Economy* 62(3), 407-420.

Evernden, N. (1986). *The Natural Alien.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fabrizio, F., Pfeffer, J. & Sutton, R. I. (2005). 'Economic language and assumptions: How theories can become self-fulfilling', *The Academy of Management Review* 30(1), 8-24.

Falconer, J. (2002). 'Emergence happens! Misguided paradigms regarding organizational change and the role of complexity and patterns in the change landscape', *Emergence* 4(1-2), 117-30.

Faure, B. (1991). *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen.* NJ: Princeton University Press.

Faure, B. (1993). *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition.* NJ: Princeton University Press.

Faure, B. (1997). *The Will to Orthodoxy: A Critical Genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism.* trans. P. Brooks. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Faure, B. (1998). *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Festinger, L., Riecken, H. W. & Schachter, S. (1956). *When Prophecy Fails.* New York: Harper and Row.

Fields, R. (1992) *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America*, 3rd edn. Boulder: Shambhala.

Fischer, N. (1991). 'Meditation and poetry', in K. Johnson & C. Paulenich (eds). *Beneath a Single Moon: Buddhism in Contemporary American Poetry.* Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Fisher, H. (2004). *Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love.* New York: Henry Holt & Company.

Flanagan, O. (2002). *The Problem of the Soul: Two Visions of the Mind and How to Reconcile Them.* New York: Basic Books.

Flyvbjerg, B. (1998) *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Flyvbjerg, B., Skamris Holm, M. K. & Buhl, S. L. (2005). 'How (in)accurate are demand forecasts in public works projects? The case of transportation', *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71(2), 131-146.

Foster, J. (1998). 'Abstraction in economics: Incorporating the time dimension', *International Journal of Social Economics* 25(2-4), 146-167.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977.* C. Gordon (ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1983). *This is Not a Pipe.* trans. J. Harkness. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Foucault, M. (1984). 'Polemics, politics, and problematizations', in P. Rabinow (ed.) (1997). *Michel Foucault, Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth; Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol. 1.* London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press.

Foucault, M. (1990). *The History of Sexuality Vol 1: An Introduction.* trans. R. Hurley. Harmondsworth: Penguin; French original 1976.

Frankl, V. E. (1969). 'Reductionism and nihilism', in A. Koestler & J. R. Smythies (eds). *Beyond Reductionism.* London: Hutchinson.

Friedman, M. (1953). *Essays in Positive Economics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fromm, E. (1978). *To Have or to Be*? London: Jonathan Cape.

Fukuyama F. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. London: Penguin Books.

Fullbrook, E. (2002). *Intersubjectivity in Economics: Agents and Structures.* London and New York: Routledge.

Fulton, P. R. (1986). *The Ethnography of Anatta: Self and Selves in American Vipassana Buddhism.* Harvard University ED.D.

Gadamer, H. G. (1992/1989). *Truth and Method* (rev. 2nd ed.). trans. J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall. New York: The Continuing Publishing Corporation.

Galbraith, J. K. (1971). *A Contemporary Guide to Economics, Peace and Laughter.* Boston: Mifflin.

Gandhi, M. K. (1945). *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi.* R. K. Prabhu & U. R. Rao (eds). Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House. www.mkgandhi.org/momgbook/Chap87.html (accessed September 2003).

Gandhi, M. K. (1929) Speech at a Public Meeting in Rangoon, 8 March 1929. *The Collected Works*, vol. 40, p. 104. In N. F. Gier (1996). 'Gandhi and Mahayana Buddhism', *Journal of Oriental Studies* 35(2), 84-105.

Garfield, J. (1994). 'Dependent Co-origination and the Emptiness of Emptiness: Why Did Nagarjuna Start With Causation?,' *Philosophy East and West* 44, 219-250.

Garfield, J. L. (2001). 'Nagarjuna's Theory of Causality: Implications Sacred and Profane.' *Philosophy East and West* 51(4) 507-524.

Garfield, J. L (2006). 'Buddhist studies, Buddhist practice and the trope of authenticity', *Seeds of Peace, Journal of International Network of Engaged Buddhists.*

Geertz C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* New York: Basic Books, 28-29.

Geertz C. (1995). 'Culture wars [review essay on Sahlins, How "Natives" Think and Obeyesekere, The Apotheosis of Captain Cook]' *The New York Review of Books* 42(19), 4-6.

Gergen, K. (1991). *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life.* New York: Basic Books.

Gergen, K. (1994). *Realities and Relationships: Soundings in Social Construction.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society: An Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Glass, N. R (1995). *Working Emptiness: Toward a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought.* Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press.

Globus, G. (2005). 'Nonlinear dynamics at the cutting edge of modernity: A postmodern view', *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 12(3), 229-234.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Goldstein, J. (2002). *One Dharma: The Emerging Western Buddhism.* San Francisco: Harper.

Goleman, D. (1972). 'The Buddha on meditation and states of consciousness, Pt. 2: A typology of meditation techniques', *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 4(2), 151-210.

Goleman, D. (1988). *The Meditative Mind: Varieties of Meditative Experience.* Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher.

Gombrich, R. & Obeyesekere, G. (1988). *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Gombrich, R. F. (1996). *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings*. London: Athlone Press.

Gowans, C. W. (2003). *Philosophy of the Buddha.* London: Routledge.

Grady, C. D. (1995). 'A Buddhist Response to Modernization in Thailand: With Particular Reference to Conservation Forest Monks.' PhD diss., University of Hawaii.

Graham, D. (2005). 'Heraclitus: The Doctrine of Flux and the Unity of Opposites', *The Internet Philosophy of Encyclopedia*, www.utm.edu/research/iep/h/heraclit.htm (accessed March 2005).

Granovetter, M. (1985) 'Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness', *American Journal of Sociology* 91, 481-510.

Griffin, D. R. (ed.). (1988). *The Reenchantment of Science: Postmodern Proposals*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Gross, R. (1997). 'Toward a Buddhist environmental ethic', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65(2), 333–53.

Habito, R. L. F. (2004). *Living Zen, Loving God*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Hamilton, C. (2004). 'The disappointment of liberalism and the quest for inner freedom', The Australia Institute Discussion Paper 70.

Hamilton, C. & Denniss, R. (2005). *Affluenza: When Too Much Is Never Enough*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Harding, D. E. (1986). *On Having No Head: Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious.* London & New York: Arkana.

Harré, R. (1991). 'The discursive production of selves', *Theory & Psychology* 1(1), 51-63.

Harris, I. (1995). 'Buddhist environmental ethics and detraditionalization: The case of EcoBuddhism', *Religion* 25(3), 199–211.

Harvey, P. (2000). *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hattam, R. (2004). *Awakening-Struggle: Towards a Buddhist Critical Social Theory.* Flaxton: Post Pressed.

Haule, J. R. (1992). *Pilgrimage of the Heart: The Path of Romantic Love.* Boston: Shambala.

Hayward, J. & Varela, F. (eds). (1992). *Gentle Bridges: Conversations with the Dalai Lama on the Sciences of Mind.* Boston: Shambhala.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time.* trans. Macquarrie & Robinson. New York: Harper and Row (Original work published 1927).

Heidegger, M. (1966). *Discourse on Thinking.* trans. J. M. Anderson & E. H. Freund. New York: Harper and Row.

Heidegger, M. (1991). *Poetry, Language, Thought.* by A. Hofstadter. San Francisco: Harper (Original work published 1946).

Heilbroner, R. L. (1972) *The Economic Problem.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice -Hall.

Heilbroner, R L. & Milberg, W (1995). *The Crisis of Vision in Modern Economic Thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hill, P. C. (2005). 'Living on the boundary: Scriptural authority and psychology', *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 33(2), 98-112.

Hillman, J. (1979) 'Peaks and vales', in J. Hillman (ed.) *Puer Papers.* Dallas: Spring Publications.

Higgins, W. (2006). 'Globalisation and neo-liberal rule', *Journal of Australia Political Economy* 57, 5-29.

Hirakawa, A. (1993). *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to Early Mahayana.* trans. P. Groner, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Hobbes, T. (1994). *Human Nature and the Corpore Politico*. J.C.A. Gaskin (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hofstadter, D. R. (1980). *Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid.* New York, Vintage Books.

Hopkins, J. (1983). *Meditation on Emptiness,* London: Wisdom.

Houshmand, Z., Harrington, A., Saron, C.D. & Davidson, R. J. (2001). 'Training the mind: First steps in a cross-cultural collaboration in neuroscientific research', in R. J. Davidson & A. Harrington, (eds). *Visions of Compassion – Western Scientists and Tibetan Buddhists Examine Human Nature.* New York: Oxford University Press, 3-17.

Hove, P. (2002) 'Cultivated experiences: Learning retreat meditation', in M. van Manen (ed.). *Writing in the Dark: Phenomenological Studies in Interpretive Inquiry.* London, Ontario, Canada: The Althouse Press, 198-221.

Hume, D. (1992/1888). *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Huxley, A. (1945). *The Perennial Philosophy.* New York & London: Harper and Brothers.

Hyde, L. (1983). *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property.* New York: Vintage.

Inoue, S. (1997). *Putting Buddhism to Work: A New Approach to Management and Business*. trans. D. Ryuken Williams. Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd.

Jarzabkowski, P. (2004). 'Strategy as practice: Recursiveness, adaptation and practices-in-use', *Organization Studies* 25(4), 529-560.

Jackson, N. & Carter, P. (1991). 'In defence of paradigm incommensurability', *Organization Studies* 12(1), 109–27.

Jackson, R. & Makransky, J. (eds). (2000). *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars.* Richmond: Curzon.

James, W. (1902/1985). *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Penguin (Original work published 1902).

Johnson, R. A. (1983). *We: Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Johnson, S., Cooper, C., Cartwright, S., Donald, I., Taylor, P. & Millet, C. (2005). 'The experience of work-related stress across occupations', *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 20(2), 178–187.

Jones, K. (1989). *The Social Face of Buddhism*: *An Approach to Political and Social Activism.* London: Wisdom.

Jones, K. (1999). 'Emptiness and form: Engaged Buddhism struggles to respond to modernity', *Think Sangha Journal* 2, 100-119.

Jourdan, A. C. (1994). 'Dharma bucks', *Far Eastern Economic Review* 157(22), 42.

Jung, C. G. (1990). *Man and His Symbols.* London: Arkana.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). 'Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future', *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 10, 144–156.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005) *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness.* New York: Hyperion.

Kalupahana, D. J. (1975). *Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism.* Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.

Kalupahana, D. J. (1992). *A History of Buddhist Philosophy.* Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.

Kalupahana, D. J. (1987). *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Kalupahana, D. J. (1992). *A History of Buddhist Philosophy.* Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.

Kanth, R. K. (1997). *Against Economics: Rethinking Political Economy.* Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate.

Kapleau, P. (1967). (ed.). *Three Pillars of Zen: Teaching, Practice, Enlightenment*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Kasser, T. (2002). *The High Price of Materialism*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kearney, P. (1994) *Freedom and Bondage: An Exploration of Interdependent Arising and the Interdependently Arisen in Early Buddhism.* Honours thesis, www.buddhanet.net/filelib/genbud/freedom.zip (accessed May 2005).

Keen, S. (2001). *Debunking Economics: The Naked Emperor of the Social Sciences.* Annandale, Sydney: Pluto Press.

Kennedy, A. (2004). 'Reflections on Buddhism in Leeds: Identity, practice and experience', *Contemporary Buddhism* 5(2), 143-156.

Keown, D. (1996a) *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Keown, D. (1996b). 'Karma, character, and consequentialism', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24(2), 329–350.

Kornfield, J. (1977). (ed.). *Living Buddhist Masters.* Santa Cruz, Calif.: Unity Press.

Kornfield, J. (1993a). *A Path with Heart: A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*. New York: Bantam Books.

Kornfield, J. (1993b). 'Insight Meditation Teachers Code of Ethics'. Appendix in *A Path with Heart: A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*. New York: Bantam Books, 340-343.

Kornfield, J. (2001). *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path.* Westminster, MD, USA: Bantam Books, http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utslibrary/Doc?id=5002038& g=131.

Kostera, M. & Kociatkiewicz, J. (1999). 'The anthropology of empty space', *Qualitative Sociology* (1), 37-50.

Kuhn, T.S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kulananda, D. (1992) **'**Protestant Buddhism – Correspondence', *Religion* 22(1), 101-103.

Lakoff, G. (2002) *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, 2nd edn. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought.* New York: Basic Books.

Lancaster, B. (1997) 'The mythology of Anatta: Bridging the East-West divide', in J. Pickering (ed.). *The Authority of Experience: Essays on Buddhism and Psychology.* Surrey, England: Curzon, 170-204.

Langer, E. J. (1989). *Mindfulness*, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Langer, S. K. (1942). *Philosophy in a New Key.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Lanzetta, B. J. (1992). 'Three categories of nothingness in Eckhart', *The Journal of Religion* 72(2), 248-268.

Lasswell, H. D. (1936). *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How.* New York, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.

Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern.* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press

Latour, B. (1998). 'On Recalling ANT', published by the Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, at www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Latour-Recalling-ANT.pdf (accessed September 2005).

Lau, R. K.W. (2004). 'Habitus and the practical logic of practice', *Sociology* 38(2), 369-87.

Lawson, T. (1997) *Economics and Reality*. London: Routledge.

Lawson, T. (2001). 'Two responses to the failings of modern economics: The instrumentalist and the realist', *Review of Population and Social Policy* 10, 155–181.

Lawson, T. (2003). *Reorienting Economics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lecourt, D. (2004). 'On individualism', trans. S. Gaston. *1. Angelaki. Journal Of The Theoretical Humanities* 9(3), 11-15.

Lee, M. R. Maume, M. O. Ousey & Graham C. (2003). 'Social isolation and lethal violence across the metro/nonmetro divide: The effects of socioeconomic disadvantage and poverty concentration on homocide', *Rural Sociology* 68(1), 107-131.

Levine, D. P. (1989). *Subjectivity in Political Economy: Essays on Wanting and Choosing.* Florence, KY: Routledge.

Levine, J. (1983). 'Materialism and qualia: The explanatory gap', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64, 354–361.

Lewin, K. (1951) *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers.* D. Cartwright (ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

Lindblom, C. E. (1959) 'The "science" of muddling through', *Public Administration* 19: 79-88.

Linder, S. H. (2001). 'An inquiry into dialogue, its challenges and justification', *International Journal of Public Administration*, 24 (7&8), 651-678.

Ling, P. K. (1981). *The Intensive Buddhist Meditation Retreat and the Self: Psychological and Theravadin Considerations*, Ph.D., Boston University Graduate School.

Lipsey, R. G. (2001). 'Successes and failures in the transformation of economics', *Journal of Economic Methodology* 8(2), 169-201.

London, S. (1997) 'The Ecology of Magic with David Abram', from the Insight & Outlook radio series, 1997. www.scottlondon.com/interviews/abram.html (accessed April 2006).

Lovelock, J. (2000). *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth.* 3rd edn. Oxford University Press.

Loy, D. R. (1985). 'Wei-wu-wei: Nondual action', *Philosophy East and West* 35(1), 73-87.

Loy, D. R. (1990). 'The non-duality of life and death: A Buddhist view of repression', *Philosophy East and Wes*t 40(2), 151-174.

Loy, D. R. (1992a). 'Avoiding the void: The lack of self in psychotherapy and Buddhism', *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 24(2), 151-180.

Loy, D. R. (1992b). 'The deconstruction of Buddhism', in Coward & Foshay (eds.) *Derrida and Negative Theology.* NY: Suny Press, 227-253.

Loy, D. R. (1994). 'Preparing for something that never happens: The means/ends problem in modern culture', *International Studies in Philosophy* 26(4), 47-67.

Loy, D. R. (1995). 'The Dharma of Emanuel Swedenborg: A Buddhist perspective', *Arcana (Journal of the Swedenborg Association)* 2(1), 11-35.

Loy, D. R. (1997). 'The religion of the market', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65(2), 275–290.

Loy, D. R. (2000). *Lack and Transcendence: The Problem of Death and Life in Psychotherapy, Existentialism and Buddhism.* New York: Humanity Books.

Loy, D. R. (2002). 'The religion of the market', in *A Buddhist History of the West: Studies in Lack*. New York: SUNY, 214-236.

Loy, D. R. (2003a). *The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory.* Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Loy, D. R. (2003b). 'Can Buddhism save the world? A response to Nelson Foster', *Think Sangha: Buddhist Peace Fellowship* (accessed July 2004) www.bpf.org/html/resources_and_links/think_Sangha/papers_and_viewpoints/papers/loy_can_buddhism/loy_can_buddhism.html.

Loy, D. R. (2004). 'Review of "Zen War Stories" by Brian Daizen Victoria', *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11, 68-73.

Lyotard, J. F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. trans. G. Bennington & B. Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mabbett, I. (1998). 'The Problem of the Historical Nagarjuna Revisited.' *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 118(3), 332-346.

MacIntyre, A. (1984). *After Virtue: A Study of Moral Theory,* 2nd edn. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

MacIntyre, A. (1988). *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

McMahan, D. L. (1998). 'Orality writing and authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary literature and the struggle for legitimacy in the Mahayana', *History of Religions* 37(3), 249-265.

McMahan, D. L. (2002). 'Repackaging Zen for the West', in C. S. Prebish & M. Baumann (eds). *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 218–29.

Macpherson, C. B. (1962). *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Macy, J. (1985). *Dharma and Development: Religion as Resource in the Sarvodaya Village Self-help Movement.* Rev. ed. West Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian.

Macy, J. (1991a). *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory: The Dharma of Natural Systems.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Macy, J. (1991b). *World as Lover, World as Self.* Berkeley, Ca.: Parallax Press.

Mah, K. & Binik, Y. M. (2002). 'Do all orgasms feel alike? Evaluating a two dimensional model of the orgasm experience across gender and sexual context', *The Journal of Sex Research* 39, 104–113.

Makransky, J. (2000a). 'Contemporary academic Buddhist theology: Its emergence and rationale', in J. Makransky & R. Jackson (eds). (2000). *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars.* Richmond: Curzon, 14-21.

Makransky, J. (2000b). 'Historical consciousness as an offering to the trans-historical Buddha', in R. Jackson & J. Makransky (eds). (2000). *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars.* Richmond: Curzon, 111-135.

Manent, P. (1996). *An Intellectual History of Liberalism.* Princeton University.

March, J. G. & Simon, H. A. (1958). *Organizations.* New York: Wiley.

Marcuse, H. (1964). *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marshall, A. (1961/1890). *Principles of Economics.* London: Macmillan for the Royal Economic Society.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*. New York: Viking Press.

Maturana, H. & Varela, F. (1992). The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding. London: Shambala.

Mauss, M. (1950/1967). *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies.* (Trans). I. Cunnison New York: W.W. Norton Co.

May, R. (1996). *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East-Asian Influences on His Work.* trans., with a complementary essay, by G. Parkes, London: Routledge.

McClellan, J. (1993). 'Nondual ecology', *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 3(2), 58-65.

McCloskey, D. N. (1985). *The Rhetoric of Economics*, Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press.

McQuaid, J. (2001). *A View of Religion in Japan.* A Japan Foundation fellowship essay, www.japansociety.org/global_affairs/fellowship_essay.cfm?id_fellowship=666018121 (accessed 29 July 2006).

Mellor, P. A. (1991). 'A Protestant Buddhism? The cultural translation of Buddhism in England', *Religion* 21, 73-92.

Mellor, P. A. (1992) 'The FWBO and tradition: A reply to Dharmachari Kulananda', *Religion* 22(1), 104-107.

Mendes, P. (2003). 'Australian neoliberal think tanks and the backlash against the welfare state', *Journal Of Australian Political Economy* 51, 30-56.

Mendis, P. (1993). 'Buddhist equilibrium: The theory of middle path for sustainable development'. St. Paul: University of Minnesota, Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics, *Staff Paper P93-2* http://agecon.lib.umn.edu/cgi-bin/pdf_view.pl?paperid=923.

Metzinger, T. (2003). *Being No One*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Metzinger, T. (2005). 'Being No One: Consciousness, the Phenomenal Self, and the First-Person Perspectives' *Foerster Lectures on the Immortality of the Soul* Lipman Room, Barrows Hall U. C. Berkeley http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-3658963188758918426&q=immortality (accessed June 2006).

Mishra, P. (2004). *An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World.* NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Mintzberg, H. (1975). 'The manager's job: Folklore or fact', *Harvard Business Review* 53, 49-61.

Mintzberg, H. (1994). *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning.* New York: Free Press.

Moore, T. (1992). *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life.* San Francisco: Harper.

Moss. S. (1999). 'The heterodox economist and the possibility of good science', *Science & Society* 63(4), 503-509.

Muller, C. (2004). 'Zen Buddhism and Western scholarship: Will the twain ever meet?' *Journal of Buddhist Studies* 9, 261-285.

Murdoch, I. (1992). *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. New York: Penguin.

Nagel, M. (2001). 'Are state-specific sciences of advanced meditative states possible?' Unpublished revision to presentation at the *Towards a Science of Consciousness II Conference,* 1998, www.whole-person-counseling.com/ascs1.htm (accessed 30 August 2003).

Nakai, P. & Schultz, R. (2000). *The Mindful Corporation: Liberating the Human Spirit at Work.* New York: Leadership Press.

Nagapriya, D. (2004). *Exploring Karma and Rebirth*, Birmingham: Windhorse Publications.

Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu & Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995). Trans. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima-Nikaaya.* Boston: Wisdom Publications.

National Research Council (NRC) of Canada (2004). 'Facts' www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/education/bio/random_facts_e.html (accessed May 2004).

Nelson, R. H. (2001). *Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond.* University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Nelson, J. A. (2004a). 'A Buddhist and feminist analysis of ethics and business', *Development* 47(3), 53–60.

Nelson, J. A. (2004b). 'Clocks, creation, and clarity: Insights on ethics and economics from a feminist perspective', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 7(4), 381-398.

Neusner, J. (1988). 'The theological enemies of religious studies: Theology and secularism in the trivialisation and personalization of religion in the west', *Religion* 18(1), 21-35.

Neville, J. W. (1998). 'Economic rationalism: Social philosophy masquerading as economic science', in B. Cass & P. Smyth (eds). *Contesting the Australian Way*. Cambridge University Press, 169-179.

Newberg, A., Alavi, A., Baime, M., Pourdehnad, M., Santanna, J. & d'Aquili, E. (2001). 'The measurement of regional cerebral blood flow during the complex cognitive task of meditation: A preliminary SPECT study', *Psychiatry Research* 106(2), 113-22.

Nhat Hanh, T. (1987). *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism.* Berkeley, California: Parallax Press.

Nietzsche, F. (1967). *On the Genealogy of Morals.* trans. W. Kaufmann. New York: Random House. (Original work published 1887).

Nickerson, C., Schwarz, N., Diener, E. & Kahneman, D. (2003). 'Zeroing in on the dark side of the American dream: A closer look at the negative consequences of the goal for financial success', *Psychological Science* 14, 531–536.

Nisbett, R. E. & Wilson, T. D. (1977). 'Telling more than we can know: Verbal reports on mental processes', *Psychological Reports* 84(3), 231-259.

Nishida, K. (1921). 'Zen no kenkyu,' trans. in M. Abe & C. Ives (1990). *Inquiry into the Good.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Norberg-Hodge, H. (1991). *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh.* San Francisco, Calif.: Sierra Club Books.

Norberg-Hodge, H. (1996). 'The pressure to modernize and globalize', in J. Mander & E. Goldsmith (eds). *The Case Against The Global Economy – And For A Turn Toward The Local.* San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 33-47.

Norberg-Hodge, H. (2002). 'Buddhism in the global economy', in *Mindfulness in the Marketplace: Compassionate Responses to Consumerism.* Berkeley, CA: Parallax.

Norton, D. L. (1976). *Personal Destinies: A Philosophy of Ethical Individualism*. Princeton University Press.

Obeyesekere, G. (2002). *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Odin, S. (1996). *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Olson, C. (2000). *Zen and the Art of Postmodern Philosophy: Two Paths of Liberation from the Representational Mode of Thinking.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Omerod, P. (1998) *Butterfly Economics: A New General Theory of Social and Economic Behavior*. London: Faber and Faber.

Ornatowski, G. K. (1996). 'Continuity and change in the economic ethics of Buddhism: Evidence from the history of Buddhism in India, China and Japan', *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 3, 187-229.

Oxford English Dictionary, The, 2nd ed. (1989). OED Online. Oxford University Press. http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/cgi/entry/50118985?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=interdisciplinary&first=1&max_to_show=10 (accessed April 2000).

Paquet, G. (1998). 'Evolutionary cognitive economics', *Informtion Economics and Policy* 10(3), 343-357.

Patton, M. (1997). *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation*. London: Sage Publications.

Pavlov, I. P. (1927). *Conditioned Reflexes.* G. W. Anrep. London: Oxford University Press.

Pavlov, I. P. (1928). *Lectures on Conditioned Reflexes.* trans. W. H. Gantt. New York: International Publishers.

Payne, R. K. (2002). 'Buddhism and cognitive science: Contributions to an enlarged discourse, symposium proceedings', *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, Third Series, 4, 1-15.

Payutto, P. A. (1994). *Buddhist Economics: A Middle Way for the Market Place*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

Pearce, J. (2001). *Small Is Still Beautiful*. London: HarperCollins.

Penrose, R. (1994). *Shadows of the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pesqueux, Y. & Damak-Ayadi, S. (2005). 'Stakeholder theory in perspective', *Corporate Governance* 5(2), 5-21.

Petitot, J., Varela, F., Pachoud, B. & Roy, J. (1999). *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Piboolsravut, P. (1998). *An Outline of Buddhist Economic Theory and System*, PhD Dissertation, Simon Fraser University.

Pickering, J. (1995) 'Postmodern Psychology is Postcognitive: Selfhood and Embodied Discourse', based on a paper by John Pickering & Will Barton given at the 'Persons in Society' conference Huddersfield University, 17 July 1995, www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/psych/people/academic/jpickering/johnpickering/huddersfield/ (assessed September 2003).

Pickering, J. (1997). 'Foreword', John Pickering (ed.) *The Authority of Experience: Essays on Buddhism and Psychology*. London: Curzon Press.

Pickering, J. (1999). 'The self is a semiotic process', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6(4), 31-47.

Pirsig, R. (1974). *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.* New York: Bantam.

Polanyi, K. (1944). *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. New York: Holt, Rinehart.

Polanyi, M. (1962). *Personal Knowledge*. London: Routledge & Keegan Paul.

Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance.* New York: Free Press.

Prebish, C. S. & Baumann, M. (eds.) (2002). *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Prebish, C. S. (1993). 'Text and tradition in the study of Buddhist ethics', *The Pacific World* N.S., 9, 49-68.

Prebish, C. S. (1999). *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Priem, R. & Butler, J. (2001a). 'Is the resource-based view a useful perspective for strategic management research', *Academy of Management Review* 26(1), 22-40.

Priem, R. & Butler, J. (2001b). 'Tautology in the resource-based view and the implications of externally determined resource value: further comments', *Academy of Management Review* 26(1), 57-67.

Prothero, S. (2001). 'Boomer Buddhism', *Salon*, February 26, www.salon.com/books/feature/2001/02/26/buddhism/index.html (accessed June 2003).

Pryor, F. (1990). 'A Buddhist economic system – in principle', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 49(3), 339-49.

Pryor, F. (1991). 'A Buddhist economic system – in practice', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 50(1), 17-32.

Putnam, H. (1981). 'Brains in a vat', in *Reason, Truth and History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-21.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Queen, C. S. & King, S. B. (eds). (1996). *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Queen, C. S. (1996a). 'Dr. Ambedkar and the hermeneutics of Buddhist liberation', in C. S. Queen & S. B. King, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 45–71.

Queen, C. S. (1996b). 'Introduction: The shapes and sources of engaged Buddhism' in C. S. Queen & S. B. King, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1-44.

Rasmussen, J. (2003). 'Let's get to know Howie Bagley!' *ArtSF Newsletter* – Edition III, www.artsf.org/press/pressnewsO.htm (last accessed 6 June 2005).

Rawlinson, A. (1997). *The Book of Enlightened Masters: Western Teachers in Eastern Traditions.* Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Company.

Reason, P. & Rowan, J. (eds). (1981). *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*. Chichester: Wiley.

Reason, P. (ed.). (1988a). *Human Inquiry in Action: Developments in New Paradigm Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Reason, P. (1988b). 'Experience, action, and metaphor as dimensions of post-positivist inquiry', *Research in Organizational Change and Development* 2, 195-233.

Reason, P. (1993). 'Reflections on sacred experience and sacred science', *Journal of Management Inquiry* 2(3), 273-283.

Reason, P. (2005). 'Living as part of the whole: The implications of participation', *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* 2(2), 35-41.

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (eds). (2001). *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. London: Sage.

Reps, P. (1957). *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings.* Rutland VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co.

Ricard, M. (2003). *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*, Paris: Little, Brown and Company.

Ricoeur, P. (1970/1965). *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation.* trans. D. Savage. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1992/1990). *Oneself as Another.* trans. K. Blamey. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ridley, M. (1996). *The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Penguin Books.

Rilke, R. M. (1995). 'Ah, Not to be Cut Off', from *Ahead of All Parting: The Selected Poetry and Prose of Rainer Maria Rilke*. trans. S. Mitchell. New York: Modern Library.

Robinson, H. (1998). 'Materialism in the philosophy of mind', Edward Craig (ed.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* New York: Routledge.

Roof, W. C. (1999). *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion.* Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Roos, J. P. & Rotkirch, A. (2004). 'Habitus, nature or nurture? Towards a paradigm of evolutionary sociology', in J. Monreal, C. Diaz & J. J. Garcia Escribano (eds). *Viejas Sociedades, nueva Sociologia*. Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas, Madrid, 87-100.

Rorty, R. (1979). *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rorty, R. (1989). *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rorty, R. (1991). *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical papers Vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2001). 'On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being', *Annual Review of Psychology* 52, 141-166.

Samuels, J. (1999). 'Views of householders and lay disciples in the Sutta Pitaka: A reconsideration of the lay/monastic opposition', *Religion* 29, 231–241.

Samuelson, P. A. & Nordhaus, W. D. (2004). *Macroeconomics.* 18th edn. New York: McGraw-Hill College.

Samuelson, P.A. Hancock, K. & Wallace, R. (1973). *Economics.* 2nd Australian edn. Sydney: McGraw-Hill.

Sayadaw, Mahasi (2002). *Mahasi Abroad (Second Series).* Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation.

Schore, A. N. (2001) 'The effects of early relational trauma on right brain development, affect regulation, and infant mental health', *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 22, 201-269.

Schumacher, E. F. (1968). 'Buddhist economics', *Resurgence* 1(11); reprinted in Herman Daly (ed.) (1973). *Toward a Steady State Economy*, U.S.A.: Freeman and Co., 231-239.

Schumacher, E. F. (1973). *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered.* London: Abacus.

Schumacher, E. F. (1977). *A Guide for the Perplexed.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Schumacher, E. F., Robertson, J. & Hawken, P. (1999). *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as If People Mattered: 25 Years Later.* Point Roberts, WA: Hartley & Marks Publishers.

Schuon, F. (1990). *The Feathered Sun: Plain Indians in Art & Philosophy.* World Wisdom Books.

Scott, D. (1995). 'Buddhist functionalism – instrumentality reaffirmed', *Asian Philosophy* 5(2), 127-149.

Scott, J. W. (1991). 'The evidence of experience,' *Critical Inquiry* 17, 773-797.

Scrivener, M. (2004). 'Inside and outside Romanticism', *Criticism* 46(1), 151-165.

Sekida, K. (1977). *Two Zen Classics: Mumonkan and Hekiganroku, with Commentaries.* New York: Weatherhill.

Sen, A. K. (1987). *On Ethics and Economics.* London: Basil Blackwell.

Sen, A. K. (1999). *Development as Freedom.* New York: Knopf.

Senauke, A. (1998) 'Relinquishment & renunciation: Opening the hand of thought', edited from a Dharma talk given at Berkeley Zen Center, Berkeley, California, May 1998, www.bpf.org/tsangha/senaukerenun.html (accessed February 2002).

Sessions, G. (1991). 'Ecocentrism and the anthropocentric detour', *ReVision* 13(3), 109-116.

Shapiro, D. H. & Walsh, R. N. (1984). *Meditation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives.* New York: Aldine.

Sharf, R. H. (1994). 'Whose Zen? Zen nationalism revisited', in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism.* Edited by J. W. Heisig, & J. C. Maraldo. Nanzan Studies in Religion and Culture. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 40-51.

Sharf, R. H. (1995a). 'Buddhist modernism and the rhetoric of meditative experience', *Numen* 42(3), 228-283.

Sharf, R. H. (1995b). 'Sanbõkyõdan: Zen and the way of the new religions', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22(3-4), 417-458.

Sharf, R. H. (1998). 'Experience', in M. C. Taylor (ed.) *Critical Terms for Religious Studies.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 94-116.

Sharf, R. H. (2000). 'The rhetoric of experience and the study of religion', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7(11/12), 252-79.

Shear, J. (2000). 'Experimental studies in meditation', in J. Pace, D. Parsons & W. B. Parsons (eds.). *Religion and Psychology: Mapping the Terrain.* London: Routledge, 280-296.

Sherrard, P. (1987). *The Eclipse of Man and Nature: An Enquiry into the Origins and Consequences of Modern Science.* West Stockbridge: Lindisfarne Press.

Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text, and Interaction.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Sim, S. (2000). *Post-Marxism: An Intellectual History*. New York: Routledge.

Simondon, G. (1992). 'The genesis of the individual,' trans. M. Cohen & S. Kwinter, in J. Crary & S. Kwinter (eds). *Incorporations: Zone 6*. New York: Zone Books, 297-319.

Sivaraksa, S. (ed.). (1990). *Radical Conservatism: Buddhism in the Contemporary World.* Bangkok: The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation.

Sivaraksa, S. (1992). *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society.* Berkeley: Parallax Press.

Skolimowski, H. (1992). *Living Philosophy: Eco-philosophy as a Tree of Life.* London: Arkana.

Smart, N. (1993). *Buddhism and Christianity: Rivals and Allies.* Macmillan: London.

Smircich, L. (1983). 'Concepts of culture and organizational analysis', *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28(3), 339-58.

Smith, A. (2002/1759). *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Smith, A. (2000/1776). *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. East Rutherford, NJ: Viking Penguin.

Smith, B. L. (1968). 'Toward a Buddhist anthropology: The problem of the secular', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 36(3), 203-216.

Snow, C. P. (1959). *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. Cambridge University Press.

Sokal, A. & Bricmont, J. (1998). *Fashionable Nonsense Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*. New York: Picador USA.

Sokal, A. (1997) *Professor Latour's Philosophical Mystifications* www.physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/le_monde_english.html (accessed December 2005).

Spiegel, H. W. (1991). *The Growth of Economic Thought*, 3rd edn. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Spiro, M. E. (1966). 'Buddhism and economic action in Burma', *American Anthropologist* 68, 1163-73.

Spiro, M. E. (1970). *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*, New York: Harper & Row.

Spretnak, C. (1991). *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Post-modern Age.* San Francisco: Harper.

Spretnak, C. (1995). 'Embodied, embedded philosophy', *Open Eye*, *California Institute for Integral Studies* 12(1), 4-5.

Spretnak, C. (1999). *Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypermodern World.* New York: Routledge.

Sternberg, R. J. (1986). 'A triangular theory of love', *Psychological Review* 93, 119-135.

Stemberg, R. J. (1997). 'Construct validation of a triangular love scale', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 27(3), 313-335.

Sumedho, Ajahn (1981). Interview by Roger Wheeler at Centre for Higher Tibetan Studies: Switzerland www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism/sumedho/s0004interview.html (accessed May 2005).

Suzuki, D. T. (1962). *The Essentials of Zen Buddhism: Selected from the Writings of D. T. Suzuki*. B. Phillips (ed.) with Introduction, New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

Suzuki, D. T. (1970). 'Lectures on Zen Buddhism: East and West', in E. Fromm, D. T. Suzuki & R. De Martino (eds). *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Harper and Row, 1-6.

Suzuki, S. (1970). *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*. New York: Weatherhill.

Swatos, W. H., Jr. & Christiano, K. J. (1999). 'Secularization theory: The course of a concept', *Sociology of Religion* 60, 209-28.

Swearer, D. K. (1997). 'The worldliness of Buddhism (ancient religion)', *The Wilson Quarterly* 21(2), 81-93.

Tanahashi, K. (ed.) (1985). *Moon in a Dewdrop – Writings of Zen Master Dogen*, San Francisco, CA.: North Point Press.

Tarrant, J. (1998). *The Light Inside the Dark: Zen, Soul, and the Spiritual Life.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Taylor C. (1991). *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press (also published as *Malaises of Modernity*).

Taylor, M. C. (1997). *Hiding.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff) (1996). *The Wings of Awakening: An Anthology from the Pali Canon.* Free book. Barre, MA: Dhamma Dana Publications.

Thanissaro, Bhikkhu (1993). 'The Not-Self Strategy', www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/modern/thanissaro/notself.html, 1–8. (accessed 18 May 2005).

Thomas, V. N. (1997). *Pain: Its Nature and Management.* London: Bailliere Tindall.

Thompson, E. (1999). 'Human consciousness: From intersubjectivity to interbeing', Proposal to the Fetzer Institute, available at www.consciousness.arizona.edu/pcs/pcsfetz1.html (accessed September 2000).

Thompson, E. (2001). 'Empathy and consciousness', in E. Thompson (ed.). *Between Ourselves: Second-Person Issues in the Study of Consciousness.* Thorverton: Imprint Academic, 1-32. Also in *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8(5-7), 1-32.

Thompson, E. (2006) 'On the epistemic priority of science', *The Oxford Handbook of Science and Religion*, Oxford University Press.

Thompson, H. (1997). 'Ignorance and ideological hegemony: A critique of neoclassical economics', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics*, 8(4), 291-305.

Titmuss, R. M. (1971). *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*, New York: Pantheon Books.

Tokuriki, T. (1957). 'The Oxherding illustrations', in P. Reps, Nyogen Senzaki, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones.* Boston: Charles E Tuttle Co.

Tsong Khapa, Dalai Lama & Hopkins, J. (1987). *Tantra in Tibet*, New York: Snow Lion Publications.

Tucker, M. E. & Ryuken Williams, D. (eds). (1997). *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnectedness of Dharma and Deeds.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Uchiyama, K. (2004). *Opening the Hand of Thought: Foundations of Zen Buddhist Practice*, Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Udehn, L. (2002). 'The changing face of methodological individualism', *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, 479-507.

van Boven, L. (2005). 'Experientialism, materialism, and the pursuit of happiness', *Review of General Psychology* 9(2), 132–142.

van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching Lived Experience*, 2nd edition. The Althouse Press.

van Manen, M. (2002). 'Writing in the dark', in M. van Manen (ed.). *Writing in the Dark: Phenomenological Studies in Interpretive Inquiry*, London, Ontario, Canada: The Althouse Press, 1-9.

Vance, C. S. (1991). 'Anthropology rediscovers sexuality: A theoretical comment', *Sociological and Scientific Medicine* 33, 875-884.

Vanwesenbeeck, I. (1994). *Prostitutes' Well-Being and Risk.* Amsterdam: VU University Press.

Varela, F. J. (1996). 'The emergent self', in *The Third Culture: Beyond the Scientific Revolution* by John Brockman. NY: Simon & Schuster.

Varela, F. J. (1999). *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom, and Cognition.* trans. L. Gius & R. B Figli. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Varela, F. J. (2000). 'Steps to a science of interbeing: Unfolding the dharma implicit in modern cognitive science', in G. Watson, S. Batchelor, & G. Claxton (eds.). (2000). *The Psychology of Awakening: Buddhism, Science and Our Day-to-Day Lives*. London: Rider.

Varela, F.J. & Shear, J. (1999). *The View from Within: First-Person Approaches to the Study of Consciousness.* Thorverton, UK: Imprint Academic.

Varela, F. J., Thompson, E. & Rosch, E. (1991). *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience.* Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press.

Veblen, T. (1898). 'Why is economics not an evolutionary science', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 12(4), 373-397 (accessed July 2003), www.angelfire.com/indie/nehu_economics/veblen_whyis.htm.

Velez de Cea, A. (2005) "Emptiness in the Påli Suttas and the Question of Någårjuna's Orthodoxy," *Philosophy East and West* 55(4): 507-528.

Velmans, M. (ed.). (2000). *Investigating Phenomenal Consciousness: New Methodologies and Maps*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Velmans, M. (2000). 'An introduction to investigating phenomenal consciousness', in M. Velmans (ed.). *Investigating Phenomenal Consciousness: New Methodologies and Maps*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company. http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utslibrary/Doc?id=5000245& g=1-18.

Vermersch, P. (1999). 'Introspection as practice', in F. J. Varela & J. Shear (eds). *The View from Within: First-Person Approaches to the Study of Consciousness*. Thorverton, UK: Imprint Academic.

Victoria, B. (1997). *Zen at War*. New York & Tokyo: Weatherhill.

Wallace B. A. (1999). 'Three dimensions of Buddhist studies', in J. Makransky & R. Jackson (eds). *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections of Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*. London: Curzon Press, 61-77.

Wallace, B. A. (2002). 'A science of consciousness: Buddhism (1), the Modern West (0)', *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, Third Series, 4, 15-31.

Wallace, B. A. (2003). 'Introduction: Buddhism and science – Breaking down the barriers', in B. A. Wallace (ed.). *Buddhism and Science: Breaking New Ground.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Walsh, R. & Vaughan, F. (1993). 'The art of transcendence: An introduction to common elements of transpersonal practices', *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 25, 1–9.

Watson, B. (1997). trans. *The Vimalakirti Sutra.* Columbia University Press.

Watson, J. B. (1928). 'Behaviorism – the modern note in psychology', in J. B. Watson & W. McDougall (eds). *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist.* London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 7-41, http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Watson/Battle/watson.htm (accessed March 2004).

Watson, G., Batchelor, S. & Claxton, G. (eds). (2000). *The Psychology of Awakening: Buddhism, Science and Our Day-to-Day Lives.* London: Rider.

Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J. & Fisch, R. (1974) *Change: Problem Formation and Problem Resolution*. NY: W. W. Norton.

Weber, M. (1958). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Weiser, J. & Zadek, S. (2000). *Conversations with Disbelievers: Persuading Companies to Address Social Challenges.* Ford Foundation.

Welwood, J. (2000). *Toward a Psychology of Awakening: Buddhism, Psychotherapy, and the Path of Personal and Spiritual Transformation.* Boston: Shambhala.

Wilson, T. D. (2003). 'Knowing when to ask: Introspection and the adaptive unconscious', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 10, 131-140.

White, M. D. (2003). 'Reconciling homo economicus and John Dewey's ethics', *Journal of Economic Methodology* 10:2, 223–243.

White, S. (2000). *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Whitehead, A. N. (1938). *Science and the Modern World.* Penguin: Harmondsworth Middlesex England.

Whitmeyer, C. (1994). 'Right view: Doing well by doing good', in C. Whitmeyer (ed.). *Mindfulness and Meaningful Work: Explorations in Right Livelihood*. Berkeley California: Parallax Press.

Whittington, R. (2004). 'Strategy after modernism: Recovering practice', *European Management Review* 1, 62–68.

Whorf, B. (1940). 'Science and linguistics', reprinted in *Language, Thought & Reality.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Wilber, K. (1997). 'The spectrum of consciousness: Integral psychology and the perennial philosophy', in *The Eye of Spirit*. Boston, MA: Shambhala, 37-50.

Wilber, K. (1998). 'The Great Chain of Being', from *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* in *The Essential Wilber: An Introductory Reader*, Shambhala Publications, Boston, 17-21.

Williams, P. & Tribe, A. (2000). *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition.* London: Routledge.

Williamson, O. E. (1975). *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Antitrust Implications.* New York: Free Press.

Williamson, O. E. (1985). *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism: Firms, Markets, Relational Contracting.* New York: Free Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (2001/1922). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus.* trans. C. K. Ogden with an introduction by Bertrand Russell [electronic resource] London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Wittgenstein, L. (2002/1953). *Philosophical Investigations*, both trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Blackwell Publishers.

Woolger, R. (1987). *Other Lives, Other Selves: A Jungian Psychotherapist Discovers Past Lives*. New York: Doubleday.

Wright, D. S. (1992). 'Rethinking transcendence: The role of language in Zen experience', *Philosophy East & West* 42(1), 113-138.

Wright, D. S. (1998). *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, P. (1999). 'Inside the firm: Socioeconomic versus agency perspectives on firm competitiveness', *Journal of Socio-Economics* 28(3), 295-308.

Yamada, K. (1979). 'Case 19', *Gateless Gate*: *The Classic Book of Zen Koans*, translated with commentary by Koun Yamada. Los Angeles: Zen Center Publications.

Yamane, D. (2000). 'Narrative and religious experience', *Sociology of Religion* 61, 171–189.

Yarnall, T. F. (2000). 'Engaged Buddhism: New and improved!(?). Made in the U. S. A. of Asian Materials', *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 7, http://jbe.gold.ac.uk/7/yarnall001.html (accessed 11 May 2005).

Yeshe, Lama T. (1987). *Introduction to Tantra: A Vision of Totality*, J. Landaw (ed.). London: Wisdom Publications.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Zadek, S. (1993). 'The practice of Buddhist economics? Another view', *American Journal of Economics & Sociology*, 52(4), 433-445.

Zadek, S. (1995) 'Towards a Progressive Buddhist Economics', Discussion paper presented at The Dhammic Society conference held in February 1995 in Thailand.

Zadek, S. (1997) 'Towards a progressive Buddhist economics', in J. Watts et al. (eds). *Entering the Realm of Reality: Towards Dhammic Societies*, Bangkok: International Network of Engaged Buddhists, 241-277.

Zadek, S. (2001). *The Civil Corporation: The New Economy of Corporate Citizenship.* London: Earthscan Publications.

Zadek, S. & Szabo, S. (1994). *Valuing Organisations: The Case of Sarvodaya*, London: New Economics Foundation.

Zafirovski, M. (2003). 'Human rational behavior and economic rationality', *Electronic Journal of Sociology* 7(2), www.sociology.org/content/vol7.2/02_zafirovski.html (assessed January 2006).

Zahavi, D. (2001). 'Beyond empathy: Phenomenological approaches to intersubjectivity', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8(5-7), 151-67.

Zahavi D. (2005). 'Being someone', *Psyche* 11(5), 1-20.

Žižek, S. (1989). *The Sublime Object of Ideology.* London: Verso.

Žižek, S. (1997). *The Abyss of Freedom*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

APPENDIX 1

In the Waiting Room
by Elizabeth Bishop

In Worcester, Massachusetts,
I went with Aunt Consuelo
to keep her dentist's appointment
and sat and waited for her
in the dentist's waiting room.
It was winter. It got dark
early. The waiting room
was full of grown-up people,
arctics and overcoats,
lamps and magazines.
My aunt was inside
what seemed like a long time
and while I waited I read
the *National Geographic*
(I could read) and carefully
studied the photographs:
the inside of a volcano,
black, and full of ashes;
then it was spilling over
in rivulets of fire.
Osa and Martin Johnson
dressed in riding breeches,
laced boots, and pith helmets.
A dead man slung on a pole
--'Long Pig,' the caption said.
Babies with pointed heads
wound round and round with string;
black, naked women with necks
wound round and round with wire
like the necks of light bulbs.
Their breasts were horrifying.
I read it right straight through.
I was too shy to stop.
And then I looked at the cover:
the yellow margins, the date.
Suddenly, from inside,
came an *oh!* of pain
--Aunt Consuelo's voice--
not very loud or long.
I wasn't at all surprised;
even then I knew she was
a foolish, timid woman.
I might have been embarrassed,
but wasn't. What took me
completely by surprise
was that it was *me*:
my voice, in my mouth.
Without thinking at all
I was my foolish aunt,
I--we--were falling, falling,
our eyes glued to the cover
of the *National Geographic*,
February, 1918.

I said to myself: three days
and you'll be seven years old.
I was saying it to stop
the sensation of falling off
the round, turning world.
into cold, blue-black space.
But I felt: you are an *I*,
you are an *Elizabeth*,
you are one of *them*.
Why should you be one, too?
I scarcely dared to look
to see what it was I was.
I gave a sidelong glance
--I couldn't look any higher--
at shadowy gray knees,
trousers and skirts and boots
and different pairs of hands
lying under the lamps.
I knew that nothing stranger
had ever happened, that nothing
stranger could ever happen.

Why should I be my aunt,
or me, or anyone?
What similarities--
boots, hands, the family voice
I felt in my throat, or even
the *National Geographic*
and those awful hanging breasts--
held us all together
or made us all just one?
How--I didn't know any
word for it--how 'unlikely' …
How had I come to be here,
like them, and overhear
a cry of pain that could have
got loud and worse but hadn't?

The waiting room was bright
and too hot. It was sliding
beneath a big black wave,
another, and another.

Then I was back in it.
The War was on. Outside,
in Worcester, Massachusetts,
were night and slush and cold,
and it was still the fifth of February, 1918.