

CHAPTER TWO

DIMENSIONS AND ESSENCE OF MEDITATION

This chapter undertakes an inquiry into the psychological processes involved in meditation and comprises a topography or geometry of consciousness. I will approach the matter by tracing the evolution of my theoretical view.

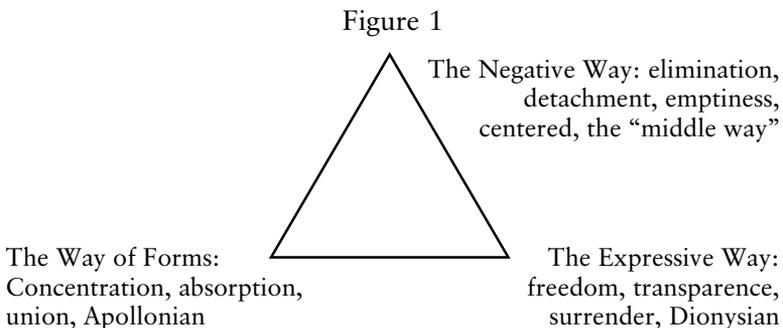
When Joe Kamiya (widely known today for his pioneering research on brain-wave control through biofeedback) invited me in the mid-sixties to give a talk on the psychology of meditation at the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute, I inspected what books on the subject I could find in print and was impressed with the variety of definitions and forms of meditation that were proposed in them. Some spoke of meditation as a focusing of the mind *on* something—a concept, passage of scripture, or, more generally, “an object”; others insisted on meditation being anything *but* that: meditation must *not* have an object.

The differences in definition could be multiplied, and it seemed that before one might propose a more encompassing one, one would first of all need to stand before the whole meditation domain.

I didn't deem it reasonable to restrict the term *meditation* to a specific region of the total field; there were enough points of similarity between different forms of meditation to conceive of

them as near or distant points in a single domain; it was clear that one could speak of *provinces* or *kinds* of meditation, and also *aspects* of meditation underlying the different forms. In an attempt to organize the field of meditation in view of the predominance of one or another among such underlying experiences, I then proposed the tri-polar graph, which I later elaborated upon in 1970 when Dr. Ornstein invited me to co-author the now well known book on the subject.

In my part of *On the Psychology of Meditation*,¹ I established a distinction between the kind of meditation which I then called a “negative way” (epitomized in the well-known Sanskrit dictum *neti neti*, “not this, not that”), involving a gesture of dis-identifying with the contents of the mind, and two other contrasting groups and styles of meditation. The first of these I called “concentrative meditation,” for in it the practitioner disciplines his mind by focusing on a chosen object or content; the contrasting style characterized as a sort of “discipline of undiscipline”—a “discipline of surrender”—in which the main issue is that of letting the mind go its spontaneous course. To characterize the “antipodes” of concentrative meditation and meditation consisting in surrender or letting-go, I proposed the labels “Apollonian” and “Dionysian.”



I continue to feel that these concepts apply to the realm of spiritual endeavor even more appropriately than to styles of art and of culture (for which they were proposed by Nietzsche), yet

the theoretical model I suggested failed to influence current thinking on the matter. In spite of the book's market success, it seems to me that the transpersonal specialists have not deemed my proposition weighty enough to supplant the traditional classification of meditation within the Buddhist tradition, which emphasizes the distinction between *two* kinds of practice: *shamatha*, which consists of the calming of the mind; and *vipassana*, which consists of looking keenly at the state and content of the mind moment after moment.

Yet there are practices outside Buddhism—ranging from shamanic trance to kundalini yoga—in which surrender of control is the most prominent feature, and it can be argued that even though mind-calming and mindfulness are the *outspoken* goals of most Buddhist meditation, there is also in Buddhism, as a background to both *shamatha* and *vipassana*, an important component of surrender. In the Zen tradition there is a great emphasis for instance on spontaneity as well as on the expression of the meditative state in art and life. In Zazen itself the meditation process is an invitation not only to a quieting of the mind but to a *non-obstructed* state. Furthermore, in all Buddhist schools an attitude of letting go is invoked by the practice of refuge, in which the meditator *surrenders* to the *Buddha*, the *Dharma*, and the *Sangha* (concepts approximately equivalent to the Christian ones of the “divine within,” God’s will and the Communion of Saints). Of course letting-go is well known to practitioners and instructors in various non-expressive techniques ranging from *anapanasati* to Taoist meditation—for the practice of doing nothing evokes many spontaneous experiences that constitute the perceptual or physical consequences of control relinquishment. Just as in the Taoist tradition the cultivation of an understanding of the Tao in its emptiness runs parallel to the cultivation of alignment with the Tao as natural flow (both in outer movement and in the inner movement of *chi*) so, too, in the Buddhist tantric traditions, realization is described both in terms of wisdom and in terms of a subtle *pranic* body.

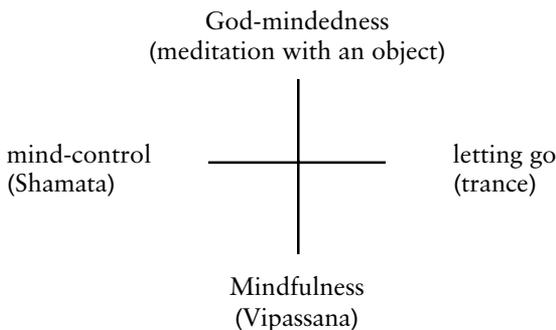
The fact that freedom and spontaneity are not regarded the mark of a distinct category of meditation in Buddhism is inspired, I think, by an implicit pedagogy: a teaching strategy of steering away from the attempt of pursuing spontaneity deliberately, and from the temptation of letting an interest in meditation distract the practitioner from the cultivation of non-attachment, in which the practitioner is invited to focus his attention in such a way that spontaneity remains as spontaneous as possible.

Yet in time I, too, became dissatisfied with my early tri-polar model of the meditation domain; not because I had ceased to regard the surrender of control an independent component of meditation (particularly striking in certain forms appropriately designated as expressive meditation), but because the tri-polar model failed to distinguish properly between the practice of mindfulness and that of meditation on a fixed object.

Thus, I eventually changed my meditation map into one both triadic and bi-polar, in which the simple polarity of “Apollonian vs. Dionysian” became articulated into a set of three independent active/passive continua or “dimensions.”

At first—before I arrived at a sixfold view of the meditation realm in terms of three yin/yang dimensions—I shifted from my initial tri-polar map in *On the Psychology of Meditation* to a two-dimensional fourfold view as in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2



According to the updated model, four aspects of meditation were understood as the expression of two bi-polar continua, each spanning a specific complementarity.

The mind-calming practices of Buddhist *shamata* or Patanjali's *raja yoga*, which are geared to stopping the mind, are in this scheme contrasted to experiences such as inwardly guided shamanic trance, spiritual inspiration (or prophetic as known by the Western mystical tradition), or the *pranic* phenomena of tantrism. To emphasize the nature of the underlying polarity, I have spoken of a "stop-go" dimension of meditation.

Both in the (active) case of mind-control as in that of (passive) surrender to the deeper spontaneity of the mind, it is a matter of action: non-doing no less than non-interference can be said to span a conative dimension of the mind and meditation.

The second dimension in Figure 2 is, by contrast, cognitive—for the alternatives it spans involve a contrasting focus of attention.

Awareness may be turned to the particulars of immediate experience (whether it be the experience of the body or, more broadly, sensory experience, feeling experience, or the thinking process)—to the phenomenal, at the surface of the mind. To designate such attention to the particulars of experience I use the word "mindfulness." Alternatively, attention may be turned to the sense of sacredness, which, in turn, is invoked through its holy names and many faces—i.e., symbolic allusions to the ground of consciousness.

Just as there is a practice of mindfulness, then, there is a practice of God-mindedness or evocation of sacredness, in which concentrated attention is focused on the abstract or imaginal realm as a way to absorption in a simple or complex meditation object.

It is easy to see that in either instance—that of the stop/go dimension of meditation as well as in that of inwardly vs. outwardly directed attention—it is not a question of a simple opposition, but of a complementarity of active/passive alternatives.

Thus for centuries mindfulness has been cultivated as an approach to transcendence; and, conversely, many of those who have been touched by the experience of transcendence have, in time, ripened to an integration between transcendental awareness and ordinariness in the here and now. Likewise, stillness and flow constitute a complementarity and not merely an opposition, for despite the existence of characteristic states (such as were recognized by Roland Fischer in his physiological distinction of enstatic and ecstatic domains), there is also a mental state characterized at the *same time* by mental flow and an inner permeability or openness. This is indicated in the Zen metaphor of the empty sky that allows movement of birds or clouds; a condition in which the meditator becomes aware of a stable, ever silent and undifferentiated core of mind, that is neither disturbed nor obscured by the flow of thoughts and other mental events—from which, *precisely* in view of the non-obstructedness (of the mental condition), proceeds a maximum of creative freedom and organic appropriateness.

We may think of these four processes or tasks that the meditator can embark upon as four internal gestures, and of the *process* of meditation as consisting in different proportions of not-doing, letting-go, paying attention, and evoking (or invoking) sacredness. Some techniques have a predominantly calming effect; others partake more of the invocational or worship quality; others may lie halfway between surrender and the concentrative effort.

The domain of kundalini yoga, for instance, can be seen as a combination of mindfulness and God-mindedness: meditation on the *chakras* (body centers) involves mindfulness, for attention is focused on parts of the body that are not ordinarily in the foreground of awareness but in the background of experience (for we are mostly aware of the surface of our bodies, and such meditation invites us to focus on the somewhat forgotten center or axis of the body). Yet along with this mindfulness component there is also in the tantric traditions a deliberate invocation of

divine attributes; and different aspects of sacredness are superimposed on the *chakras*, while these, in turn, are evoked through visualization of colors and symbolic geometrical patterns, and, with the support of mantra and the invocation of deities, with specific mythic and visual characteristics.

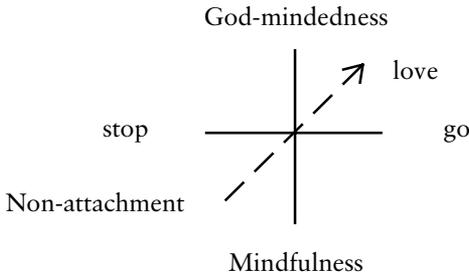
When at the request of Dr. John R. Staude and the *Consciousness and Culture* magazine² I presented the fourfold map of meditation that I have just outlined, I did not include in that analysis the cultivation of love as a form of meditation, and that omission introduced a rather questionable boundary between devotional practices and the rest of the meditation domain—particularly since surrender and God-mindedness, which are hardly separable from devotion in the life of prayer, *are* included. For those who prefer to exclude devotionalism from the sphere of meditation proper, the more extended map that I am now proposing could be more appropriately called a map of *spiritual exercises* rather than “meditation.” Whatever the case—dimensions of meditation or, more generally, of spiritual practice—I have in recent years chosen to include devotionalism in my topography of consciousness—in its diverse cultural forms, including the cultivation of compassion and *guru bhakti*.

As I proposed at the 1981 APA (American Psychological Association) meeting in San Francisco and at the Bombay meeting of the International Transpersonal Association in 1982, a survey of this enlarged realm makes it clear that meditation in a broad sense of the word needs to be explained in reference to more than the conative axis (of not-doing/surrender) and the cognitive axis (of attention to sensory perception/inner representations) but also an *affective* axis, not only in view of the dominant characteristics of the paths of austere sacrificial detachment and of devotion, but also in reference to qualities intrinsic to full-blown meditative realization.

I formulated this affective axis (represented in Figure 3 as perpendicular to the page) as one spanning the polarity of loving and detachment, and it is easy to see that here again the yin/yang

opposition involves a complementarity; for just as bountiful love flows from non-attachment, non-attachment is kindled by love.

Figure 3



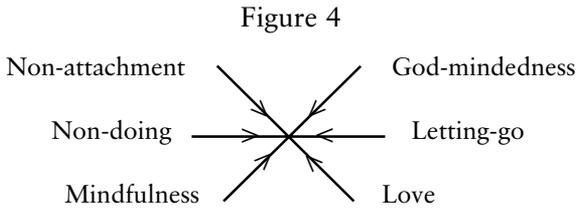
By non-attachment I mean the power of renunciation and sacrifice grounded in a “cosmic indifference” or transcendent neutrality. Such non-attachment does not involve a lack of energy or emotion, but a disidentification from the emotional realm and an “extinction” of the passions.

Love, on the other hand, is the end point of a transformation of “*samsaric*” or degraded passional energies—a returning of psychological energy from the condition of deficiency motivation to that of abundance motivation, from its obscured to its primal and natural condition.

Just as, according to the old Indian Cosmogonic myth, Indra thrust his *vajra* in the great dragon *Vritra* and caused all the waters that he held in his body to fall in the form of rain to form the oceans and rivers that sustain life in our world, so the enlightening power of meditative activity may be said to put an end to a holding-on gesture of the mind that constitutes both a degraded derivative of love and, in its reaching for it, prevents its recognition and expression.

We may view these six mental processes that I have enumerated (and corresponding states) as facets of meditation or components of the meditation process; yet to speak of “facets” or

“components” implies that they are different aspects of a single underlying process.



The convergent arrows in Figure 4 convey the idea of the meditation components as different avenues to a single process of ego-suspension or temporary ego-dissolution.

Thus non-doing, to the extent that it brings everything to a stop in the psyche, is a natural remedy for anything that may be going wrong; whatever the dynamics, whatever our habits, emotions, and thoughts—if we only manage to stop whatever we are doing that is dysfunctional, we are momentarily healthy. So the calming helps us, regardless of the kind of compulsive behavior that permeates our psyche, and we may say that the attempt to quiet the inertia of ongoing mental agitation is like a grinding against the ego.

Letting-go also works like an ego-antidote. From one point of view, the ego is like an usurper that has taken control of the psyche, so that in place of the healthy and desirable situation of control of (the whole) body/mind complex by the whole, there has arisen a control of the whole by a part: an island within the psyche that pretends to be the whole and *calls* itself “I,” which creates an implicit inner tyranny.

In connection with letting-go of “insular” control, it is pertinent to bring in the biological concept of organismic self-regulation, which became widespread through Fritz Perls and Gestalt therapy and constitutes a modern echo of the old idea of Tao. Just as in Tao and Tê there is the notion that by yielding to an inner spontaneity the individual acts in harmony with the world, Perls

introduced the notion that when organismic self-regulation is allowed to operate, a deeper coherence and wisdom of the mind may come into play healing the neurotic complications of egoic “control madness.” We may say that we are designed in such a way that, if we function properly, we find ourselves in harmony with something beyond us—whereas, if this regulation of the whole by the whole is inhibited, we lack the fluidity and complexity that are within our potential and must make decisions through the operation of conceptual thinking and deficiency motivation alone.

Another aspect of the ego is unconsciousness—an *active* unconsciousness. If a part regulates the whole, it must do so at the expense of repression; it must block awareness and interfere with impulse. To keep something from expression, it has to ignore it. Through unconsciousness the personality is fragmented and comes to see itself as separated from the whole. “Ordinary consciousness” involves such a lowering of awareness that we don’t even have a complete and integrated body-sense, to say nothing of emotional awareness and direct knowledge of our thinking experience. And so we can say that mindfulness—awareness—is an antidote for this active unconsciousness; in restoring awareness and cultivating contact with immediate experience, the psychological inertia of the ego is counteracted.

Something similar can be said about God-mindedness, concentration on the holy or creative imagination. It is also an antidote to the ego because in the functioning of the ego there is not only a veiling over of perception and a fragmentation, but a loss of *meaning*, a loss of *value*. Dante expressed this in the *Divine Comedy* by making hell—the realm of greater emotional sickness—inaccessible to angels. (Angels, in the *Commedia*, move about in heaven and purgatory but, with a single exception, they don’t come into hell.) I think this is a good metaphor for the fact that in the mechanical mind of the ego, which is like a puppet, a computer, or a life-simulation, there is no place for the mystery of existence.

The ego might be called a false-self. It is something that calls itself “self” and, precisely because it is not the fullness of our being, it contains, more or less veiled, the experience of a lack of being and also a *thirst* for being. The ego has *apparent* being, is an apparent personality, but to the extent we “are” our ego, we are only *trying* to be, *wanting* to be. We would like to be more alive, we would like to be full, and it is this thirst for being that moves us to do most of what we do. From this thirst for being and the corresponding threat of non-being comes the craving, the anger, the need always to keep things out. We might say that the blood that runs in the veins of the ego is this craving, this thirst; while the “blood of being”—of the “soul,” the “true self,” the “essence” or the enlightened condition—is abundance, which is to say love. If we consider that love with its sense of abundance and overflowing, is a part of both health and enlightenment, we may understand the activation of love as one more path to ego-transcendence.

And the same may be said of non-attachment: it is, like the other ingredients of meditative disciplines, a method for the suspension of the ego, for the ego, rooted in craving, can only practice non-attachment by getting out of the way—i.e. through self-inhibition.

But if we may conceive of the six alternate gestures of meditation as ways to the undoing of the ego, we may also view them as paths to the realization of Being. For the extinction of the “lower mind” and the realization of the “greater mind,” the dissipation of illusion and the cognition of transcendent truth are complementary aspects of meditation’s goal: nirvana (the suspension of “samsaric” consciousness and the passions) being complementary to enlightenment (*sambodhi* or awakening) or, in the language of Sufism, *fana* (annihilation), the door to *baqa* (permanence).

Thus far I have been speaking of the three dimensions of meditation as if they were completely independent of each other—as the three dimensions of space, appropriately repre-

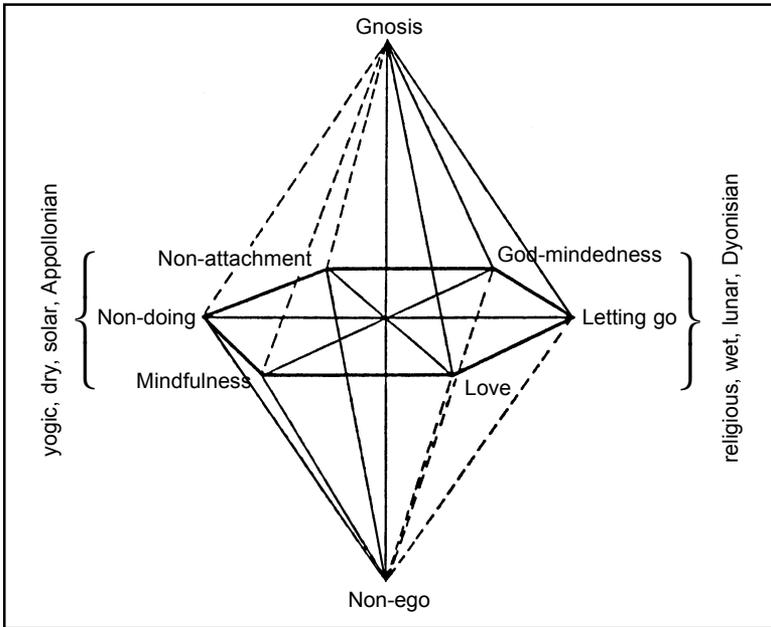
sented by the orthogonal coordinates of analytic geometry. This is only an approximation, however, for the different gestures of the mind under discussion are not completely independent from one another. We cannot, for instance, completely separate awareness from inner calm, or calm from detachment.

Without elaborating on the different connections between the six meditation components among themselves, let me only say that there is a special affinity between the practices of non-doing, mindfulness, and non-attachment; and there is, likewise, a relationship between their opposite poles: letting-go, God-mindedness, and love. We may speak, in the case of the former three, of a “yogic complex”—for these are the attitudes most characteristic of Indian and Buddhist yoga (and, generally speaking, of far Eastern spirituality); while in the case of the other three we may recognize the “religious complex”—that is, the constellation of practices characteristic of religion in the Western sense—shared by Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and also by Indian devotionalism.

These two predominant orientations in spiritual practice—the Apollonian and the Dionysian—sometimes called the “dry” and the “wet” ways, or the “solar” and “lunar” paths—are not incompatible, however, as is historically demonstrated by the combination of both in the early Western mysteries, in the Middle-Eastern tradition of the “masters of wisdom,” in Indian tantrism, and by the considerable elaboration of both in Tibetan Buddhism.

In Figure 5 is shown the interdependence of non-ego and spiritual cognition or awakening, and the way in which each of the six basic exercises contribute to both. In it I have emphasized with dark lines (as distinct from dotted) how in the yogic path the process of ego-suspension is emphasized, while the religious path emphasizes the unveiling of higher being. As remarked elsewhere³ the situation is like the one pointed out by Kurt Lewin decades ago in his film of a young child who, after repeated frustration, discovers that, in order to sit, he must turn his back to the chair.

Figure 5



From the point of view of the preceding analysis, my inquiry as to the nature of meditation has been answered with the identification of six meditation paths to ego-suspension and ultimate transcendental knowledge: the invocation of sacredness, awakens to the here and now, stilling of the mind through yogic control, surrendering the mind to its natural spontaneity, non-attachment and love.

Yet are not such exercises anything but a prelude to meditation proper? For, is not the pinnacle of the meditator's art (whether we choose to call it "meditation proper" or "non-meditation") a spontaneous condition transcending every form of spiritual exercise?

Conversely stated: the description of any manner of psychological exercise falls short of the expression of supreme consciousness. Supreme consciousness and reality—what Plotinus called "the One"—is, rather, a nothingness of which nothing can

be said. In view of its being beyond characteristics and nameless, it is appropriate that we heed Wittgenstein's contention at the end of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: "of that which cannot be spoken, we must be silent." Yet if the One is unnameable, many spiritual traditions have talked about higher consciousness in the light of a triad or another—as in Sat-Chit-Ananda, in the Christian Trinity, the Buddhist Trikaya, and the three gunas of Samkya philosophy. In the present analysis of the aspects of meditation, we may ask: have we not missed a third alternative in each case where a yin/yang opposition obtains? Is it not the case that the highest meditation not only involves a complementarity between the active and the passive alternatives of a given continuum, but that this coincidence of opposites is itself the expression of a reconciling neutrality?

In the following analysis I undertake to show that, indeed, each of the three realms that I have presented as a bi-polar continuum may be alternatively conceived as tri-polar, and that in each a neutral alternative may be found to the active and passive. If we call the former "Apollonian" and "Dionysian," it would be fitting to call this third "negative" (in the sense of "*neti-neti*") or neutral alternative, "Buddhist."

Let us reconsider, then, the inner/outer continuum of mindfulness/God-mindedness.

It is very true that we may direct attention to the particulars of sensory-motor experience or, alternatively, to inner objects such as divine attributes, mandalas or concepts (including self and emptiness) that serve as bridges to qualities of consciousness and sacredness. But is there not an alternative to these inner and outer objects? There is—in that consciousness can turn on itself; or, rather: *awareness can become cognizant of itself without becoming its own object.*

Though this approach to meditation surely finds its most refined expression in the Buddhist Ati-yoga tradition, it is as ancient as yoga and is the aim of practices in many schools,

including the contemplation experience of some Christian mystics and Ramana Maharshi's "Who am I?"

I quote, for instance, from Swami Muktananda's *I Am That* which purports to echo the teachings of the *Vijnanabhairava*. He begins by pointing out that man goes through great trouble to acquire knowledge of the material world but

Because he doesn't know the boundless happiness which lies inside his heart, he looks for satisfaction in mundane activities and pleasures.... The divine Principle which creates and sustain this world pulsates within us in the form of supremely blissful light.... Some philosophers say that the Self cannot be known. Yet, the Self is always being experienced, at every moment of our lives....

A sage wrote, "The Self, Shiva, is supremely pure and independent, and you can experience it constantly throbbing and pulsating within your mind."

It cannot be perceived by the senses because it makes the senses function. It cannot be perceived by the mind because it makes the mind think. Still, the Self can be known, and to know it one does not need the help of the mind or the senses.

According to Shaivism, the supreme Principle has two aspects, *prakasha* and *vimarsha*. With *prakasha* that Principle illuminates everything in the world, including itself. With *vimarsha*, that Principle gives knowledge about the things it illuminates, and also differentiates between them.... The Self which gives light to the inner and outer senses also illuminates itself.

One striking contribution of Buddhism to this recognition is the shift from self-talk to the no-self view, which in time became the *sunyata* or emptiness doctrine. Of course, "self" is still an entity and Buddhism, wanting to emphasize how the essence of meditation transcends every thing and every concept, deems inappropriate to it even the notions of Being or non-being. Instead of speaking of self-knowledge or knowledge of the self as Vedanta had done, Buddhism speaks of knowledge of "Mind" or of "Truth." While avoidance of the word "self" discourages grasping at anything at all, it cannot be doubted that the wisdom

of seeing into the “heart of mind” in Buddhism is not a different experience than that described by Patanjali in terms of realizing that the *purusha* transcends the psychic apparatus. We find confirmation in Padmasambhava’s *terma* (or hidden) text, *Self-Liberation through Seeing with Naked Awareness*,⁴ in which he explains:

Some call it “the nature of mind” or “mind itself.” Some Tirthikas call it by the name Atman or “the Self.” The Sravakas call it the doctrine of Anatman or “the absence of a self.” The Chittamatrins call it by the name Chitta or “the Mind.” Some call it the Prajnaparamita or “the Perfection of Wisdom.” Some call it the name Tathagatagarbha or “the embryo of Buddhahood.” Some call it by the name Mahamudra or “the Great Symbol.” Some call it by the name of “the Unique Sphere.” Some call it by the name Dharmadhatu or “the dimension of Reality.” Some call it by the name Alaya or “the basis of everything.” And some simply call it by the name “ordinary awareness.”

There is, then, a concentrated form of attention that focuses neither on inner nor outer objects: a diffuse attention that does not focus at all, but without fixating on anything is omnidirectionally available while it “tastes” its own presence. This is what Tibetan Buddhism calls *rigpa*, “intrinsic awareness”—and the most refined approaches to meditation—Mahamudra and Dzogchen—are concerned with its recognition. That its attainment transcends mental exercises was made clear by the Sixth Patriarch in his famous reply to a less enlightened monk to the effect that Zen practice is not so much a matter of dusting off the mind but a cognition of mind’s essence.

Now that our exploration of the cognitive axis of meditation has revealed that beyond the polarity of mindfulness/God-mindedness, attention may abide in itself, let us now consider another set of polar opposites in meditation and see whether here too we may discern a third term pointing to a deeper aspect of the mind, a common root or synthesis of both.

The stop/go or calm/surrender dimension of meditation reminds us that meditation is peace. Yet insofar as *shamata* is mind pacification through mind control, it falls short of peace, in which are conjoined non-agitation and non-obstruction—tranquility and life-flow.

We may say that deep meditative realization is one in which there is neither (concentrative) control of the mind nor control-relinquishment, and in which there is a coincidence of non-effort and the process of life. While in mind-pacification we are still dealing with an exercise in the inhibition of action and of thinking, which involves trying not to try, peace or ease of the mind might be characterized as *wu-wu-wei*: *not* (even) not doing.

As I reflect on alternative ways of describing the meeting point between mind-calming and letting-go—a third state that might be regarded their common background or synthesis—I think of expressions such as non-interference, naturalness, permeability, openness, spaciousness, emptiness.

And in the case of awareness-of-awareness, such non-trying stands in contrast to meditation exercises proper, as an aspect of meditation's goal: something to be discovered in the mind's natural condition rather than constructed or achieved.

If intrinsic awareness is the simplest aspect of mind's cognition, only that it is eclipsed by our habitual consciousness (as the stars that become invisible in the light of day), similarly non-interference or openness is not something that may be fabricated, but the simple expression of ego-dissolution. Indeed intrinsic awareness and emptiness constitute a polarity no different from that which we have already encountered in discussing the goal of meditation: gnosis and non-ego or awakening and annihilation.

Just as we discovered a third alternative to the orientation of cognition toward the sensate and toward the symbolic in intrinsic awareness, and as we found an alternative to both inhibition and disinhibition (or, excitement) in openness, can we find a third alternative to affective engagement/disengagement?

We may find it in a turning of valuation upon itself rather than toward outer objects: a condition of appreciation without an object comparable to awareness without an object, only that awareness is cognitiveness and appreciation is valuation.

The words “bliss” and “blessedness” have been traditionally used for the experience of such self-reflective love-without-object. And we may say that bliss or spiritual satisfaction is at the mid point between love and non-attachment: a source from which both non-attachment and love arise, and a condition to which both may be preparatory.

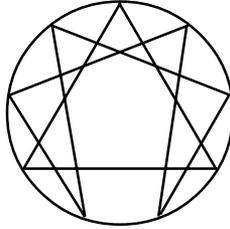
At this point in my analysis I wonder how many among my readers may have asked themselves whether I, who have been known for applications of the enneagram to psychology, have not been all along implicitly presenting an “enneagram of meditation”?

The truth is that I did not at the time of formulating the sixfold domain of meditation exercises and components (and corresponding states of consciousness), yet the appropriateness of the enneagram as a universal meditation map became apparent to me through a simple question of my wife, Suzy Stroke, after reading my statement on the “six gestures”: “Could these not fit in the enneagram?”

But before I say anything further on this matter I need to explain that the enneagram was introduced to the Western world by G. I. Gurdjieff,⁵ in whose treatment the symbol was a parallel to the musical scale and to the spelling out of the steps along what he called the “ray of creation.” According to Gurdjieff this cosmic map was said to have been originated in an ancient esoteric school as the mathematical symbol for the operation of two universal laws: the “law of three” and the “law of seven.” If one considers that in the figure of the enneagram (Figure 6), the nine points belong to two sets of six and three, respectively, we may wonder about how the figure expresses “a law of seven.”

The answer is in the notion of tri-unity. Alternatively, the enneagram structure might be rendered as the sixfold of a “Star of

Figure 6



David” with a central point in which three-foldness is implicit. The enneagram, thus, might be described as an abstract way of spelling out two successive emanations: one from the One to three-foldness and another from the 3 to the 3+6, which may be discussed as both 9 and 7.

Though Gurdjieff used the enneagram as a map for cycles in time, it is its application to psychological structure, presented by Oscar Ichazo in the late sixties, and developed by myself, that is most relevant to the present analysis, so let me say in the briefest way what we need to consider about the enneagram of character as a prelude to an application of the enneagram to the meditation realm.

In Figure 7 I have placed along the points of the enneagram labels corresponding to personality types known in clinical psychology. A familiarity with this map reveals that three pairs of opposites follow one another along the enneagram periphery. The obsessive and rigid character mapped in point 1 stands in sharp contrast to the indulgent, over-fluid, mischievous and histrionic character in point 2, which rebels against constraints just as the “perfectionist” accepts the discipline of restraint and imposes prohibitions and duties on self and others. Though it would be a mistake to say that the mental discipline of an obsessive (or, as I have called this neurotic style, “perfectionist”) is the same thing as meditative concentration, it is also true that the practice of mind-control demands zeal and involves a subtle austerity. After equating the obsessive style with the discipline of

ate than one between austerity and love: the willingness of the compassionate person to maintain involvement in the presence of pain may be said to echo more precisely than “love” the pathological over-involvement of the masochist, who will cling in spite of frustration or victimization.

After having mapped the conative and the affective axis of meditation realm so felicitously, we expect to find an echo of the cognitive polarity of meditation in the remaining region of the personality enneagram, and so it is: the opposition between the creative imagination of “God-mindedness” and the “mindfulness” of the “here and now” corresponds exactly with the tendencies of E7 and E8. While the “oral-optimistic” “charlatan” over indulges in fantasy and symbolization, the “phallic-narcissistic” and tough-minded E8 clings to sensateness in the present, disdaining symbolic or conceptual representations.

What sense does the mapping of the six meditations gestures on the enneagram make when tested against the structure of the inner flow?

If we begin by considering the 1–4 connection, we must ask: is concentration or one-pointedness something that stands in contrast to compassion, and does it make sense to say that *ekagrata* or calm abiding leads to or supports compassion? The answer is clear: yogic super-concentration is in contrast to compassion as *Shiva* to *Shakti*, stillness to flowing; and yet the experience of centuries confirms the contention that meditation is a support for virtue and may lend to the development of love. And understandably so: the practice of ego-suspension in stillness and isolation is of the same nature but simpler than the practice of transcending the hindrances or passions in life. Loving involvement may be said to be the spontaneous condition that manifests when the *kleshas* have been “burnt” by yogic practice.

Besides, there is in concentration a renunciation, a giving up of interest in all that lies beyond the focus of attention. This “cutting away” occurs also in compassion, in which the focus is the suffering of others.

The arrow between 4 and 2 invites us to consider the relation between compassion and trance, and the contrast between surrendering to the well-being of another and the kind of surrender involved in possession trance and inner guidance is obvious. Yet the polarity is clear: while in attunement to inner or higher guidance there is a yielding to pleasure; in compassion the issue is a yielding to pain. Also, in the movement from 4 to 2, the focus shifts from the other to the self. Just as in the domain of character E2 is “I-centered” and E4 “other-centered,” so in the realm of meditation something similar is obtained: compassion, in its other-centeredness, involves a privation, while a non-privation is involved in inspiration.

And can we not say that the other-centered and self-sacrificing practice of compassion is conducive to the attunement, inspiration and permeability to the flow of life that constitute “letting go” at its best?

I personally think that a kindly disposition not only facilitates unconditional surrender but is rewarded by what blessings may emerge from inspiration and possession trance.

Let us now consider the enneagram arrow from 2 to 8 which echoes the contrast between possession trance and *vipassana*. It is clear that a subtle surrender supports *vipassana* practice: a choiceless surrender in being open to the flow of experience as well as the deeper surrender involved in the “*pranic* flow” characteristic of advanced practice. (Such is the source of well known sensations that are the focus of the *U-Ba-Khin* approach to *vipassana*, emphasizing body awareness and the subtle vibratory phenomena.)

As for the relation between mindfulness (8) and non-attachment (5), this is most apparent since mindfulness is the field in which non-attachment (or austerity) is practiced, non-attachment (i.e., non-indulgence in attachment or aversion) being the immediate goal of *vipassana* training.

What is the relation between non-attachment (5) and creative imagination (7)? The polarity is apparent: numinosity evokes and

is evoked by enthusiasm which is opposite to the neutrality of non-attachment. Yet non-attachment is the gateway to radiance, as emptiness is the source of vision.

Nothing could be so antithetical as the exuberance of creative imagination (7) and the quiet sobriety of concentration (1). Yet is not the sense of sacredness the most powerful incentive to concentration? Before the holy, attention is naturally focused, and spontaneous renunciation sets in. Yogis at the time of Patanjali applied this to concentration training through the practice of evoking deities in the chakras; and in Tibetan visualization practices too, the sense of sacredness helps the development of concentration and mental quietness.

Just as we have found that the sixfold realm of the *ways* of meditation is mapped in the enneagram's hexad, the inner core of meditation—and of the mind, to be discovered at the end of meditation's course—can be mapped in the enneagram's inner triangle.

Geometry makes it unambiguous, for the relation of each successive pair of opposites along the circumference to a center of symmetry assists us in the recognition: in the meditation enneagram, as in the personality enneagram, point 6 belongs in some sense with points 1 and 2; 3 with 7 and 8; 9 with 4 and 5.

Parenthetically, it may be of interest to spell this out in the personality domain before returning to the consideration of meditation: while in some sense fear (which in its naked state is avoidant) is the opposite of the perfectionistic (E1) and histrionic (E2) characters, which are assertive and contactful, in other ways fear-grounded character is similar to E1 and E2, and is often confused with them. The same is true of E3: while E3 people often think of themselves as E8 or E7, E3 is opposite to both in terms of an anti-social/pro-social (or “rebellion/agreeableness”) dimension. And it is also true that the self-postponing E9 is frequently confused with E5 (for its resignation) or with E4 (in the case of conscious depression), though E9 contrasts with the inwardness and selfishness of both.

In Figure 7 are shown the three sets of contrasting kinds (or components) of meditation along with the corresponding nuclear feature of consciousness. It now remains to ascertain that the mapping of core meditation issues onto the enneagram's inner triangle is as relevant to characterological issues as we saw in the case of the six meditation exercises.

Is there some relation between awareness-of-awareness, mapped on point 3, and enneatype 3, characterized as image-conscious, over-active, superficial and alert?

Indeed: only that the otherwise disciplined attention of E3 resists being directed toward the mind-core. While the so called "ego-go" is keenly effective and attentive to appearance and production, the present model suggests that it needs to focus its attention to the subtlest region of undifferentiated consciousness at rest.

Is the idea of a neutrality beyond both letting go and active mind control relevant to the characterological style mapped onto point 6 in the egotype enneagram?

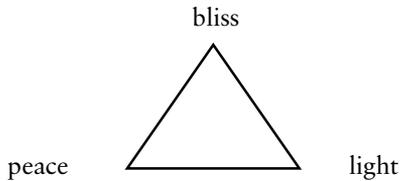
Enneatype 6 is sometimes passive, sometimes over-active, but always ambivalent: a "tormented soul," in whose psyche an excessive energy is invested in the antagonism between desire and its prohibition.

There is nothing that an E6 needs more than to "get out of the way" of life, to leave himself alone; for fear, inaction is no other than the loss of healthy non-interference with organismic self-regulation. The distrusting person (be he/she insecure, paranoid or obsessive) fears relinquishing an obsolete attachment to what was, at the dawn of life, a "panic reaction"—an emergency response to intense pain.

Because of this, he or she fears "simply to be," letting go of the defensive apparatus, and needs the courage, then, to just be in peace.

Let us now inquire into the relation between bliss and E9 character.

Figure 8



E9 is that in which the “capital sin” or basic hindrance is *acidia* (from the Greek *a-chedia* = no care), poorly echoed in today’s “sloth.” The dominant passion is one of playing possum to avoid being killed; the strategies are of self-deadening and self-deafening in pursuit of survival.

What does “deadening” mean? Not only a loss in the capacity for self-experience, but the loss of a healthy love of self (without which love toward others remains a shallow substitute).

When not depressed and in contact with a sense of separation, E9 is inwardly resigned and outwardly contented, even jolly. In either case—that of conscious and that of unconscious love-deprivation—there is an interference with the love-thirst that extends to the minimization of all “personal” wants (in deference to the wants of others).

Ichazo called “love” the psychocatalyst of E9, contemplative identification with which may break away the fixation wall. And while the enneagram of meditation is not the same thing as the enneagram of catalysts,⁷ “love” is coherent with the self-loving bliss reported by those in whom awareness of the mind’s emptiness and light has ripened.

While the E9 person is compulsively “loving” in a robotic manner by one alienated from his heart, he needs, first of all, self-love, but ultimately the experience of Spirit in the form of ego-less love without an object—which is transcendental bliss (*ananda*, *mahasukha*).

Just as after mapping the “meditation practice sixfold” onto the enneagram I proceeded to testing the map through a consideration of the “inner flow,”⁸ again at this point I think that it is important to inquire into the contextual relevance of the notions that have resulted from the mapping of the additional “inner triad.” Do the lines uniting intrinsic awareness, emptiness and bliss indicate an interdependence, a reciprocal origination?

The tantric Buddhist tradition has been explicit about the three connections: between bliss and void, bliss and light, and between spacious openness and the recognition of the hidden light of intrinsic awareness.

Still, there remains a test to conduct in regard to the coherence between the meditation enneagram and its triune core.

Are the three regions around the “three corners” such that a polarity is obtained between the wings of M9,⁹ M6 and M3, and such that each nuclear aspect of the mind (and of meditation) may be viewed as a support or as resultant of its “wings”? M9 thus, should not only be understandable as a third element to the E5-E4 and the E6-E3 polarities, but as a third element along with the contrasting E8-E1.

This may be confirmed: while attention to the here-and-now is panoramic in M8 and focused in M1, we may say that in M9 attention is removed from the world: neither actively persisting in its voluntary focus nor receptively roaming and shifting its focus from one emerging gestalt to another: it has left the world behind, and fallen toward its own core in enjoyment of its intrinsic appreciativeness. I think that, however alienated, some intuition of the blessedness of ultimate reality constitutes the hidden source of the sense of the value of life, and it is this that sustains both austere concentration and the no lesser austerity of the naked here-and-now.

I have discussed the inner/outer contrasts involved between E5 and E7 and between E2 and E4 on occasion of discussing the

“inner flow” in the hexad, and it only remains to point the relevance of M6 and M3 as reconciling elements.

The polarity of E4 and E2 can be envisioned as one between being attuned (or empathic) to the needs and the good of the other and surrendering to (or being attuned to and empathically identifying with) the promptings of a higher or deeper self or entity. Awareness of awareness, between both states or gestures, gravitates neither toward the other nor a higher self, but toward *itself*, like bliss, and is no more separate from bliss than the light of a flame from its heat.

The enneagram further invites the conjecture that intrinsic wakefulness (M3) may be cultivated through its wings—compassion (E4) and surrender (E2)—which I personally regard true but not obvious. It also suggests that, conversely, such *gnosis* or cognitiveness by itself supports both compassion and inspiration.

It only remains for me to anticipate the possible question of how this theory of meditation—the record of a gratuitous contemplation of the domain—may be also useful.

May the theory be practically applied? Could it be that the remarkable coherence between psychotherapy and meditation styles may carry a prescriptive consequence?

If for particular kinds of meditation there is a special suitability according to personality structure, does this mean that the perfectionist should practice yogic *citta vritti nirodha*,¹⁰ the seducer *ishvara pranidha*,¹¹ one with a passion for appearances some form of *gnani yoga*, etc.?

Though I don't know that the experiment has been done, and only in time may we be ready to prove or disprove such a proposition, let me only say that we should not allow this idea to obscure an obvious and complementary suggestion of the meditation model: that however wise it may be to harness our over-developed aspect, we also need to develop the under-developed.

Thus, the perfectionist is in particular need of learning to surrender control, while the histrionic is in need of disciplined focus; the E4 needs detachment and the E5, compassion; the E7, attention to the ordinary and the E8, sacralization. The characters mapped in the inner triangle, by contrast, may benefit from a more direct approach to the blissful cognition of the empty mind.