

MIND & REALITY

DAY TWO - TAPE 3 of 7 - PANEL ON MEDITATION

TAPE START

CHRIS KELLEY

00:00.02 -you note, today's panels, unlike yesterday's, which were more focused on theory, we're looking now at applications of theory - what you might call methodology. And right now, we're turning to panel four - meditation.

00:00.19 Much of the popular dialogue between science and Buddhism has focused solely on the ways in which mind (unintell) may be used to reduce stress and improve health. Far less attention has been paid to the ways in which such meditations facilitate reasoning and the introspective investigations of mind and reality.

00:00.36 Members of this panel will look at how certain meditations that are specifically designed to analyze the nature of conscious experience-

SPEECH BREAK

00:00.44

-therapeutic as well as pedagogically useful in contemporary study. Professor Klein, our moderator for this panel, has been a Professor of Religious Studies at Bryce University since 1995 and Chair of the Department from 1995 to 1998. She is currently the recipient of a Ford Foundation Grant for multi-faceted project entitled, "Gender, Self and Well-being - Traditional Buddhism and Modern Western Culture, A Living Dialogue."

00:01.15

And is also founding director of Don Mountain, a center for contemplative study and practice in Houston, based in the Tibetan tradition and enriched by other traditions, as well. I now turn to Anne Klein. Thank you.

ANNE KLEIN

00:01.34

And welcome everyone to a wonderful panel, as I know from having read their papers and some knowledge of the participants, as well. Looking at meditation, its relationship to knowledge and

some broader historical contextualization, as well. Our target essayist is Mark Siderits, who is a Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Illinois State University. And we welcome him and his remarks.

MARK SIDERITS

00:02.11

Thank you. Ok, those of you who might have come in a little late this morning missed our wonderful organizer, Chris Kelley's, opening remarks. Chris was having a little difficulty getting his mouth in gear earlier this morning. And so, in addition to calling Robert Thurman a preventer instead of a presenter on one of yesterday's panels, he also at least to my ears sounded- seemed to be saying that I was not the moderator, but a martyr, on one of yesterday's panels, too.

00:02.55

Well, no I wasn't really feeling like a martyr yesterday, but maybe this morning I'm going to, because I hadn't- when I wrote the essay for our panel today, I hadn't realized that Alan Wallace

would be making the very interesting and provocative remarks that he did just now about contemplation, about meditation. So, here goes.

00:03.22

Ok. Is meditation a means of knowledge? Meditation is after all, an integral part of Buddhist practice. The question for our panel, I think, is whether it holds any lessons for us concerning the relation between mind and reality and how we can best come to know the nature of the world.

00:03.48

Now, I should say that by meditation in my remarks, I'm going to mean the sort of focused introspection that Alan Wallace was just describing for us. I don't mean all sorts of other practices that are also often included in what gets roughly called Buddhist meditation. Those can include, for instance, visualization practice, practice of projecting loving kindness throughout the world, various other forms of

practice that involve various disciplined ways of changing deeply entrenched habits.

00:04.30

What I'm going to be talking about is rather just the sort of focused introspection that I think plays an absolutely central role in the, what I will call, the Buddhist enlightenment project. Now, one often hears claims about the benefits of meditation for physiological and psychological well-being, even for one's success in business or tennis or what have you.

00:04.58

Well, these sorts of claims that we hear today have, in fact, a very long history. The classical Indian sources credit yogans (ph) with all sorts of supernormal powers. For instance, the ability to see things very, very far away. The ability to see very, very small things.

00:05.22

For instance, in Nyaya it's claimed one of these yogic perceptual abilities is the ability to see atoms. Ok. Something most of us obviously don't

have, we need to use special tools. The ability to remember past lives is also supposedly a yogic power, a power that is developed through engaging in meditational practice.

00:05.48

But, by and large, the Buddhist tradition has held these things, these supernormal powers that are developed, that can be developed through meditation, to be a distraction from the business at hand, which is attaining liberation from suffering. That is attaining nirvana. So, what role does meditation play in the Buddhist enlightenment project?

00:06.13

Well, my characterization of meditation and the role it plays in Buddhist practice overall is no doubt, going to be controversial. But that's nothing new. While most Buddhists agree that both philosophy and meditation are necessary for enlightenment, for attaining nirvana, release from suffering, there is a long history of real

tension between partisans of philosophy and partisans of meditation.

00:06.45

And within classical Indian institutionalized Buddhism, of course, there would have been, there were specialists in both. If you need to train a large body of new monks in both, then you're going to obviously divide up the labor and have some people who specialize in philosophy and others who specialize in meditation. But then you get these two classes of experts, in fact, dueling with one another.

00:07.15

Each side accusing the other of giving undue weight to their preferred practice. And so you get distortion. Well, I'm a philosopher by training and by occupation, so maybe I've simply got it all wrong. But, here at least is my understanding of the situation. The Buddhist enlightenment project is aimed at helping us overcome existential suffering by dissolving the

false assumption that there is an "I" whose life can have meaning and significance.

00:07.52

Ok. Existential suffering as most thoroughly crystallized in fear of death, realization of our own mortality, this sense of frustration, alienation, despair that can arise in response to recognition of our own mortality. But, of course, suffering runs deeper than that, that's just the signal instruments.

00:08.14

That's the point. Philosophical reasoning helps us see how our deep seated sense of interior subjectivity might not reflect reality, but instead result from processes of conceptual construction. The sense of an "I" is, in fact, the result of various conceptual impositions on reality and does not, in fact, reflect what's really there.

00:08.42

And this, by the way, is where Dan- we heard some reference made yesterday to Daniel Dennett's

notion of the self as the center of narrative gravity, which is clearly one way of making the point that the sense of an "I," the sense of self, is in fact a conceptual construction. Well, that fits quite well with the Buddhist account.

00:09.05

But, this is the role of philosophical reasoning in the project. Such reasoning can only take us so far. The point of meditation, I think, is to bring home to the practitioner in a very concrete and immediate way the fact that there is no one home.

00:09.25

We all know the difference between the sort of knowledge that can be called merely theoretical and the kind that can successfully disrupt deeply entrenched habits by being somehow more immediate than the merely theoretical kind.

00:09.47

For instance, I knew for many years – I knew in that merely theoretical sense – that smoking can damage the heart and the lungs and do all sorts

of other bad things. To oneself as well as to others. But, it wasn't until I heard that wrong note on the echocardiogram that I quit. I quit, in fact, that very day.

00:10.14

Well, we can likewise know perfectly well that there is no enduring entity underlying the flow of mental states. David Hume presumably knew this. But such knowledge doesn't necessarily disrupt the habits forged from earliest childhood of thinking of such states as mine. And of thinking of this "me" as an ongoing project for which the events of this life have significance.

00:10.42

Hume noticed that when he left the study and went to play backgammon with friends he also left behind whatever conviction he had attained concerning the unreality of the self. Meditation represents, I think, a way of seeing in a concrete and immediate way that the general truth applies in one's own case. In meditation, one learns to dissect one's mental acts and thereby

see that they aren't what we take them to be, namely the performances of a mental agent.

00:11.16

To see that beneath the surface appearance of a unified seer and doer there is a large variety of impersonal mental events in complex causal interaction. It is this experience, the experience attained in meditation, that presumably brings about liberation from the illusion of a self and the suffering that is engendered by that illusion.

00:11.41

Now, this is actually, I think, part of a larger pan-Indian phenomenon. Indian epistemologists in general agree that perception is the foremost means of knowledge. And, they thought this is so because in perception, we are more directly in contact with the fact that's being cognized than we are when we employ such relatively indirect means as inference and testimony.

00:12.13

So, in perception our awareness of the fact in question is more vivid. Now, I think what we have in the case of meditation and the use it is put to in the Buddhist contemplative tradition is precisely an instance of that. Meditation is designed to make more vivid the truths that we first discover through philosophical reasoning, that strictly speaking there is no one home. Dissolving the sense of a "me" for whom the events in this life can have meaning and significance.

00:12.53

Ok. So, what does this tell us about the role of meditation in finding out important truths about the mind and reality, which is after all the topic of our conference. Well, it might suggest that the Buddhist meditation tradition represents a 2,500 year old mind science to which neuroscience should look for insights. And I think we heard earlier this morning in Alan Wallace's wonderful presentation a very

interesting and insightful plea on behalf of that, just that position.

00:13.34

Now, the thought here would be that meditative techniques are designed to enhance one's introspective powers. In fact, this is exactly what we heard Alan Wallace saying. So that what one observes in meditation more accurately reflects mental reality than do the deliverances of ordinary folk psychology.

00:13.58

And, I should say something here about- ok. Folk psychology versus mental reality as presumably exhibited in meditational practice. In this respect I would claim the Buddhist tradition is, in fact, reductionist. It is not reductionist in the sense in which we've been hearing the word reduction used over the course of this conference. Not mind-body, not physicalist reductionist.

00:14.33

In fact, for the most part, the Buddhist tradition is- maintains a kind of ontological dualism. It's not a substance dualism. It's not saying there are two distinct kinds of substance - thinking substance and extended substance - but it is a kind of - ok, I'll use some philosophical shorthand here - a trope theoretical dualist. There are two kinds of tropes, that is quality particulars. There are the rupa ones - those correspond roughly to what we think of as the material world - and then there are the nama ones, which correspond roughly to what we think of as mental phenomenon.

00:15.10

Ok. And you can construct all of reality out of those tropes. But they are, in fact, two distinct kinds of tropes. Ok. So, they are dualist in that respect, but they are nonetheless reductionist in another important sense, namely reductionist about persons.

00:15.27 The underlying idea here is that the person is a whole made of parts. And, it's only because it's useful for us to think of all those parts all working together as one thing, the person, that we in fact get this - according to the Buddhists - misleading sense of there being a me who is the author of this narrative, the narrative of my life.

00:15.58 But, the claim is, that is a mere conceptual fiction. The ultimate underlying reality is a reality of thoroughly impersonal physical and mental states or physical and mental events in complex causal interaction. And, the point here of both Buddhist philosophy and Buddhist meditational practice is to get in touch, get in clear touch with that underlying purely impersonal reality and thereby see through the mere conventional reality of the person, me.

00:16.39 See it as a fiction, a useful fiction no doubt, but a fiction nonetheless. Not in our first class

ontology. Only in the second tier. Back benchers, ontological back benchers. Ok. So, that's how I see the overall Buddhist project and the relation of meditation to philosophy in that project. And now, once again, the question is could meditation be somehow in a serious, significant alliance with neuroscience as a kind of tool to be used in the cognitive science lab.

00:17.19

Well, perhaps. But I think that conclusion may be just a tad premature. For two reasons. The first has to do with the obvious point that introspection is methodologically problematic in the science context. Now, hang on, because I have a little bit more to say about that. Ok. Ok. Here's the first pass. There just isn't any reliable way of getting independent confirmation of the results.

00:17.49

But this is not the so-called privacy problem. It's a deeper problem. Because ok, someone can object to this point, by saying that Buddhist

meditation techniques have proven reliable and effective for millennia. Well, the difficulty is that this fact alone does not rule out the possibility of confabulation. Indeed, it's easy to see how mastery of Abhidharma philosophy, the kind of philosophy is typically done as a precursor to engaging in meditation, traditionally, how mastery of that philosophy would prime the meditator to individuate the mental states of their inner lives in terms of the categories of that tradition.

00:18.38

And those categories, it's well-known, arose out of the efforts of early Buddhist commentators to make sense of the array of technical terms that the Buddha used in describing meditational practice. So, the typology of mental states that's at the heart of the Buddhist meditation tradition rests on the assumption that the Buddha's teachings give an accurate mapping of the mental landscape.

00:19.06 And, so there seems to be an implicit appeal to the Buddha's omniscience in these matters and that doesn't fit well with the methodologies of the natural sciences, which require universal fallibilism. There's nothing that anyone can't be wrong about.

00:19.27 But, there's another problem, another way of getting at the difficulty of confabulation, which is that in fact, different Abhidharma traditions individuate the ultimate mental states that one discovers in meditation differently. And, not surprisingly, those who embark on meditation having mastered one particular system of Abhidharma will, in fact, surprise, surprise, discover just the mental states that that tradition describes as their bedrock atomic mental states.

00:20.04 Another tradition, which individuates things slightly differently will lead to meditators, in fact, seeing their mental reality in its terms.

And then, of course, when we look beyond the Buddhist tradition to other yogic traditions in classical Indian culture, we're going to find yet different maps of the fundamentals of the mind. This is the real difficulty.

00:20.29

We have a problem of intersubjective agreement. Now, I should add that even if this is an insuperable problem, it might still be fine as a technique. Even if confabulation is a difficulty in making good on the claim that in meditation, we discover how the mind it genuinely is in itself. It might nonetheless do the job for which it's designed. And here's the analogy.

00:21.06

That echocardiogram note that I heard was, in fact, a false positive. There was nothing wrong with my heart. But it did make me quit smoking. Ok. Ok. So, this is one problem with supposing there can be this full-scale collaboration between the Buddhist meditation tradition and neuroscience.

00:21.33

But, there's a second and deeper reason to perhaps be skeptical about the claim that Buddhist meditation tradition can be directly incorporated into cognitive science. The argument for doing so seems to depend on the idea that meditative techniques enable one to see mental states as they really are in themselves. Stripped bare of what the folk psychology of common sense projects onto them.

00:21.59

The philosophers of the Abhidharma school would embrace this idea, in fact. They claim that this is why they think meditation works as a tool in attaining liberation, attaining nirvana. Because you are getting beneath the surface appearance of our mental states as being the results of this agent who is in charge and finding the purely impersonal reality by dissolving the big thing into its little components.

00:22.30

But- and so you are getting in touch with objective reality, reality as it is independent of the concepts that we happen to use. Ok. But, not the philosophers of the Madhyamaka school- Madhyamaka is, of course, the one big exception to this Buddhist reductionist project that I've been discussing so far. For them, for Madhyamaka, the notion of self-individuating entities, the notion that there is one right way to carve up the world is incoherent.

00:23.04

This, I think, is the point of the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness. The doctrine that nothing has its nature intrinsically. And it would seem to follow from this doctrine that there can be no such thing as a theory neutral way of observing the mind and its states. The only way to observe the mind and its states is by presupposing some theory or other.

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This, I think, is the simplest, straightforward consequence of the Madhyamaka doctrine of

emptiness. I think it is because it does follow from the doctrine of emptiness that there are things there to be observed, things with determinant natures only given the sorts of interests that inform a theory.

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What one finds when using the powers of introspection developed in meditation is determined, in part, by the interests that are reflected in Abhidharma theory. So, what one finds in meditation is not necessarily the nature of the mind in itself, as it is independently of our interests, the concepts that we happen to use.

00:24.17

Now, to this, I immediately hasten to add that the same thing goes for science. Same thing goes for the observations used to test theories in cognitive science, for instance. For any science for that matter. If Madhyamaka's right and all things are empty of intrinsic nature, then the observations used in the construction and

confirmation of scientific theories must likewise depend on some going theory or other.

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Cognitive science is no more able to show us the mind as it is in itself than is meditation. If the Madhyamaka arguments are sound, there is no such thing as how the mind is in itself. Now, of course, this may make it seem as if well, maybe there can be a collaboration between cognitive science and Buddhist meditation. If no enterprise can claim, can lay claim to ultimate epistemic privilege when it comes to discerning the nature of the mind, what reason can there be to deny that the observations derived from the Buddhist mind science are scientifically respectable and worth the attention of cognitive science.

00:25.29

Well, in principle, none. But, I suspect that the two theories are unlikely to mesh particularly well. For the interests that determine the context of Abhidharma theorizing are quite unlike those that generate the scientific context. The

former have to do with how best to live our lives. The latter have to do with technologies of material transformation.

00:24.54 Now, that's not to denigrate either enterprise, it's just to point out that they are, in fact, generated by rather disparate interests. And, so, it's not clear to me that the two kinds of enterprises are going to mesh particularly well.

00:26.11 Ok, but this brings me to a third point. I myself as a philosopher think that the jury is still out on the possibility of a strictly physicalist reduction, reductionist cognitive science. Ok. Can mental states and can cognitive science, in fact, work with a strictly physicalist ontology? I think the jury's still out on that.

00:26.40 Physicalism may be on its way. Reductive physicalism may be on its way to winning the battle over mental causation, but the hard problem of qualia remains. And I agree. It's a

hard problem. It's not clear to me exactly how that problem should be solved. The problem, in other words, of bridging the so-called explanatory gap between accounts of one's brain states, one's neurophysiology and the how it feels to me when I see something red. Ok

00:27.10

Bridging the gap between those two kinds of descriptions. Well, the question I want to raise is not who is right and who is wrong about physicalism. I think further work needs to be done to answer that question, but rather whether Buddhists, as Buddhists, have an interest in this debate and how it comes out.

00:27.35

Many would claim that they do. Many would say that the Buddhist project is incompatible with physicalism. And they might point to the role of meditation in the Buddhist project as proof of this. Now, of course, there will also be those who will point to the notions of karma and rebirth.

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And claim that those turn out to be- would be ruled out if physicalism turned out to be true. I'm not so sure that that's true. At least it is, in principle, possible to account for karmic causation through some sort of physicalist causal machinery. It also, given our current knowledge of- in the natural sciences, it seems unlikely, but it's not, in principle, ruled out.

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But, the question here is what about meditation. The argument would be that this role, the role of meditation, depends on the irreducibility of the mental states that are investigated and analyzed in meditation. If physicalism is true, then those mental states are reducible to strictly physical events of some sort or other. In other words, ok, in meditation I isolate particular mental states like an individual act of attending, an individual samskara, individual volition. I break down what seems to be a unified conscious field into its atomic components, none of which is, in

fact, understood as the agent, the thing that's in charge. Ok.

00:29.09

That's what one does in meditation. That's how it's supposed to work. But, the argument would be, if physicalism is true, then those mental states that I've succeeded in isolating are, in fact, further reducible. I've reduced what looks like one thing - the conscious agent - to many things, many individual conscious states, but those aren't the ultimate- what's ultimately real either, it turns out. Those are mere conceptual constructions, too, because if physicalism is true those are reducible to neurophysiological events of some description or other. Ok.

00:29.41

That would be the argument for claiming that a physicalist outcome to this debate in cognitive science and philosophy of mind would, in fact, be a disaster for Buddhists. Because then, meditation could not reveal the final truth about the mind. And thus, it could not do the work it's

supposed to do of undermining our implicit belief in the self. Ok. That's the argument that someone might make as to why Buddhism does have a stake in this debate. Ok.

00:30.12

Well, I think it will be clear from what I've already said what I think a Madhyamaka would say in response to this. Given the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness, there is no such thing as the final truth about the mind. And here, I liked what Owen Flanagan had to say yesterday morning in talking about the- introducing the concept of a naturalistic, imperialistic ontology, ok.

00:30.44

Supposing that the ontology that goes along with a naturalist physicalism is, in fact, the final truth. This is all that there really is. And, of course, on the other side of this debate we have people who are natural- who are dualistically imperialist in their ontology. There are, in addition to these physical things there are these

non-physical things, as well. And that's the ultimate nature of reality.

00:31.12

Well, of course, the Madhyamaka would dismiss both sides in that debate. There is no such thing as how things really, truly are. At least, that's my understanding of the doctrine of emptiness. In fact, for Madhyamaka, all this passionate debate over the truth of physicalism would just serve to reinforce their conviction that metaphysical disputes involve subtle forms of self construction.

00:31.40

When someone pounds the table and says there's more to me than just this body, what are they doing? They are pounding the table. And what are they revealing through that gesture? That they think the truth is on my side. Ok. And that's a subtle form of self-construction. Well, not so good from a Buddhist perspective.

00:32.04 But, leaving Madhyamaka aside, I think even Abhidharma could agree that there is no reason for Buddhists to prefer one outcome over another in the debate over physicalism. Or at least, there isn't any role that I- any reason I can see that derives from the role that meditation plays in this Buddhist liberation project.

00:32.28 For that role depends on the efficacy of meditation in undermining the seeming reality of the categories of folk psychology. And here, I would actually allude to Susan Carey's very interesting discussion yesterday morning, yesterday afternoon, talking about research that reveals a core knowledge of intentional agency.

00:32.55 Where that fits very neatly into the Abhidharma project is it reveals to us a foundation for folk psychology which sees each of us as an intentional agent. Ok. This is the equipment that human infants come into the world with that explains how folk psychology generates this

feeling. It gives the infant the basic resources on the basis of which through developmental process, the- we come to think of ourselves as persons and thus, come to have that sense of agency of being a subject.

00:33.38

Well, of course, the role of meditation is to get beneath the surface of that, perhaps, innate or, perhaps, environmental, socially constructed or perhaps a little bit of both folk psychology that the Buddha says is, in fact, the ultimate cause of suffering.

00:33.59

Meditation does this by showing how the subject of cognition can be reduced to a set of causally related impersonal mental events. Now, if physicalism is true, then those mental events will allow a further reduction. But this does not threaten the success of the reduction. If meditation succeeds in showing us why it would seem as if there is someone home when there isn't, then it's done its job.

00;34.27

And this, I might add, this anti-homuncularist's job - dissolving that sense of there being a little person inside me who is the real me, ok. Getting rid of the homuncule, a little person. This is also common to the natural sciences and this is why, in fact, there seems to be this natural affinity between Buddhist projects and natural scientific projects.

00:34.58

The possibility of further reduction does not call into question the success of meditation performing its job. After all, no one questions the reduction of developmental biology to biochemistry on the grounds that biochemistry is further reducible to quantum mechanics, ok. We can show that the property of life is not a genuinely emergent property because we can reduce biology to developmental biology and that can be reduced to biochemistry and that, in turn, can be reduced to organic chemistry and that can, in the end, be reduced to quantum mechanics.

00:35.35

Ok. So, we can explain these- the emergent- the seeming emergence of these higher level properties in terms of the ability to reduce them to explain what's going on at this level in terms of facts about what's going on at this lower level, but ok, you got life up here. You've got this biological property. You reduce that to biochemistry. Well, biochemistry is further reducible - to organic chemistry.

00:36.00

But that doesn't mean that the reduction of these vitalist emergent properties hasn't succeeded if we can go from this level down to a lower level. Even if that lower level is not the bottom level, you still succeeded in reducing, ok. So, even if the kinds of mental states that we can get in touch with, we can find and isolate through meditation turn out not to be the final bottom level - assuming that there is one - still, the fact that it is a successful reduction is enough.

That's all that Abhidharma needs for meditation to play its role.

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The only possible threat I can see to the Abhidharma reduction is that physicalism might give us clues that the ways in which meditation, Buddhist meditation, individuates mental states isn't, in fact, giving us access to a natural kind.

00:37.06

Ok. Oops. It's so hard. Ok. One last very quick point. I hope it's clear that nothing I've said so far has any implications for the neuroscientific investigation of meditational states. That investigation is something I think Buddhists should welcome since it might lead to new techniques for attaining liberation from suffering.

00:37.29

The question I've tried to address is whether Buddhist meditation can be more than a new objective investigation for brain science.

Whether the two can enter into an epistemic partnership. As I said, because I'm a philosopher, my views on that question may be all wrong. If so, I expect my fellow panel members and maybe some of you in the audience will set me straight. I look forward to hearing what you all have to say. Thank you.

APPLAUSE

ANNE KLEIN

00:37.59

Thank you, Mark, for starting us off on this wonderful quest about the relationship between meditation and knowledge. And we continue along in the same vein with Roger Jackson, who teaches the Religions of South Asia at Carleton College and who had the impertinence to ask the question, famously now, whether enlightenment is possible. And he is now going to ask what good is meditation.

ROGER JACKSON

00:38.32

Thank you, Anne, and thank you to everybody who's put this conference together. I've learned a tremendous amount and I'm afraid I won't be able

to contribute anywhere near what I've learned,
but I'll do my little bit here, anyway.

00:38.46

The notion of a kind of target essay strikes me as a wonderful metaphor and as I was searching about within my own quiver to see what arrows I might launch at our target essayist, I, perhaps taking the metaphor a little too literally, thought of my favorite Mahasiddha or great adept from the tantric tradition in India, namely Saraha. And I'm gonna start out with a couple of short quotes from Saraha's treasury of dohas.

00:39.14

Saraha says, "Meditation. Why look for freedom in a lie?" And again, he says, "You're deceived by meditation, so why meditate?" Goes on to say, "Mind is unstained, don't taint it with meditation." I'm not really, in fact, going to spend a great deal of time trying to unpack this. I think there's a bit of irony in Saraha's approach, as there often is in things that he says because he, in fact, is seen as the

progenitor of a tradition within Indian and Tibetan Buddhism that goes by the name of the Great Seal or Mahamudra, chak-gya chenpo in Tibetan, that is profoundly meditative in its approach to the Buddhist path.

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Though it is worth noting that even within Mahamudra there are stages of meditation - in quotes - with terms like "non-meditation." So, there's something interesting going on there, but as I say, I'm not really going to focus on that so much. I think of it more as a kind of beginning koan for me and, perhaps, for the rest of us because what Saraha does and what I'm hoping to do a little bit here is to - I don't know if problematize is the word, exactly - but to complicate a little bit our picture of meditation.

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Primarily, though not exclusively, by doing so in terms that I would describe as sort of cultural historical. I will have some philosophical things

to say, as well, and I want to certainly acknowledge that Mark Siderits's essay stimulated all of this, even if some of the things that I say don't address as specifically as he might have liked some of the points that he's made there. But his essay is a wonderful take-off point.

00:40.56

Because, as I sat down to write these comments last weekend, thinking I would just write a few pages, kind of modeled on Mark's, you know, wonderfully concise and succinct essay and ended up then with ten single-spaced pages. There's no way I'm going to be able to say everything that I said in the piece that's online.

00:41.16

I'm gonna spend just a very few minutes talking about what I might describe as some kind of cultural historical issues that I think are at least worth putting into the hopper in our discussion here. And this is to try to contextualize something about meditation, both as

a topic of fascination in the contemporary world and as a topic within the Buddhist world that has been by no means simple or undisputed.

00:41.46

Anyway, as I say, I'm only gonna make a few remarks about that and then focus a little more on some remarks that perhaps are somewhat more philosophical, that try to get - from at least one angle - at Mark's question about, from his title - is meditation a means of knowledge.

00:42.04

On the sort of cultural historical side, I want to really make two major points. The first of these is to say what I think some of you have read one place or another and if you've forgotten it, I just want to remind you about it. Donald Lopez, perhaps, most famously and publicly mentioned this in a wonderful little tricycle piece that he had a few years back on the ten most common misconceptions about Buddhism.

00:42.32

And the point that he made - he had had his class discover this in the course of a term at Michigan, I guess - is most Buddhists don't meditate, have not meditated. We tend, in our construction of Buddhism in the West, to assume that meditation is absolutely central to the tradition and has been central for all Buddhists at all places and times. And certainly, there's absolutely no denying that the normative tradition places meditation on- in a very, very important role, particularly when we're concerned with matters of soteriology, with questions of how one achieves enlightenment.

00:43.10

There's no doubt that meditation is quite basic there. And I think- but I think that the other point to be made here is that historically, Buddhism constructed itself as a social institution in terms of the monastic and the lay, most basically. And the presumption through most texts and most places and times, I think it's fair to say, is that meditation was properly the

province of monastics and for laypeople, there were a variety of virtuous practices – the generation of virtue and of generosity, particularly toward the monastic Sangha, it might be noted.

00:43.49

And basically that- it was presumed that- and I think this was evident from the kinds of things that Alan has talked about and written about and many people are aware of, as well, that meditation is not easy. It's not the kind of thing that you can simply and unproblematically integrate with lay life. And I think the presumption for most Buddhists in most places and times was that laypeople didn't have the time, interest, ability or whatever it may be.

00:44.17

Now, the picture's more complicated than that, certainly. There are instances in the texts that we read of, of laypeople who were meditators – both in Pali traditions and in Mahayana traditions. And particularly when you get to

somebody like Saraha who is a layman, the tantric traditions, I think the boundaries begin to get a little bit more problematic. But still, this kind of distinction has been very basic in-

00:44.46

So, I think we have to understand the current placing of meditation as kind of the center of attention that Buddhism gets within the liberal arts and sciences to be a function, in part, of Buddhism's encounter with modernity. And you can find in both Asian and certainly in Western settings plenty of instances in which the encounter between traditional Asian - particularly Buddhist - ideas and practices and modern ideas, practices, science, all, you know-

00:45.19

Colonialism was an important agent of this in Asia. One we can't really go through all the sort of history and sociology of this, but what you find is that in the phenomenon that some people have called Buddhist modernism and others have actually called Protestant Buddhism - a

wonderful, if controversial, term - that the boundaries- the traditional boundaries between lay and monastic began to break down. Such that, for instance, you far more commonly nowadays will find Buddhist monks or nuns who are involved in what we might generally regard as social work, political work, commitment to various causes.

00:45.55

This was not, this was not usually part of the profile of a Buddhist monk or nun. And conversely we find that - especially starting in the 19th century in places like Sri Lanka and Japan as modernization came in - that meditation was something that laypeople began to think they could actually do.

00:46.14

And so, I think we have to understand ourselves as people interested in meditation as being part of this historical current. I see very few robes in this room and yet presumably, most people in this room are quite interested in meditation. I suspect most people in this room have attempted

to meditate or perhaps meditate quite regularly and perhaps quite successfully.

00:46.33

But, we are part of a- we are a function of a particular, and very interesting, historical moment. That's all I'll say about that. First, sort of social historical point. The second social historical point is just to point out very quickly that one has to be- and I think Thubten Jinpa will certainly address this far better than I can, but I want to address this from a- perhaps a slightly different angle than his.

00:47.00

Namely, that meditation is- to have it as a single word is itself a slightly problematic move because it is within Buddhism and it was within Indian culture a very, very complex phenomenon. And it was a matter- it's not as if, you know, Bob Thurman was talking yesterday, quite rightly, about the different levels of education, you know, starting with sort of memorization and

study of the texts and then sort of philosophical dispute and argumentation, rationality.

00:47.32

And then there's meditation and it's as if meditation was off in this realm that was not touched by disputes at all. But, if you read the Buddhist texts from any era and any place and time, it's quite clear that people were squabbling about meditation all the time. The Buddha, if we take the Pali cannon as being, quote, the words of the Buddha - and that's itself, of course, a very difficult problem -

00:47.56

but if we take that- those as acceptable, that the Buddha himself was very critical of a variety of meditative techniques that he found in the culture around him. After all, as I think Alan pointed out this morning, the Buddha after he left the palace went off and tried a couple of techniques, mastered them thoroughly and thought no, this doesn't do it.

00:48.15

And the texts are full of critiques of a variety of usually not- of non-Buddhist teachers who have, you know, for instance claimed to have direct knowledge of reality, but really don't. Obviously, the stakes were high in all of this because meditation was already in the culture understood to be a possible method for attaining spiritual liberation, which was after all - as Mark puts it - the enlightenment project was the project for most spiritual teachers in the fourth, whatever, century BCE India.

00:48.48

But it's not just that Buddhists were and are critical of non-Buddhist meditators and meditative techniques. They will often go off on that, but they have had disagreements among themselves from the beginning. It- there are- there is, of course, profoundly woven into Buddhist literature the sense that there are basically two complementary types of meditation that one ought to practice and master.

00:49.19

Meditation that is primarily for the purpose of concentrating or focusing or stilling the mind and concentration that is involved- may or may not be more discursive, but that is for the purpose of our gaining greater insight into the nature of things.

00:49.35

There are interesting studies that- You know, perhaps scholars sometimes are always, are looking for tensions and disagreements and not for unity and I think I certainly fall prey to that at times, I must admit. But, there have been some very interesting studies by scholars about these two sides of Buddhist meditation - both contextualizing them within the pre-Buddhist meditative traditions of India, where the sort of concentration techniques, you know, and insight-based techniques, if not with specifically Buddhist insight, can be found in earlier literature like the Upanishads.

00:50.16

So, you have these. And there's- there can be questions raised and scholars and philosophers have raised questions whether there is a complete compatibility or can be a complete compatibility between these two different types of meditation. Certainly, most Buddhists would say, yes, there is and can be, but it's not self-evident necessarily.

00:50.38

It's always been interesting to me that in the first iteration of the Buddha's so-called first sermon - the sutra and the turning of the wheel of dhamma or dharma - the origin of suffering is ascribed to craving and not overtly, at least, to ignorance. And there's some interesting material in there that one could get at in terms of meditation techniques that are more intent, it seems, on suppressing things like craving and others that are more intent, perhaps, on suppressing ignorance.

00:51.10

Anyway, just one more very quick point to make about this, because I don't want to take too much time and I do want to get onto the more philosophical, in quotes, part of my talk. And that is simply to say that there- Buddhists have disputed about these matters and if you sort of follow the history of Buddhist discourse about meditation down through the years, many of you have heard, for instance, of things like the sudden gradual debate in the East Asian traditions, starting in China, but well- arguably starting in India, but certainly quite well-known in both Chinese and Japanese settings.

00:51.46

Or something like the famous Samya debate in Tibet where Indian pundits and a Chinese Chan or Zen master debated over, among other things, the nature of meditation. And all I'm trying to say with this is that Buddhists, though they lay out basics of meditation and there is a kind of broad agreement on the categories and types - the order

in which one should do it, what gets priority - all these things are very much in dispute.

00:52.15

And so, it's by no means a simple matter just to say Buddhist meditation, as if this were a unitary phenomenon. It's a very, very complex one. I would incidentally, probably, locate Saraha somewhere in these debates over, for instance, sudden and gradual approaches to liberation, as well as to, you know, the question of what sort of meditation has priority.

00:52.41

Anyway, I'm told I'm- got only five minutes here, so I'll try to get down to what is perhaps the philosophically slightly more interesting part of my remarks. And this is to return basically to a series of very quick meditations on Mark Siderits's title question - is meditation a means of knowledge. I think one thing to note here - and certainly Mark is aware of this - if we were to translate the phrase "means of knowledge" back into Sanskrit as "pramana"-

00:53.15

-and this is, in fact, often an English translation for this very important term for the means of valid cognition or avenues of valid cognition. There is no such thing as a bhavana pramana. There is no meditation listed as a means of knowledge. But this is merely a technical point, because it's quite clear that the various sorts of things that happen in meditation to meditators do come to be regarded as valid means of knowledge.

00:53.46

They would in some cases be found under the category of yogi pratyaksa or yogic perception, which we've had mentioned a couple of times. Some of them might be regarded as instances of mental perception, which is another type of perception. And, in fact, if you were going to talk about discursive and analytical types of meditation, you could say that meditation also could involve something like proper inference, which is itself also a pramana or valid means of knowledge.

00:54.15

What I want to do primarily is to try to delineate what seem to me five different levels of claims about knowledge through meditation. And I'm gonna sort of- they're gonna go in, I suppose, sort of ascending order of cultural difference and problematicity for people who come from a largely Western cultural context.

00:54.42

And I want to say that the first level that I've sort of identified for the types of knowledge that might come to us from meditation - obviously again, a topic of Alan's talk and something many other people are talking about here - is what you might call the neurophysiological. And this is simply the claim that through the examination of- with accepted scientific techniques of a variety of different ways- sorry, of a variety of different people who engage in meditation practice, we can get information about how the brain works and it may tell us things about how the brain works that we didn't know before.

00:55.23

I think Richard Davidson's research and research of other people, as well, who are involved in this area are beginning to show that this is a kind of knowledge that we can get from the- in effect, the fact that people meditate. And to the degree that, perhaps, the things we learn about the brain from neurophysiological studies tell us something about our- about empathy or other kinds of social values, there is some good in this that goes quite beyond the sort of knowledge that's to be gained from it.

00:55.56

The second level of knowledge, it seems to me, that is claimed for meditation is what I would call the psychological. And this is the claim that physiology aside and with tradition Buddhist claims of- metaphysical claims in abeyance, the practice of Buddhist meditation techniques gives us first-hand knowledge of our own cognitive and affective lives.

00:56.19

And the ability to control this through meditation will both provide us with information and again, perhaps, some social good, as well. The third level is perhaps slightly related to the psychological and I- but I would call it the epistemological level. And this is the assertion that physiology, psychology and Buddhist metaphysics notwithstanding, reports about the nature and functions of the mind conveyed by meditators on the basis of their experience are a legitimate source of knowledge about these topics.

00:56.53

And I think this is the argument that Alan has been making and I think many people have made this argument in a variety of ways. And there are- I think there are sort of harder and softer versions of this kind of claim. I think, actually, Alan's is a very open and a kind of accommodating and softer version of the harder claims in what once famously was called the Buddhist empiricism thesis.

00:57.16

And this is the, you know, the sort of argument - Buddhism is by god a scientific experiment. And, you know, you had a hypothesis that enlightenment is possible and you've got a technique that you can use, which is like 20 years of meditation and you find out at the end whether your hypothesis was correct.

00:57.32

This, I think, is a little more troubling and I tend to sympathize with Mark in his suspicion of this. All three of these first that I'm describing - the neurophysiological, the psychological, the epistemological - I think are probably unproblematic for most of us. I want to just, in closing, point very quickly to two other levels of claims that are made more by tradition and by traditionalists than by modern people.

00:58.00

And these are first of all, what I would describe as the metaphysical claim. And by metaphysical I mean both in an epistemological and in a sort of

ontological sense that is the claim that in fact, Buddhist meditation does allow you to see things that are beyond our ordinary ken. I just want to very quickly point out that in the classic accounts of the Buddha's enlightenment, he is said to have gained three knowledges on the night of his enlightenment.

00:58.29

The first of these turns out to be the retro-cognitive ability to see infinitely into all of his past lives. The second is the clairvoyant ability to gaze around him in the cosmos and see exactly why beings are born, beings suffer and beings die. Clearly, if this is the kind of thing that meditation gets you, there are claims here that go considerably beyond what most of us tend to assume about the world.

00:58.57

And, you know, I would go further and say that there are- when you begin looking into the literature on meditation, the claims that are made for meditation and what it can do for you,

it definitely begins to push a great deal at our sense of the boundaries between, quote, mind and, quote, reality. Just leave that at that.

00:59.19

The final claim, and I'm not gonna detail this much, but it is important, is the transformative claim or transformational claim. And that is that meditation actually turns you into a different sort of being. And, in fact, Buddhism does insist in most of its classic traditions that when you gain a direct insight into the nature of reality on the platform or basis of a concentrated mind, you are no longer an ordinary being. You're an arya or noble or holy being.

00:59.48

And the fundamental notion here is that there is something you can know, if you know it in the right way - which is meditatively or directly - that actually changes thoroughly what you are and who you are. And it, you know, there's a great deal, I think, of philosophical interest, but I

think a great deal that is philosophically
problematic in these sorts of claims -

01:00.12

that knowing in a particular way will actually
change the sort of being we are. I don't deny
that, of course, our knowledge affects who we are
in all sorts of ways. But, there seems to me a
pretty strong claim involved here. At least in
the classic sources. And I think that we at least
have to sort of respect the fact that the classic
sources make these very, very strong claims.

01:00.38

And, of course, the claims go all the way up to
the notion that once you get to the end of all of
this, you're omniscient. Pretty- in a sense,
pretty close to the omniscience that has always
been ascribed to the, say, the Judeo-Christian
God. You know, there- again, I'm pretty much
gonna leave it there. Can maybe pick up with some
other points later, but just, you know, to say
that within the whole compass of meditation, you
know, disputes quite aside, there are so many

different sorts of meditative states that are described in the tradition.

01:01.11

And, you know, both in terms of the possible scientific interests these have, as well as in the sorts of philosophical problems that claims about these experiences have, that there's still a great deal to be discussed. Thank you.

APPLAUSE

ANNE KLEIN

01:01.35

Thank you so much, Roger. And we continue with this investigation into knowledge with Thubten Jinpa, who received his geshe lama degree from Ganden Shartse and went on to get a PhD at Cambridge University and is now teaching at McGill and who will further refine this investigation by asking the question of whether meditation leads to knowledge of mental states.

THUBTEN JINPA

01:02.02

Thank you. I've actually written a text in response to the target essay that Mark Siderits has beautifully presented and I'm not going to

read the essay since it is already posted on the
blog. Those who are interested in the details can
download it and read it.

01:02.26

TAPE END

MIND & REALITY

DAY TWO - TAPE 4 of 7 - PANEL ON MEDITATION

TAPE START

ANNE KLEIN

00:00.02 -and who will further refine this investigation
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*****START NEW MATERIAL*****

00:00.35 What I wish to do is to summarize some of the
points I've raised there. And Mark Siderits in
his essay, which is provocatively titled, "Is
Meditation a Means to Knowledge?" raises some
very critical questions about meditation. And
what I would like to do is to look at two

particular questions that he is raised. One is, what is the role in meditation in the Buddhist enlightenment project, as he calls it.

00:01.06

And the second is, is mediation- can meditation be in an epistemic partnership with science more than becoming an interesting object, albeit an important one, object of study by science. However, before I deal with that, I would like to ask the more salient question which Roger Jackson brought up, briefly, which is what is meditation.

00:01.37

And I think it is important to appreciate the context in which this kind of discussion is taking place. Sometimes we have a tendency to come up with our own understanding of a particular concept, which may have been, you know, derived from a tradition such as Buddhism, but somehow we have a modern understanding of that. And then we impose that understanding onto the tradition, which creates a lot of problems.

00:02.08 So, I'm very happy that Roger in his- Roger Jackson in his opening really reminded us the context in which our interest in meditation has taken place. And also those of- who have followed some of the recent news coverage - there's been quite a popular interest in the whole kind of idea of scientific study of meditation.

00:02.33 There's a- it's become a kind- almost like a kind of a bit of a fashion. So, everybody seems to be jumping on the bandwagon. So, what I would like to do is to take, you know, take us back to a kind of a more critical appreciation of the context in which what this kind of dialogue means.

00:02.54 And here, although the panel is on meditation, and particularly the Buddhist meditation and the science- Sorry. I see this as representing part of a bigger picture, which is an encounter between Buddhism and science. And that bigger picture was presented beautifully in the opening

keynote address of Owen Flanagan, which, you know, which was entitled "Science for Monks."

00:03.20

And I think it is important to keep that in mind because otherwise, sometimes there is the tendency to reduce Buddhism into meditation and then furthermore, there is a danger of reducing meditation into some homogenous mental state, which could then be reduced to some observable bio-physical phenomenon or an event. And then, find out what are its benefits and then possibly, at some point you can create a pharmacology product, which can, you know, which can give us that state and then, you know, lo and behold, Buddhism is redundant.

00:03.57

And there is that danger and I would like people to be aware of this. And I say so because in a sense, I'm in a rather peculiar position. On the one hand, I have one foot in the modern academia, but my other foot is still firmly planted in the Tibetan monastic tradition. Although I'm no

longer a monk. And being brought up as a traditional Buddhist in the traditional Buddhist culture, in some sense I have to constantly, you know, put on these two hats.

00:04.29

So, in a sense, what is happening here is a kind of dialogue that is taking place internally in me, as well. And I would like to- So, in- So, in this respect, what I would like to appeal to all the participants in this dialogue is to really be more self-critically aware. So, for example, when we as scholars of Buddhism interpret certain Buddhist ideas, certain Buddhist traditions, we have to be more self-critically aware that, you know, there might be certain ideas that we are somehow imposing on the tradition.

00:05.06

And in this respect, I think it is very important to have some kind of respect for the self-understanding of the traditions themselves. So, in the case of Tibetan Buddhism, which is what- a form of Buddhism that I'm familiar with, in the

academic jargon referred to as the Indo-Tibetan tradition -

00:05.26

those who are working from the Indo-Tibetan tradition in the scholarly world, I think the intellectual etiquette demands that we accord quite a high degree of respect to the voice of the tradition itself and the self-understanding of the tradition. This, I think is very important.

00:05.43

Second is a degree of humility is also very important on a- in people who are participating in the dialogue. And also, because- and mutual respect. Because if there is mutual respect, then we will not fall into the temptation of trying to reduce one set of explanation and frame of working into another set of explanation and framework.

00:06.08

We will respect the integrity of the two cultures that are being brought together here. Similarly,

if there is a greater self-critical awareness, then also one will be more- let's say, for example, on the part of the traditional Buddhists - and I would perhaps include myself in that camp - if there is a greater self-critical awareness then on the part of the traditional Buddhist scholars who are interested in engaging in this kind of dialogue, then there will be a greater sensitivity to be able to distinguish what part, aspects of the Buddhist thought and practice - or particularly Buddhist thought - are normative ideas.

00:06.55

What part of the Buddhist thought may be in some sense operative assumptions? Which- So, and what part may have more, at least in the self-understanding of the tradition, claims for greater empirical, you know, factuality. So, on the part of the traditional Buddhist scholars, there will be greater appreciation of these distinctions, although traditionally we may not make such distinctions.

00:07.22

But by using- by being exposed to a kind of a critical scholarship of, you know, modern Buddhist scholarship, one will be able to then appreciate these distinctions. So that the traditional Buddhist will be in a better position to really talk more articulately and confidently about the ideas that they will bring onto the table. So that the danger will be avoided of this kind of imperialistic portrayal of Buddhism as being some kind of perfect science.

00:07.58

The- some of the more strong claims that were made by the early- in the early stages of, you know, Buddhist modernism - these could be avoided. Similarly, on the part of the, you know, philosophers and scientists, if they are more self-critically aware, then they will be also in a better position to appreciate what part of their theories are operative, you know, assumptions.

00:08.23

What part of their theories can have a greater weight for the Buddhists? Anything that would have an empirical evidence would carry a tremendous weight for the Buddhists because at least in an ideal understanding of the tradition as, you know, Owen presented and also Alan beautifully presented in his keynote address this morning, that at least in principle, in the Buddhist thought between experience, reason and scripture, there is a hierarchy of authority - experience, in some sense, trumps both reason and scripture.

00:09.00

So, therefore, in this kind of dialogue if the scientists are more- and philosophers are more critically self-aware, then they will be able to distinguish what part of their presentation is speculative, theoretical and how- you know, based upon certain operative assumptions. And what part will have more empirical evidence. For example, like in Susan's presentation, there were very

clear suggestions that some of these core knowledge, you know, abilities were innate.

00:09.33

And if the evidence is very strong, this is something that will carry tremendous weight on the- to the Buddhists. Which would then- The Buddhists would then be, in some sense, compelled by their commitment to reason and experience, somehow find a way of incorporating these kind of, you know, data into their worldview.

00:09.55

So, with the respect to the- Sorry, I have only five minutes. What I've done in my paper is to raise the question - what is meditation? And one thing that we always- I wouldn't say always, but quite often forget is that meditation is an English term. And that somehow, we assume that we're using this term by referring to some phenomenon that comes from traditionally from ancient classical traditions, like, you know, Indian Buddhists or whatever.

00:10.30

So, we tend to forget that here we're using an English term to describe a phenomenon that is more dominant in the Eastern spiritual tradition and then we forget about what complications this might raise. Secondly, also in the Tibetan tradition, the term for meditation in Sanskrit is bhavana, which has the notion of cultivation of something. So, whether it is a cultivation of a habit or way of being or way of seeing things. The Tibetan term is gom. Which has an etymological connotation of cultivating familiarity.

00:11.09

So, built in the term itself, there is a understanding of some kind of repetitive process of, you know, conditioning your mind or familiarizing your mind in a particular way. So, because of this, the- when I'm in my own professional work as a translator of classical Tibetan texts, so when I translate classical texts into English whenever the term gom or gumpa

- gom as a noun or gompa as a verb - appears, I cannot just throw in meditation or meditate.

00:11.43

Because that would produce a text that is, you know, in many instances will be totally, you know, meaningless. So, which suggests that the term has a much wider application and different English terms will have to be used in different contexts. So, sometimes we use cultivate, develop, visualize, meditate, espy, contemplate and so on. So, I just want to, you know, bring this linguistic point.

00:12.10

It may be a simple point, but in this simplicity, I mean, there is some important points in this. So, and also, with respect to the role of meditation here in my presen- in my paper, I have brought up some of the classical formulations of the traditional Buddhist understanding of how the development process is supposed to occur in meditation.

00:12.40

And in Bob Thurman's presentation and in Gary Tubb yesterday, there were references made to a notion of an education where it proceeds from listening and learning and memorization, then going on to critical reflection and reasoning, culminating in some deep meditative concentration. So, this formal- formulation is very well known in the classical Indian Buddhist tradition - referred to as the three stages of understanding.

00:13.11

Understanding derived through learning or hearing. Understanding derived from reflection, critical reflection. Understanding derived from meditation. So, and within the Tibetan tradition and then the third level of understanding is really characterized by spontaneity, effortlessness and so on.

00:13.31

And the idea is that there can be an instance of knowledge, but knowledge alone cannot immediately translate into a behavioral expression. So, what

is required is an internalization or integration of that knowledge into the very being of the person. And this would be the Buddhist response to the question, the problem that the Greek philosophers had - how is it that the knowledge does not translate into action. If you know that smoking is bad for your health, but you still keep smoking.

00:14.02

And the Greek philosophers' solution to this was to come up with a notion of *acrasia*, a problem of will. Whereas the Buddhist solution would be to meditate and internalize and integrate the knowledge into your being, which will then translate into a transformed- transformation in your behavior. So- and in the Tibetan tradition, these three levels of understanding is further subsumed into another triad, where we talk about the view or the outlook, philosophical outlook; meditation; and action.

- 00:14.37 So, the idea here is that philosophical outlook will provide the content for your meditative concentration, which will then translate into action.
- 00:14.49 And this triad is further subsumed into another triad - Tibetans love these numbers. And outlines and so on. So, those who work in the Tibetan texts, they are familiar with this. Into what is the Tibetan tradition refers to as the ground, meditation and result. Sorry- ground, path and result.
- 00:15.11 So, the ground here is the philosophical understanding of the nature of reality. Path is the way of inner meditation and action based upon that and the result is the enlightenment that one is aspiring for. So, there is a much more complex understanding of the process of development and transformation in the classical tradition.

00:15.32

And I think it is important to take seriously the traditions' voice and the self-understanding. Now, finally, with response- One minute? Ok. On the final point, I think I don't- I do not share the skepticism that Mark Siderits has raised. Mainly for a pragmatic reason, which is that, for example, the cognitive science have to get their vocabulary of the mental reality from somewhere.

00:16.08

Ok? The brain science cannot provide the vocabulary for the mental reality. Now, what are the sources? They are, of course, candidates for this in the West's own tradition. You have a rich spiritual tradition. The West has tremendously creative literature, particularly those writings of existential, existentialist philosophers, you know, who have a deep insight into the human psyche and there is, of course, psychology and so on.

00:16.35

But this is one area where the Buddhist Abhidharma tradition can really make an important

contribution. Because Buddhist Abhidharma taxonomy of mental factors represent probably one of the most sustained attempts to create a map of the mental world.

00:16.54

Although the tradition- There is not a suggestion that it represents the complete map. But there is an attempt to map out and define each of these mental states, that relationship with the other mental factors, the causal, cause and effect dynamics between them. And so on. Now, whether this taxonomy of mental reality constitutes the finding, empirical findings, you know, through meditation or whether it is based upon the Buddha's statements that were compiled together.

00:17.26

Or whether they are based upon speculative philosoph- you know, philosophical analysis of the mental terminology. This is, of course, open to question. My own personal feeling is probably it's a combination of all three. So, and this is

one area I feel that Buddhism can make a significant contribution.

00:17.44

And Evan, in his presentation, made a wonderful suggestion of three points if I can just remind- It's basically, I'll just read them. Evan Thompson suggested that by incorporating the first person methodology, it can potentially generate new data on mental reality. It can create techniques for reproducing the mental states reliably and robustly. And the third one was that it can refine the first person descriptions of subjective experiences, so that it's not just totally untrained. Thank you.

ANNE KLEIN

00:18.24

Thank you.

APPLAUSE

ANNE KLEIN

00:18.36

Thank you so much. Thank you among other things for reminding us that meditation is a process in which the mind itself is changed. It does not remain, in the vocabulary Alan introduced this

morning, in-idle. That is unchanged by what it is perceiving.

00:18.53

And now we continue opening our perspective more broadly. Professor Joseph Loizzo who is a Harvard trained psychiatrist and a Columbia trained Buddhist scholar is going- And a clinical- currently Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Complementary and Integrative Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College, will give us a kind of panoramic overview of what he refers to at one point of Eurasian culture.

JOSEPH LOIZZO

00:19.27

Thank you. And thank you both to Chris and Annabella for organizing my colleagues and for all of you - I want to thank you Thubten Jinpa for being- specifically addressing comments to the previous speakers, so I'm- I can bat clean up as they say in baseball. And that is - just be impressionistic and try to talk about how I see meditation in my own schizophrenic balance between the Indian- my training as a Buddhist

scholar and as a Western psychotherapist and researcher.

00:20.05

I'm gonna look at this topic in four different ways. First, historically. The idea of whether meditation is a valid means of knowledge is a- it's a modern question. It's- prior- Descartes, for example, although he doubted Catholic tradition, didn't doubt meditation. Subsequently in the Britain- in the Protestant British analytic tradition, it began to be eroded and along with the Roman Church and the monastic academy that was the support of it.

00:20.37

So, the story was given- that was given for this was the idea- was essentially given story in my view that is the rebirth of Greek rationality in the dark age of Catholic decadence. And somehow, contemplation got associated with the latter. With Catholic decadence.

00:20.53

It's true that Aristotle's version of Greek culture had been lost and we needed the Islamic philosophers to resurrect it for us. But, the Augustinian mainstream that was represented in Catholic tradition, was equally Greek.

00:21.11

And our Renaissance, in that sense, by flipping to one- to the other side of our Greek heritage, was partial. For Toynbee, the great historian of world history, it was a schismatic move to cut out the middlemen who linked us to Eurasian civilization, the Romans. And, as such, its success for us lay in the choice of an extroverted version of Greek culture that was friendly to our colonizing ambitions.

00:21.37

This is maybe imperial intellectual, intellectual imperialism. As a measure of the violence done by the crusading take on Greek culture, contrast the London school's motto - knowledge is power - with know thyself or the truth shall set you free.

00:21.52 To undo the violence, I turned to comparative philosophy, my second point of view. Carl Potter, an Indian historian and scholar, observed that knowledge in the Indian tradition is measured against an ideal we now think of as religious.

00:22.05 And that is, the ideal personal liberation or freedom. He viewed yoga and meditation as a means by which Indians committed mind and body to a vision of reality, testing its truth in the first person laboratory of their lives.

00:22.17 These presuppositions are clear in the four noble truths, the basic framework of all Buddhist learning and practice. The first two trace human suffering to delusion. The second two describe Shakyamuni's realization of freedom and spell out the path of reeducation he took to it.

00:22.33 The multi-disciplinary nature and contemplative spirit of Buddhist learning reflects the Buddhists' own reliance on three disciplines -

wisdom, meditation and ethics. We're getting there on translating Samadhiya's (ph) meditation. While wisdom includes philosophy and science, it aims at a direct personal experience of reality that requires meditation and yields personal freedom and empathic art.

00:22.55

So, this ambitious vision challenges our modern belief that meditation- it's a means of indoctrination, not knowledge. And, again, I trace this belief to our break with Rome and our construction of science and religion as a mutual exclusive and divergent pathways of civilizations.

00:23.13

Like the Indians, the Greeks saw philosophy, science and spirituality as convergent and they accepted two paths to knowledge - Pythagorean and Aristotelian path that emphasized math and physics and logic, and an Empedoclean, Platonic one that emphasized language and contemplation. The Catholic church controlled both of those, but

actively adopted the contemplative, Platonic tradition. So, when Aristotelian culture was revived to challenge the Church, moderns privileged math and physics and suspected linguistics and meditation.

00:23.47

Among the contributions of Buddhism crucial for us, is the unique way it integrates scientific and religious or spiritual disciplines. Like our modern tradition, the Buddhist tradition prefer reason and evidence over authority and scripture. Like our tradition, it saw worlds as produced and destroyed by natural causes and humans as evolving from mammals.

00:24.06

Like our tradition, Buddhism transgresses (sic) the limits placed on human potential by authoritarian religions, rejecting theistic ideals of omniscience and omnipotence. But while we distributed these ideals across human communities over time, conceding that individuals are incapable of objective knowledge and action,

Buddhists revised them into humanistic ideals of a therapeutic omniscience and an omni-compassionate social agency.

00:24.31

Instead of seeking objectivity- Another way of saying this - instead of seeking objectivity by perfecting disembodied, impersonal knowledge and technology, Buddhists saw no surer way to human objectivity than to perfect humanity itself. No appeal to authority, the tradition's commitment to Buddhahood is as a reproducible paradigm of that kind of human perfection.

00:24.54

So by increasing control over the mind, emotion and motivation, meditation plays a key role in replicating Buddhahood. For two reasons, meditative self-correction was never displaced in India as it was in the West and in particular, one of these has to do with the way in which Indian linguistics and yoga or meditative techniques were far more rigorous than their Western analogue.

00:25.17 So, it was a stronger- the contemplative sciences were extremely robust in the Indian tradition and this may relate to the second reason, which is given India's greater stability and tolerance, these traditions were not restricted to religious elites, but universalized into rational disciplines, supporting progressive scientific and religious traditions.

00:25.42 So, when the time came for a renaissance of Indian science, satellites like Tibet had no need to abandon the Buddhist contemplative paradigm to modernize. Historically, among the young satellites in Eurasia, we in the far West chose an extroverted version of science to enhance industrial wealth and military power through physical science and technology.

00:26.03 While the older, richer societies, including their satellites like Tibet, continued refining contemplative versions meant to sustain and

spread mercantile wealth and political tolerance through psycho-social science and technology. So, given our need for both material and human progress, integrating these two paths of civilization seems worth trying. And for this I turn to the Buddhists and Western mind sciences.

00:26.25

From the West, I want to sketch an evolutionary view of meditation using models drawn from two brain studies. The first is a split brain study in which epileptics who've had their two cortical hemispheres surgically severed - the right hand literally doesn't know what the left hand is doing. And this is a model for dissociation and the evolution of self-deception, in my view.

00:26.52

In one study, the surgical split was extended by putting a blinder between the eyes, then visual cues were given to the eye that served the non-verbal right brain and directed it to move the hand under its control, ok? Then the investigator addressed the left brain and asked what were you

doing. What did the hand- why did your hand move?
In reply, the verbal mind gave an answer, even
though it didn't know.

00:27.17

And, not only did it explain itself, it took
credit for the action and defended the fiction,
ok. Such findings challenge Descartes's view of
discursive mind as a unitary, independent,
infallible executive and support Freud's view,
evolutionary view of ego as a self-deceiving
surface agency, largely run by unconscious
emotions and instincts.

00:27.38

As Freud saw dissociation of the verbal and
preverbal mind is normal in human waking, more so
in males than females and worse under stress than
relaxation. For us, the mind-brain evolved as a
hybrid of three- the human brain evolved as a
hybrid of three simpler systems that take turns
driving the overall system.

00:27.55

So in stress or trauma, the higher systems default to a survival mode of worst-case projection, defensive emotion and fight-flight reflexes run by the reptilian brain stress response. In the outlook of Descartes, Hume and Kant are signs of this mode - a mindset of outward suspicion and inward self-evidence, an emotional style of mistrust and isolation, and a dissociated sense of the body as an insensate mechanism. The result has been called the egocentric predicament.

00:28.23

The postmodern cure is an inversion of the same disease - doubting rational agency, mistrusting social emotions and reifying the body as an infallible executive. A genuine alternative to these is the centrist tradition of therapeutic philosophy represented by critics like Nietzsche, Freud, Ricoeur, Wittgenstein, Nagel and there are many others. This tradition reopens the Greek path of self-correction. Combining a de-reifying

critique of discursive ego with a contemplative discipline of self-transcendence.

00:28.50

To the extent that psychotherapy represents this tradition, research suggest that it works like meditation by up-regulating attention, self-correction and learning. A brain imaging study of music processing sheds light on this and gives us a model for self-regulation and the evolution of self-correction.

00:28.08

In the untrained, music listening activated a brain module in the nonverbal right cortex and inhibited the verbal. In trained musicians, listening simultaneously lit up the syntax module on the verbal side and the music module on the nonverbal side, supporting an integrated kind of processing. So, the musicians' capacity to compose music involves a network language between the brain region behind human language and an older region that processes simpler symbol

systems, like prosody, bird song and grunts and cries.

00:29.42

In that sense, self-regulation may be looked at as a networked function based on neural plasticity, in which usage builds up neural connections - like the muscle that Alan was talking about - of attention that let higher consciousness integrate older brain systems, enhancing integrity and learning competence. So, coherence and integration in the human mind-brain also varies widely. It is greater in females than males and greater under relax stimulation than stress.

00:30.09

The evolution of self-correction likely involves a mammalian synergy between a large cortex, enhanced social learning and greater safety and abundance through cooperation. It reflects an enriched abundance mode based in the biology of sex and inhibiting the stress-based survival mode. This mode enhances fertility, nurturance,

empathy, social learning, capitalizing on windows for child rearing.

00:30.30

And the ability to switch from survival to abundance mode probably grew more crucial as isolated periods of abundance gave way to stable agrarian surpluses and civilization. Religious disciplines like contemplation seem to work by cultivating a natural mammalian capacity to disarm worse-case defenses and reset the mind-brain for social living.

00:30.50

Meditation and techniques like free association share brain features like greater functional coherence, more right-left cortical balance, better vertical integration of neural systems and conscious regulation of unconscious processes. Antidotes to our modern mindset, such techniques foster an outlook of open curiosity, an emotional style of self-disclosure, and a conscious mind-body integrity.

00:31.12

So, for current science, our mind-brain combines several systems, each of which works in one of two systems modes - a conservative egocentric mode, heightening self-preservation and memory and a generative, altruistic mode, heightening self-correction and learning. And meditation as a social epistemological practice, in that sense, cultivates the generative mode of engaging reality, which makes us fit for objective knowledge and for social action.

00:31.36

In this view, Nagel - whose work I think is- has influenced me greatly in this - it is wrong to assume that the methods of self-knowledge we need to be more objective don't exist, ok. Which brings us to the Buddhist meditative tradition. Among the many Buddhist models of meditation, I'll just look at the Buddhist logic school and its critical realistic view. I'll start with that and then hopefully have time to move along to other points of view.

00:32.05 Anticipating Tart's (ph) dualistic interactionism, this school sees mind as essentially distinct from matter and external reality, while causally interdependent and interactive with them. Anticipating Linus's (ph) quantum theory of consciousness, it views mind non-foundationally as a dynamic wave function in a mind stream constantly shifting with variable input and energy.

00:32.25 Addressing the problem of mediated knowledge with an empiricist's privileging of perception, Buddhist logic anticipates Kant in seeing mind as able to transcend its own constructs and gain direct knowledge through self-correction. More phenomenological than Kant, its theory of mental perception holds that mind can gain direct knowledge by reflexively sampling the stream of consciousness the instant after a sense perception and before its constructive cognition.

00:32.49 I realize I'm just racing through this stuff. I have to apologize, but hopefully we'll have some discussion time. This school sees mental perception as a natural competence that can be culturally enhanced by formal logic, meditative control of attention and yogic control of breathing, yielding so-called yogic perception.

00:33.07 The model's limits were in explaining the persistence of learned and innate blocks to the mind's self-transcendent potential - that sort of why- the paradox of why- the eudemonic paradox of why we don't get it. And in mapping how meditation works to correct those blocks, these limits were addressed by the Buddhist idealist theory of the subconscious mind, which served like Freud's to map the dissociation of negative habits and the transformative process through which they were integrated and corrected.

00:33.35 The centrist school, which I want to focus on, critiqued this model in turn. So, that's the

Madhyamaka tradition people have referred to, Nagarjuna's tradition. And it critiqued this idealist model for its tacit reification of mind as a reality in itself. Just as it critiqued the more dualistic model for its reification of the little entities or elementary particles that things supposedly were reduced to.

00:33.58

The centrist solution was based on Nagarjuna's view that neither object nor subject, matter nor mind has any non-relative reality or identity, but all do exist and work as sheer relativities and social conventions. In the definitive centrist model of Chandrakirti, all forms of bondage and freedom, delusion and learning are consensual realities without objectivity or essence that exist only as unexamined.

00:34.20

That is, only as illusions- Just like illusions are fictions of language. As long as we suspend disbelief, reality is here. The minute we start to examine it- And science only exists because we

stop examining at a certain point of view, right?
At a certain point. So, this anticipates
Wittgenstein's vision of human forms of life as
language games without ground or essence, as well
as Dennett's multiple drafts theory of mind-brain
processing. Just a lighter way of looking at how
we assemble reality.

00:34.48

And for Chandrakirti and his heirs, the terms of
analysis shift from formologic (ph) or
deconstructive phenomenology to de-reifying
language therapy, while the contemplative methods
shift from non-discursive (unintell) and
concentration, to dialogical contemplation and
social emotional self-correction. This is Piet
Hut's New York school of meditation - sort of
much more self-corrective and let's say
thoughtful or analytic.

00:35.13

These shifts were possible because of
Chandrakirti's critique of the essentialist
commitments of formological (ph) and

phenomenological methods, as well as his refinement of centrist method as a purely therapeutic analysis of one's own and others reifying habits of thought and perception. I want to say that again because you know, we can't miss this point. Thank you.

00:35.30

That the essence of sort of de-realizing all this stuff, all the sciences - both physical sciences and psycho-social sciences or mental sciences, cognitive science - that Madhyamaka did especially as refined in Chandrakirti, or especially clear as refined in Chandrakirti is that- is to put the emphasis on correcting our own misperceptions. And that that somehow has to be before any either philosophical or scientific endeavor.

00:35.58

And if we forget that and neglect that discipline, then all of our sciences - however beautiful they are, however effective they are - are likely to be easily misused by us because

we're blind. Ok. So, it's a simple point, abhorrently simple perhaps. Hard to get a grant for. But, without objective or subjective self-evidence, objectivity comes of impartiality and magnanimity via the social correction of blocks to communicative and collaborative openness. Ok.

00:36.28

So, we're getting out of our heads and trying to sort of help each other be better observers and knowers. Thus, Chandrakirti can dispense with objectivist and constructivist jargon, as well as the reified grammar of predication behind the conundrum of mediated knowledge. So, the whole issue of, you know, the relationship between-hierarchy between the physical and mind sciences and so on is sort of distilled or dissolved.

00:36.56

And this economy also permits an epistemology in which all dualistic knowledge - conceptual or perceptual - is seen as constructed by social consensus and linguistic usage. On the one hand, this supports a common sense realism in which

explicitly discursive mental perception can yield knowledge as direct as tacitly discursive sense perception – something Anne's work on Buddhist logic makes very clear in a very elegant way.

00:37.22

On the other, it supports a view of yogic perception in which contemplative language therapy yields a de-reifying wisdom that is rational and conforming to verbal conventions, non-dualistic in ruling out objective and subjective self-evidence, yet ultimate in opening mind and heart to reality and its sheer relativity.

00:37.40

So the idea is we make better observers, better human beings, not better scientists, not better, you know, mind scientists, not, you know- but people who are more open, essentially. We do that by realizing that there is- that Buddhist meditation and practice is a therapy that we all very much need to move from the illness of being

sort of self-enclosing, self-deluding or self-deceptive beings. That's the human condition.

00:38.11

This rigorous non-dualism clears the way for a centrist contemplative system that can integrate both physical and psycho-social sciences within a philosophical objectivity seen as the only cure for our self-limiting daemon of reification. So, this the, like, the kalicakra synthesis, the esoteric synthesis of inner sciences, outer sciences and imperishable or transcendent sciences - therapeutic sciences, you might say - that make us more able to use all the sciences.

00:38.39

And I hope I've shared with you my view of meditation as a cultural extension of the mind's natural way of engaging reality. I close with a global vision for contemplative science, consistent with ancient wisdom and current science. Buddhism sees meditation as a reproducible way of helping mind clear learned and innate blocks to objective knowledge and

expertise. Buddhism maps a road not taken by the West, along which ancient contemplative arts became progressive, scientific and spiritual disciplines, clearing a non-violent mercantile path for human science and civilization.

00:39.10

Western centrists like Wittgenstein and Nagel are de facto members of this Eurasian tradition and the wheel of self-correction they reinvented is still turning in many traditions. For complex reasons, it was most fully developed and preserved in the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition or the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. As a result, Indo-Tibetan culture is poised to spark a second global renaissance of contemplative philosophy, science and technology. And such a renaissance could make all the difference as groups like this one around the world try to conceive a truly universal and sustainable culture for human civilization.

APPLAUSE

ANNE KLEIN

00:39.45 Thank you.

APPLAUSE

ANNE KLEIN

00:39.56 Thank you all for marvelous insights, marvelous narrative. And we have a little bit of time for questions. Certainly, a theme has been the interaction between conceptual and other kinds of knowing. This is a theme that's- and the impact on the body, the impact on state of subjectivity itself, the impact on interpersonal relationships.

00:40.29 As Joseph so eloquently discussed here. And as it happens, several of our questions also relate to this theme. There was- there's a question primarily addressed to Mark, but I will- regarding the matter of the self totally dissolving. And the question is - isn't there a need to distinguish between different types or ideas of the self in the context of this discussion of self-dissolution. And while you

take 30 seconds to think of your response, I'd like to open that question up a bit, also.

00:41.11

In the context of the theme of meditation, various forms of contemplation having the capacity to transform the subject that is meditating, of course, there are numerous traditions within Buddhism where you don't- it's not just a question of ending up with not finding the self or the self dissolving, but this itself has a profound impact on the subject. And this is part of what unfolds as one goes through the process of hearing, thinking and meditating. So, if our other panelists would like to address that aspect, I invite you to do so. We'll start with Mark.

MARK SIDERITS

00:41.47

Ok. Very, very useful and perceptive question. I think the quickest way to respond is to lay out one way of looking at the overarching Buddhist non-self project. One way of thinking about that is in terms of - ok, the question is what is the

referent of the word I, which is our favorite word, after all. What is that word the name of? And there are basically, logically, two possibilities.

00:42.14

One possibility, it is- is that it is the name of some one part from among all the parts that make up the psycho-physical complex. And that is the view that the word "I" is the name of a self. Because the idea of a self is the idea of some one part from among all the parts that is the essence of the whole.

00:42.33

The second possibility, logically speaking, is that the word "I" is a way of referring to the whole. Now, the Buddhist non-self project as such - at least on the philosophical side - involves first realizing that there is no one essential part and hence, no self. But, the project doesn't stop there. It goes on to point out that strictly speaking, wholes are unreal. And this is where

the reductionism that I referred to earlier comes in.

00:43.04

Wholes are unreal. Strictly speaking there are just the parts in interaction. It's just our interests and cognitive limitations that make us think of the whole as a real existing over and above the parts. Now, to say that and of course, when we speak of a whole in this context, we're speaking of what you can call the person. So, in other words, the Buddhist non-self project involves two claims.

00:43.29

One is that there is no such thing as a self - no one special part - but second, that persons, that is wholes, are not ultimately real, but conventionally real. That is, the person is a useful fiction. Ok. Now, once we think of non-self in those terms, I think we can, in fact, make sense of the notion of Buddhist practices as involving a kind of personal transformation.

00:43.59

That is, this system as the whole we have learned to think of as one thing - the me - for which the events in this system have meaning, but that involves taking this useful fiction too seriously. Coming to realize that involves a transformation in that system that is this useful fiction of the person me, comes to be understood as just a useful fixture. That's not to say that the person - me - gets utterly dissolved and eliminated. That is rather to say it comes to be seen for what Buddhists claim it really is, which is just a useful way of dealing with all these parts in their incredible complexity.

00:44.46

Ok. So, I think that there is, in fact, room in this vision for notions of meditational practice as forms of self-transformation. Once we understood how that word "self" is being used in that context, it's a way of referring to the system as a whole - the person - which is, after all, real in a way. It's what Indian Buddhists call a pragnya tisa (ph), something that is

conceptually constructed and thus not ultimately real, but does have a kind of being. It's a useful kind of being.

00:45.20

Not first tier ontology, but second tier ontology. Ok. I think that's the way of dealing with that question.

ANNE KLEIN

00:45.29

Thank you.

ROGER JACKSON

00:45.29

Can I just add- Just add a quick couple of footnotes to that. One thing that's interesting in this whole notion of dissolution of self - those of you who have read about or who are otherwise familiar with tantric practices know that the visualization practices involved in tantra involve an almost literal - though, perhaps not atomic, at least at the earlier levels - dissolution of the self. And the reconstruction of the self in an enlightened form.

00:45.57

So, I think this is one interesting sort of twist on this that one might mention. The other thing is that - and I think Anne Klein's work actually has spoken to this as well as anybody's - the whole question then of, meditatively speaking, what is involved when one does not find a self is an important one because it raises philosophical questions, epistemological questions. I don't know what sort of neurophysiological correlates there would be to the non-experience of self-

00:46.31

-but I suspect this is something that's coming down the pipe somewhere. Anyway, there are a lot of discussions within Buddhist tradition about whether one can even have, in effect, a perception of a negation. And I again cite Anne's work as an important source on this.

ANNE KLEIN

00:46.47

Thank you. (Off-mike) The question of the types of subjectivity that are invited to participate in meditation has also been percolating through our discussion here. And one question asks, why

we have talked here so much about meditation and, of course, we have seen that a great deal is included in that word, but we have not heard mention of the term "prayer." How about the value of chanting in Buddhist temples?

00:47.30

What- you're a philosopher? Well, I wonder if this is a- Ok. I'll say something to it.

THUBTEN JINPA

00:47.47

Actually, quite often- sometimes even prayer is actually understood as a form of meditation. There is one Tibetan theorist of meditation - he talks about different types of meditation and he includes prayer. He calls it aspiration. Meditation in the form of aspiration. So, you aspire for a certain state or certain qualities and then there is a sort of a-

00:48.17

Basically, meditation can be kind of, you know, broadly looked at as some kind of disciplined inner reflection. So, if you broadly define meditation in that sense, then prayer is a form

of meditation. And chanting can also be a form of meditation. In fact, there are specific texts, you know, refer to it as kirtan – which means chanting meditation.

00:48.44

So, I mean, I've, you know, I've spent most of my life as a monk. I was a monk for more than twenty-something years and chanting was a very important daily part of my practice. And it's very difficult to kind of, you know, verbally articulate the experience of what it feels like to be part of a chanting group, but there is something definitely deeply contemplative and meditative about the experience. That's all I can say.

ANNE KLEIN

00:49.14

I also personally really welcome your question. I spent a few months at Drepung in India many years ago and when I left, to my surprise, the thing that I missed almost viscerally was the absence of chanting throughout the day. And, I've actually thought about this a good bit. One of my

teachers - a very traditional Tibetan teacher - says that chanting, because often things are translated into English in prose, things that were poetry in Tibetan or Sanskrit, that chanting in his language, in traditional language, is a way for the blessings to enter more completely.

00:49.56

Which I understand in a variety of ways - understanding blessings in a more literal, the chinlab - waves of grace - a kind of energetic, dynamic, vibrational participation, which is certainly part of meditative practice. And one of the, it seems to me, potential dangers of Tibetan practice being collapsed into scientific paradigms, much as we are opening up these paradigms today - Alan's wonderful talk this morning was a great example of that.

00:50.32

You know, there are certain things that we are not talking about. We find ourselves, even here in this panel, talking primarily about ideas, about meditation as a form of knowledge. Where it

is clearly, as everyone in this panel and perhaps everyone in this room also knows very well, a form of transformation. And prayer itself is a kind of transformation. It's an opening up to a larger sense of self. Gregory Bateson has a wonderful article in "Towards an Ecology- New Ecology of Being," I think it's called.

00:51.08

He writes about the- He's actually talking about AA and how calling on a higher power epistemologically shifts one's sense of self. And prayer certainly does that. And meditation doesn't only call on a shift in cognitive understanding, though it profoundly challenges that. I think it's important to mention that terms like "aspiration," like "intention," like "open-hearted devotion," which are not cognitive states in the sense of intellectual ideation - these are crucially important.

00:51.42

They impact us, our entire being. They impact our bodies, our energies as well as our minds. And

meditation in its variety of forms, as a whole, addresses all of these parts of ourselves. So I personally appreciate the question because I think it's a reminder that we must stay very open about the qualities that we're looking at as we discuss meditation in this dialogue.

APPLAUSE

ANNE KLEIN

00:52.19

We have heard a great deal about the divide between neuroscience and spiritual traditions. Neuroscience largely sees consciousness - Am I reading this right? - as physical redef- I can't quite read this. Reductionism, thank you. Or as an emergent phenomenon with no independent spiritual traditions. Endorse independence. But what about the actual or hypothetical conditions for validating an independent consciousness or aspect of independent consciousness?

JOSEPH LOIZZO

00:53.05

I've been quiet here, so I guess I'm on the hot seat.

THUBTEN JINPA

00:53.09 Also, you're the only scientist.

JOSEPH LOIZZO

00:53.10 Ok. I think that, you know, if it has to be validated- I mean, I think that this comes out of a methodological question, ok. If you have to try and prove the existence of consciousness, given the methodological, you know, rules of Western- and presuppositions of Western physical science, you're gonna have a very hard time. It's just really- it's not in the program.

00:53.44 The program, essentially is one like the, you know, very much as Mark described the original Abhidharma tradition - the program of the Western scientists is to essentially critique and erode that sense of God and soul and, you know, its secular locus in mind. But we all walk around feeling very much like we have a self or self-consciousness and I don't think it really needs much proof.

00:54.15

I don't know- In other words, why can't we simply accept that there's that, you know, that there's a form of science which is devoted to- that, you know, we don't have to scientistically (sic) turn physical science into the exclusive description of reality for all purposes. It has a name and an interest. It's a good tool for a specific purpose. If we use it for other things, it won't work. So, if we use that to tell us what consciousness is, we're like, you know, trying to, you know, file our nails with a sledgehammer.

00:54.42

And I think that, on the other- if we just simply try and develop other methodologies that help us explore consciousness, how it works, that assume that it's a reality we're interested in describing for a particular purpose or exploring or transforming in a particular way, we won't have a problem. And we do have these traditions, as many people have pointed out, within the West and certainly we have them within the Buddhist tradition.

00:55.07

This is a challenge that I've grappled with in terms of my own research, because I'm part- I'm on this bandwagon of empirical research of meditation. But, I've tried very much to not go the way of simply trying to prove that meditation works by finding a biological correlate or a brain correlate because it really doesn't tell us anything. And it's not really- the reason why meditation was designed, the way it's defined and the way it works is not- does not include or need brain substrate in order to operate.

00:55.40

It's much more, as in psychotherapy where the system of the science is one of intersubjective experience and assuming that consciousness exists, but, you know, how do we explore it. And I've tried to develop a methodology for doing that and in my work with women with breast cancer, in particular - a recent study funded by the Avon Foundation - I significantly condense the several years of shamata training and giving

people a 20-week course, pretty much in Tibetan Buddhism, you know, including mindfulness and visualization and other things.

00:56.17

And have been looking at its effect on quality of life, which seems to be to be, you know, really where- sort of one way to look at what Buddhism wants to impact, what it's interested on impacting. And the way in which quality of life is measured - even though there are quantitative instruments - are by asking people questions and having questionnaires that ask the person to describe their own internal state. So, they use their own sort of natural self-observing capacity to make descriptions.

00:56.44

So, in that sense, I've tried to subordinate, you know, assuming that consciousness is a reality, we have lots of tools for measuring what it is in Western psychology and lots of tools in Buddhist psychology and then I think things like neurobiological correlates or, you know,

physiological correlates are interesting as an added piece of information. Yes, in fact, when people's quality of life improves, their stress hormones decrease or their cytokines change, or whatever. But that's not measuring the effect because, you know, if my target, you know, result in an intervention is to change a person's stress hormones, what about if they're still miserable, ok. That's not what I want.

00:57.28

Ok. So, I think that these techniques exist. It's really a question of the hegemony or the sort of the gold-standard sense, the attachment, the theological attachment we have to physical science and its quantitative measures as the only way to prove anything that's worth a damn. And I think we need to break that remnant of our own monotheism. You know, detach it from science and have a more pluralistic, open-minded understanding of how to use our minds.

ANNE KLEIN

00:58.01 Thank you, thank you. And that might also open us to question more deeply what exactly it is that we might want to be measuring. Not just brain activity. We have one more question and I'm going to try to get the most out of it by combining two questions that have been received.

00:58.22 One is directed specifically at Thubten Jinpa. How would you say the different, but complimentary uses of the will in Western tradition and meditation in an Eastern tradition function as methods for dealing with cognitive dissonance? And you're asked to reflect on the general outlook of science and personal psychology in the two civilizations. And while you think about condensing that into a one-minute response, there's a related question that I'll offer to see if the panel would like to respond to.

00:59.02 Could we hear more about Western contemplative approaches, including those which recognize all

theories as occurring in consciousness - again, the consciousness question - so that any epistemology of science would benefit from contemplation. Husserl, Steiner - in question marks. So, we'll start with you.

THUBTEN JINPA

00:59.26

Well, it's a very complicated question. I don't know whether I really understand the question clearly. Perhaps, one way of looking at this is the way in which meditation is applied and practiced in the Eastern, say for example in the Buddhist tradition, and the way in which psychoanalysis and some forms of therapy, which is in some sense - particularly the cognitive form of therapy - seems to be very similar to at least one form of Buddhist meditation known as the discursive meditation, or analytic meditation.

01:00.05

So, in that sense, there is definitely a kind of a- at least a similarity, some similarity and one thing that in at least in my kind of, you know,

rough understanding of the Western psychoanalytic and the therapeutic approaches is that there is much greater sensitivity and appreciation of the uniqueness of the individual, whether it is the family history or psychological, biological history or a lot of these factors are taken into account. So there is a much greater specificity to the Western kind of psychotherapeutic and analytic approaches.

01:00.49

And therefore, in some sense, when it comes to clinical applications, you know, they have a much, in some sense, the approach is much more streamlined and focused. Whereas the Buddhist meditation, in some sense, presupposes, you know, what in psychoanalytic language we would call a normality of your mind state. So, Buddhist meditation is really, you know, best seen as a way of getting beyond that normal state and trying to aspire for a more optimal state of mental health, if one can use the- loosely the kind of the term- the sort of health language.

01:01.29 So, you know, there is no reason why they can be seen as, you know, kind of conflicting each other. In fact, I would see them as complimentary. But, they perform quite different functions. So, I know that a lot of people have tried to adapt the Buddhist meditation in a clinical situation, but if it is an attempt to substitute or replace what is there in the Western tradition, I would personally say that would be a wrong approach.

ANNE KLEIN

01:02.01 Thank you. And in our closing minute would somebody, perhaps Roger, like to address this question?

ROGER JACKSON

01:02.08 Well, I don't know a great deal about Western contemplative traditions, beyond what I've read. Although, one of the first times I ever did zazen was in fact at a Trappist monastery when I was an undergraduate at Wesleyan. But I do think it's important to get the Western contemplative

traditions into this discussion at some point or
in some way.

01:02.30

And in fact, this may be going on in ways that
I'm not aware of, but it's quite clear from-

TAPE END

MIND & REALITY

DAY TWO - TAPE 5 of 7 - PANEL ON MEDITATION, PANEL ON ETHICS

TAPE START

THUBTEN JINPA

00:00.00 -in the Western tradition I would personally say
that would be a wrong approach.

ANNE KLEIN

00:00.05 Thank you. And in our closing minute would
somebody, perhaps Roger, like to address this
question?

ROGER JACKSON

00:00:12. Well, I don't know a great deal about Western
contemplative traditions, beyond what I've read.
Although, one of the first times I ever did zazen
was in fact at a Trappist monastery when I was an
undergraduate at Wesleyan. But I do think it's
important to get the Western contemplative
traditions into this discussion at some point or
in some way.

00:01.26 So, I don't know whether we're gonna, you know, get Trappist monks and put the electrode nets on their heads, as well, but I think, you know, given the cultural issues that are involved and as I tried to indicate, lurking in the background of a great deal of this, there's probably some promise in trying to get them to do just that.

ANNE KLEIN

00:01.47 Thank you. Joseph?

JOSEPH LOIZZO

00:01.48 Ok. I'll, actually, just make one reference to Thubten-la's point and then this larger work, because I see psychoanalysis and psychotherapy as not just a medical treatment - although that's its origins as an institution - but Freud actually was busy adapting- trying to adapt the Western Romantic tradition, which is really the preservation of our contemplative tradition-

00:02.16 -in a suppressed form, into a medical setting, basically to be able to make a living, I think. And also to make it palatable as a non-religious

sort of secular, materially-based tradition. So that's why I think the biggest impact of psychotherapy-

00:02.33

TAPE BREAK

00:02:59

NEW PANEL START

CHRIS KELLEY

00:03.12

If people could take their seats please. Once again, we're gonna have pink cards for you to write your questions on. So, if you need a blank card, just-

00:03.27

TAPE BREAK

CHRIS KELLEY

00:03.41

So, we're now in our final official panel, panel four- or panel five - Ethics. We will have a short panel after this, which will be sort of summary, reflections with a few of our participants.

00:03.59

And that will only be an hour. So, it won't be the full two hours that most panels are. Meditation appears to be able to provide analytic and therapeutic tools for individuals to