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Zazen, Philosophy of Mind, and the Practicality of Realising Impermanence

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Contents

Introduction

Chapter One: Simplicity and Complexity

I. Simplicity and Complexity

- (a) Simplicity and Complexity in Philosophy of Mind
- (b) Similarities and Differences with Related Disciplines

II. The Pirahã Tribe

III. Self-Imposed Problems?

- (a) The Problem of ‘Problem’
- (b) Analytic Conceptions of the Mind-Body Problem

Chapter Two: Sources of Complexity in Philosophy of Mind

I. The Legacy of Cartesian Dualism

- (a) Dualism and Distinction in Descartes’s Philosophy
- (b) Philosophical Precedent for Dualism and Distinction

II. Buddhism’s Early Encounters with the West

III. Categorisation

- (a) Categorisation
 - (i) Analogy and Categorisation: Definitions and Usage
 - (ii) Analogy and Categorisation in Action

- (b) Distinction, Analogy, and Malleability of Thought

Chapter Three: Zazen and a Return to Simplicity

I. Actuality/Mysticism and Logic

- (a) Actuality
- (b) Mysticism and Logic

II. The Practice of Zazen

- (a) Description of Zazen
 - (i) Practice: Description and Clarification
 - (ii) Original Enlightenment: Why Practise?
- (b) Zazen: Practice and Realisation
 - (i) Ease and Difficulty
 - (ii) Impermanence at the Root of Practice
 - (iii) Experience and Realisation in Zazen

III. The Neuroscience of Meditation

- (a) Neurophysiological Evidence
 - (i) Immune Response in High Stress Circumstances
 - (ii) Effects on Sleep
 - (iii) Breathing
- (b) First-Person Experience: Kenshō/Makyō
 - (i) Kenshō
 - (ii) Makyō

Chapter Four: Zazen as a Philosophical Tool

I. Application of Principles Realised in Zazen to the Analytic Philosophy of Mind

(a) Statement of Principles

(i) Impermanence

(ii) Emptiness

(iii) Boundlessness

(b) Application of Principles to Analytic Philosophy of Mind

(c) Does Buddhist Meditation Work?

II. Dogmatism in Zen

(a) Complications of Institutionalised Zen

(b) Soldier-Zen

III. Beyond Zen

Chapter Five: Categorisation and Mindfulness in Philosophy and Society

I. Categorisation in Education and Other Disciplines

II. Long-term Implications for Philosophy of Mind

(a) ‘Top-down’ Effect on New Philosophers

(b) The Role of Compassion in Philosophy

Conclusion

Appendix I: Integrating Zen

Appendix II: Funes the Memorius (Extract)

Appendix III: Problematic Terminology

Glossary

Bibliography

Acknowledgements

Declaration

I declare that this work is my own and that it has not been submitted for another degree,
either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Kevin J. Power 6/8/15

Introduction

I. Zazen, Philosophy of Mind, and the Practicality of Impermanence

The first two terms in the title of this dissertation reference complex, long-standing practices; the former more spiritual and embodied, the latter more academic and intellectual. An exploration of one - let alone both - of these fields can only hope to scratch the surface of all that has been written about and argued over within them. This dissertation involves a general overview of these two fields, while suggesting a potential bridge between them in the form of an analysis of the practicality of realising impermanence. By the end of my argument I hope to have offered up some compelling evidence in favour of the idea that analytic philosophy of mind¹ - and analytic philosophy in general - would benefit greatly from adopting principles which are best learned and expressed through the practice² of, and scholarship around, Zen Buddhism³ and in particular the treatment of the concept of impermanence therein. So while scope dictates that I can offer only a very fleeting analysis of two very complex areas, I hope that the advantage of this overview approach is that it highlights broad and fundamental issues in analytic philosophy of mind which are often overlooked. I also hope to show that these issues are not limited to this field but in fact reflect broad aspects of thinking in general.

This dissertation deals with specific issues surrounding the mind-body problem but it will also deal with the *nature* of the mind-body problem more generally: the terminology usually associated with it; the implicit assumptions contained within its analytic formulations;

¹ Through looking at the field in general rather than focusing in depth on any one particular theory.

² There is also a walking form of zazen known as *kinhin* which I do not deal with directly in the text.

³ To borrow a quote from James Austin, whose work I will discuss in chapter four, "the two fields are so intimately interrelated that each illuminates the other." (Austin 1999, 4)

the consequences for the field of an examination of the limits, constraints and mistakes (and also benefits) of the analytic method as well as the question of why we call it a ‘problem’ at all. The analytic method may not be universally dominant, but in modern educational institutes it exerts a strong influence and that is why, even though I will critique both of what I distinguish broadly as analytic and non-analytic approaches, the focus of my criticism will lie mostly with the former. Even so, I expect and hope that the nature of these two approaches each, in some regard, contain the conceptual traces of the other and that synthesis can prevail over division.

The preceding point is closely related to another issue which will mostly remain in the background throughout⁴ but is a core concern of mine, which is the comparison between applied philosophy and philosophy for its own sake. While it is obvious that philosophy and in particular ideas on mind, consciousness and free will are universal concerns that can be approached on a personal, informal level, it is also the case that institutionalised and systematised philosophy can have a top-down effect on how people think about these issues. The parameters set by professional philosophy tend to exert an influence on philosophy as a universal human experience in the sense of creating and defining terminology, paradigms and movements, and setting up broad assumptions and distinctions. This becomes a particular cause for concern when the modes of thought that are not generally endorsed by educational institutions are therefore dismissed on just that basis.⁵ While it seems safe to assume that most institutions are sufficiently ‘enlightened’ as to feature courses or classes based on non-dominant paradigms, I think it would be worth keeping in mind that the marginalisation -

⁴ A more specific discussion will be presented in chapter five.

⁵ The growing work in comparative philosophy between eastern and western philosophy is, historically speaking, a relatively recent development, particularly in terms of a practical synthesis that goes beyond mere historical and cultural comparison.

potential or actual - of philosophies that deal in unfamiliar ways with familiar subject matter should be discouraged.

In the context of this dissertation this concern falls within the realm of attempting to bridge analytic approaches to the mind-body problem with the eastern philosophy of Zen Buddhism. There is plenty of literature in the analytic tradition that demonstrates a materialist bias which would deem certain Zen Buddhist principles to be fundamentally flawed and their application to issues of mind at best limited. I would not be so pessimistic as to suggest that this is a completely dominant attitude, but that is the concern that I hope to convey here; that as much as a formal philosophical argument must be seen to be objective in its presentation, we must not lose sight of the fact that it is *people*⁶ who are engaged in it and therefore still prone to the kind of fallibility that the analytic method attempts to avoid. A double consequence of this that I address throughout this dissertation is that, firstly, no-one philosophises in an intellectual vacuum; we should always be mindful not just of the cultural or intellectual background of those involved, but also of the meta-level influence of the legacy of philosophy up to that point: the terminology, biases, influences and so forth. Secondly, that philosophy for its own sake can be fascinating and involving, but that we may find greater reward and satisfaction in considering what the practical implications and applications of such work might be. This would be of benefit not just to the field itself, but to the people who, due to the above-mentioned institutional biases find that they entertain marginalised or overlooked approaches that would - all else being equal - stand as perfectly valid outlooks.

⁶ Taken here to mean either individuals or collectives.

II. Background

The origins of this dissertation lie in an examination of the importance of contemporary scientific research around the neuroscience and neurophenomenology of Zen meditation (zazen), in particular the work of James H. Austin⁷. My early research in this area led to an increased interest in Buddhist treatments of emptiness, not as nihilism but as an expression of the idea that phenomena lack essential nature. Western analytic philosophy and Zen Buddhism are both concerned with the nature of mind. The general approach of the former leans toward the scientific objective and the latter is more concerned with the illumination afforded by present-moment embodied experience. Given that Austin's work offers a rigorous scientific overview of the effects of zazen while simultaneously taking seriously the subjective and occasionally mystic-sounding aspects of Zen and relating one to the other, his work seemed to offer a conceptual bridge between two usually distinct approaches to a universal concern. By 'distinct' here I mean not so much that these approaches share no conceptual similarities - far from it - rather that the literature and debates which attempt to bridge these two approaches in order to shed light on the mind-body problem are usually in the minority.⁸ If one is schooled in the analytic method, there is a good chance that one will not be exposed to the Zen approach unless one specifically seeks it out. My research into Austin's work led to an increase in my interest in the Buddhist treatment of emptiness, but I ultimately found a more subtle and, I believe, relevant, term from Zen Buddhist literature to apply to my issues with the analytic approach to mind, and that is impermanence.

⁷ See chapter three for a discussion of Austin's work.

⁸ Austin's work is of even greater significance when one considers that he has been a Zen practitioner for as long as he has been a neuroscientist. He does not approach the field with the neutral gaze of an onlooker but has a practiced, embodied sense of that which he is attempting to understand from a rigorous scientific perspective. Often work in east-west comparative philosophy is interesting *merely* for its comparative nature, highlighting cultural and philosophical quirks and differences. Austin's experience is deep

A thinker that demonstrates a similar depth and rigour to Austin, but from a stricter Buddhist perspective, is Zen Master Dōgen (1200-1253), the founder of the Sōtō school, whose work (and in particular his major collection of writings, *Shōbōgenzō*) I have drawn on for interpretations of Zen Buddhist approaches to a variety of issues pertinent to mind and other related subjects. Although the practice of zazen remains unchanged by any neuroscientific investigation thereof, it is still notable that the effects and benefits of meditation as expressed - albeit in a more mystic-poetic mode - in Zen literature are proven by technology unavailable for centuries after these practices were developed. Despite the necessity to understand Zen Buddhism on its own terms and not merely in terms familiar to the analytic mindset, the work of Austin and others in the neurophenomenology of meditation does provide a nice opening for those initially skeptical about the relevance of Zen Buddhism outside of purely cultural or religious contexts. Through this opening, once the practical side of Zen is seen and appreciated, its philosophical relevance can be understood and examined. While the Zen Buddhist approach to mind is not monolithic and includes much of the same type of contention found in differing analytic theories of mind, I do believe, and hope to show, that some of its fundamental principles could bear fruit when synthesised with the analytic approach.

Another work of substantial importance to my research is Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander's *Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking*. For my purposes this work offers another useful bridge between the analytic and Zen approaches in the form of a treatment of issues that highlight the psychological tendency toward categorisation, which in turn can lead to misguided thinking that an adoption of principles such as impermanence ameliorates. It provides - as well as a demonstration of the malleability of thought through analogy - a thorough and firm explanation of the activity and

and involved on either side of the East-West divide while privileging neither and he is

relevance of category-creation in intellectual activity or, as I interpret it, the ability to create distinctions between objects and ideas. This ability to categorise and distinguish objects and ideas compounds dualistic thinking about mind⁹, and if we set out to create theories of mind on that basis, we might remain locked within that paradigm, perhaps without even realising that there may be other, fundamentally different approaches. So while I will not offer a positive theory of mind from a Zen Buddhist perspective, I believe I can demonstrate how adopting and incorporating certain principles from Zen can highlight some of the drawbacks of the western analytic approach to mind, as well as hopefully clarifying the nature of the mind-body problem itself. In fact, I hope this dissertation succeeds in going one step further by showing that these principles of Zen are in some sense universal and that one need not be a Buddhist, adhere to Buddhism, or even feel it necessary to use the term Buddhist at all when discussing these principles. They are sufficiently basic and adaptable to apply in many contexts and situations, and not just from within one specific worldview.

As mentioned above, I find that a significant load-bearing term throughout this dissertation is 'impermanence.' I believe that a rigorous understanding of impermanence as seen from a Buddhist perspective but applied to an analytical one necessitates a potentially radical rethinking/alteration of how and *why* we engage in philosophy. The philosophical place where I see the most obvious need for the application of the ideas that will emerge from my discussion of impermanence is in analytic philosophy of mind. This is a field of enquiry which is home to some of the most primal and universal philosophical questions; it is also, in my opinion, these very factors which make it a sometimes unnecessarily confusing and intellectually treacherous area to work in. I hope that in this dissertation I can offer, not a critique of *theories* of mind, but a critique of the *theorising* of the mind. Once this critique is

therefore uniquely placed to offer insights on the bridge between the two.

⁹ It is necessary to clarify here that 'dualistic thinking' does not imply an adherence to Cartesian dualism, but rather refers to the way the mind-body problem is almost always set up - in the analytic approach at least - as a basic dichotomy.

in place, it should be clear how it may be scaled up to include a rethinking of intellectual activity in general, and how such activity may be further removed than we might suspect from what I only tentatively refer to as ‘reality.’

III. Outline

Chapter one, ‘Simplicity and Complexity,’ introduces working definitions of the terms ‘simplicity’ and ‘complexity’ which I rely on closely throughout. I will also briefly examine some relevant traditions which share conceptual similarities with my main thesis, but which are not entirely compatible with it.

In order to differentiate between unnecessary conceptual complexity and conceptual simplicity as I am concerned with these throughout, chapter one also presents an examination of the Amazonian Pirahã tribe. The unique cultural and perspectival experience of this tribe will serve to highlight the relevance of categorisation as I discuss it throughout.

Chapter one also addresses a curious and perhaps overlooked issue within analytic philosophy, which is the idea that concepts like mind are approached from the point of view of being a ‘problem.’ I view this as a double-edged issue. On the one hand, it is interesting that something that comes entirely naturally and passively to all people, i.e. conscious experience, should be regarded as a problem. On the other, within philosophy and academia in general there seems to be a tendency to view the merits of a subject on the basis of its effectiveness in solving a pre-existing problem. This is of particular concern because while the idea of applying lessons of philosophy in a practical context is much to be desired, it also leaves the door open for theories to set up and self-perpetuate their own problems. This is particularly evident in philosophy of mind, an area which generates many new theories most of which seem to retread all too familiar ground.

Chapter two, ‘Sources of Complexity in Philosophy of Mind’ begins with an examination of the influence of Cartesian dualism on modern philosophy of mind. This examination occurs on two main levels. The first is the influence of the Cartesian dualist approach to mind since Descartes, including the question of whether Descartes intended such an influence or not. Section two examines the early encounters between Buddhism and western philosophy in an effort to explain why Buddhist doctrine did not exert a positive influence on theories of mind at an earlier point in history. Section three draws on contemporary and historical evidence to account for the general human tendency to view certain phenomena in the world as in some sense discrete or distinct from others. This centres on a discussion of categorisation (mainly through the work of Emmanuel Sander and Douglas Hofstadter) which also serves as a bridging point between analytic and Zen perspectives. In understanding our tendency for categorisation (as well as recognising the historical and cultural reasons for assuming a dualistic worldview) we can see how easily dualistic thinking occurs. This should highlight the necessity for investigating Zen Buddhist principles such as impermanence, emptiness and interdependence, at least insofar as they call attention to the philosophical and practical shortcomings of just such dualistic thinking.

I begin chapter three, ‘Zazen and a Return to Simplicity,’ with an assessment of the relationship, if any, between mystic traditions and formal logic. Here I also introduce the term ‘actuality’ as an alternative to the term ‘reality,’ and I explain why I think it necessary to do so. In the second two sections of this chapter I will outline the practice of zazen (mainly through Dōgen), the work of James H. Austin in investigating the neurophenomenological relevance of zazen, and the philosophy of Dōgen and other Buddhist teachers in explaining and applying the lessons of impermanence via the practice of zazen.

The culmination of my argument comes in chapter four, ‘Zazen as a Philosophical Tool,’ wherein I outline the direct and immediate relevance of meditative practice to analytic

theories of mind. This relevance hinges on three principles (impermanence, emptiness and boundlessness) which I identify as finding their most appropriate expression within the practice of zazen. To demonstrate the universality of these principles I will briefly illustrate two instances in which even Buddhist practitioners succumb to the kinds of categorisation and distinction-making which meditative practice usually eases. This will also demonstrate that the principles of impermanence, emptiness and unity are not mere rhetorical devices or cultural artefacts of Buddhism. There are profound philosophical and sociological implications to the realisation and/or adoption of these principles.

In chapter five, ‘Categorisation and Mindfulness in Philosophy and Society’ I will assess the place of both categorisation and mindfulness in society, with particular regard to education systems. I will also examine the potential long-term effects of my overall thesis of the practicality of realising impermanence on analytic philosophy of mind and philosophy in general. This will testify that the mindfulness method of zazen is not an ineffectual religious practice. Rather it is an ongoing opportunity for clearing up entrenched world views, metaphysical assumptions and dogmatic thinking. This in turn may promote a more holistic and ultimately more rewarding comprehension of the role of first-person experience in understanding the world.

Appendices I-III present illustrations of, and expansions on, topics encountered throughout the course of my argument.

IV. Caveats and Qualifiers

To close this introduction I would like to foreshadow some interesting problems I have encountered in putting this dissertation together. Certain issues will arise in the course of the discussion, the phrasing of which may seem contradictory to some of the principles put forward elsewhere in the argument. For example, in this introduction alone there are multiple

references to a ‘self’, in the form of ‘me,’ ‘I,’ ‘my’ and so forth. In several places in this dissertation I will aim to demonstrate the *lack* of a self that we all feel we have/are. So in continuing with this dissertation, I have no choice but to engage in the paradoxical act of simultaneously denying the existence of an essential self and seemingly reinforcing it through repeated use of pronouns. If one ultimately disagrees with the idea that there is ‘no such thing’ as an essential self then one could use this as evidence against such a view. However, if one feels persuaded by the arguments in favour of the ‘no-self’ view then it becomes a somewhat entertaining activity to defend those arguments using ‘your’ own ‘self’ to do the work. This paradox may also be made more bearable when taken in light of the understanding of conventional and ultimate truth discussed below.

A closely related issue which may not be a problem at all depending on one’s point of view, is the paradox of using language to critique language (and, by extension, using philosophical arguments to critique philosophy). Similar to the above ‘no-self’ problem, I believe that a thorough examination of this issue (in particular with regard to Dōgen’s philosophy discussed throughout) will show that it is a paradox without contradiction. (Some problematic language terms are flagged in Appendix III where I briefly examine the extent to which principles I put forward have been violated throughout, and whether this is a surmountable problem.) I believe that the principles I discuss, while often best illustrated by reference to Zen practice and scholarship, need not be limited exclusively to them; one might see these principles at play outside of a purely Zen context or setting. This claim brings with it some problematic issues that can occur when interpreting Buddhist teachings. Does one have to commit to the whole school of thought in order to adopt principles from it? Historical evidence would suggest that hand-picking and combining ideas is often a productive and progressive method of learning and teaching. However it carries with it the risk of misinterpretation of whole teachings in one area in order to extract information suited solely

to one's own intellectual ends in another. I think this concern is particularly resonant within Zen Buddhism as it can be an easily misunderstood tradition. Even to treat the latter as a monolithic entity is to ignore the centuries of debate and argument within various Zen sects themselves.

My work is no more independent of such disagreements than any other. In this dissertation I do not deal with Buddhist conceptions of ethics, karma or rebirth, but neither do I see these ideas as necessarily of direct relevance to my main thesis. So while I am making a conscious effort to extract principles from Zen Buddhism, I am also careful to try to present these as principles that Zen naturally touches on, rather than rhetorical or doctrinal artefacts of Buddhist tradition. In just the same way I try to present the teachings of the Buddha as in some sense touching on universal principles; what I do not do is try to interpret the Buddha's teachings in order to match them to the specific way in which I present and interpret these principles. In this regard I have taken care to highlight, when necessary, instances where I think the ideas that I am trying to relate may not line up completely with - and in some cases perhaps even disagree with - Buddhist doctrine. In other words I have tried as much as possible to make an interpretation of Buddhism without claiming to be making *the* interpretation of Buddhism which my use of the term 'universal principles' might suggest. I merely see profound intellectual illumination to be gained in Zen Buddhism that I do not see arising as incisively or coherently elsewhere.¹⁰

V. Key Terminology

I would like to state and clarify some terminology from the outset, for two main reasons. Firstly, some of this terminology has a direct bearing on my critique of analytic

¹⁰ In this area I have found Richard Gombrich's work very helpful, in particular *What the Buddha Thought* both as a caution against reading one's own intentions into Buddhist

philosophy of mind yet this language - at least as I intend it - does not often occur within that field and as such requires clarification of its application to my overall argument. Secondly, this terminology is not particularly technical and needs to be distinguished from ordinary language uses of the terms involved.

‘Impermanence’: Impermanence is the continual flux and change of all things. It can be understood as an endless and beginning-less unfolding of boundless, unified actuality.

‘Non-Specialist’: In presenting ideas on mind, body and the inter-relation thereof, from both the analytic and Zen perspectives, I am dealing with universal concerns expressed using specific methodologies. Using one perspective is necessary to address a specific aspect of mind but it also risks isolating other possibilities available from other perspectives. It also risks diluting the universality of the conscious experience in the sense that it forces us to take a common human experience and discuss it in ‘professional’ terms.

In dealing with the above-mentioned issues in this dissertation (i.e. mind, practice, language and so forth) I have looked to apply a term that will describe someone who is not a professional/full-time philosopher but will still be affected by, and have a strong opinion about, these issues.¹¹ Sometimes we see this type of person referred to as the ‘ordinary person,’ but I maintain that a baseline idea of ‘ordinary’ or ‘normal’ is useless, so this term does not help. Also we could use the term ‘non-professional’ but all this really tells us is that the person in question is not in a full-time paid position that relates to the subject at hand;

thought, and also for clearing up some easily misinterpreted terminology by putting it in an appropriate linguistic and historical context.

¹¹ If such an act might be frowned upon from the analytic perspective it is absolutely integral to Zen Buddhism; it is common in analytic philosophy for thinkers and writers to develop theories which are then handed down as the received wisdom of the time. In the case of Zen, while there are still teacher figures, the emphasis is purely on practice; subjects find illumination by their own embodied experience which is something that goes beyond the bounds of concepts of qualifications.

there are plenty of people who are not in the business of philosophy of mind who can contribute much to it. Similarly, the Buddha did not need a qualification from a university to become one of the most influential spiritual thinkers in human history, so here again the term ‘professional’ falters. The term I have decided to use here is ‘non-specialist.’ I think it is an adaptable term whose meaning can shift depending on the context (for example, a philosopher of mind might have a valid metaphysical point to make about a neurophysiological statement which is not disqualified by the fact that they are not neurophysiologists), while avoiding the pitfalls of the term ‘professional’ by not needing to make reference to qualifications and other generally ephemeral conditions.

‘Mindfulness’: Though zazen is the meditative practice I am most concerned with, there are significant experiential crossovers between zazen and other mindfulness practices. When I am not referring to zazen specifically I will refer to mindfulness on the understanding that the former serves as an instance of the latter. I like the directness of Thompson and Varela’s working definition of mindfulness: “Mindfulness means that the mind is present in embodied everyday experience; mindfulness techniques are designed to lead the mind back from its theories and preoccupations, back from the abstract attitude, to the situation of one’s experience itself.” (Thompson and Varela 1993, 22)

‘Realisation’: There are three senses in which one could understand the term ‘realisation.’ The first is the ordinary language usage of the term, i.e. the act of becoming aware, apprehending or understanding something. The second is the philosophy of mind usage in which mental states are ‘realised’ in physical or functional states. The third is the realisation of meditation and mindfulness practices, often referred to as insight wisdom. My usage of the term is closest to this last version; I use ‘realisation’ to denote an embodied though non-dual

(i.e. neither mental nor physical but also neither not-mental nor not-physical) experience of understanding. This understanding is not just intellectual; it is an *awareness* which goes beyond intellectualisation, conceptualisation or categorisation.

‘Emptiness’: Emptiness means that all phenomena lacks an essential or absolute nature.

‘Conventional Reality/Truth’ and ‘Ultimate Reality/Truth’: My working definitions of conventional and ultimate reality constitute a more basic form of Nagarjuna’s two truths doctrine. Ultimate reality is an undifferentiated unity. Conventional reality is the everyday version of reality which is based on distinction and systematic thinking. These terms adapt to apply to the notion of truth. A truth is conventional if it relies on distinction or structured systems of thought. There is only one ultimate truth; the truth of the absolute emptiness of all things.

I list the intended definition of some additional terminology in the glossary.

Chapter One

Simplicity and Complexity

I. Simplicity and Complexity

In its original form, truth is the height of simplicity. Is it not often the case that people begin by twisting and bending the truth out of shape until it has become something complex, and then go through all kinds of contortions to make their way back to its original simplicity? (Ryomin 1990, 89-90)

(a) Simplicity and Complexity in Philosophy of Mind

Throughout this dissertation I will call on particular conceptions of simplicity and complexity. Here I will spell out the most basic way in which I deploy them. ‘Complexity,’ insofar as it applies throughout, is intended in its ordinary language¹² form: a state or quality of being intricate or complicated. My overall argument will make the case that unnecessary complexity is often created by standard analytic conceptions and discussions of the mind-body problem. Such complexity is in large part a self-imposed problem and results in more work having to be done to resolve the specific problems which are created by it. (I will examine specific instances of this in chapter four). ‘Simplicity’ is also intended in its ordinary language form in particular as the quality or condition of being plain or natural. Simplicity,

¹² Any explicit definitions given in ordinary language terms throughout are sourced from the Oxford English Dictionary unless otherwise stated.

understood as that which is natural, can dissolve or negate the unnecessary conceptual complexities of analytic theories of mind. The specific meaning of the term ‘natural’ will be addressed at relevant points throughout.

The relationship between complexity and simplicity as it relates to my main thesis, is as follows: with regard to the mind-body relation, complexity is created by misguided starting assumptions and hierarchical or distinction-making modes of thought. Simplicity is dealing with things as they are, dropping off any pre-imposed conventions, distinctions or assumptions. I argue that starting from a position of simplicity gives a more appropriate impression of the mind-body relation than starting from - or creating - a position of complexity. Here is how these terms basically apply to my overall argument with regard to both Zen and analytic philosophy of mind:¹³

- Complexity: Analytic philosophy creates unnecessary conceptual complexity around the relationship between mind and body.

- Simplicity: Zazen returns us to conceptual simplicity via pure experience and present moment awareness in which the complexity created by distinction, convention and assumption is dissolved.

I am not claiming that all theorists or positions within or related to analytic philosophy of mind are inherently wrong. However I do argue that the analytic approach to mind can often proceed on conceptually misguided bases and that this often goes entirely unnoticed and therefore unchecked. I am creating a deliberately stark separation when I talk about simplicity as a fundamental aspect of Zen and complexity as a fundamental aspect of analytic

¹³ In chapter five I will also discuss the sociological relevance of these terms as I have applied them throughout.

philosophy of mind. This separation is intended to be merely provisional in order to highlight the often sharp metaphysical and methodological contrasts between these two broad fields. One claim I do make is that certain principles which find their most appropriate expression through the meditative practice of zazen can dissolve the complexities created and encouraged by analytic philosophy of mind. I would like to stress that I am not suggesting that the practice of zazen is a cure-all for shortcomings of analytic philosophy of mind, but that engagement in this practice results in certain realisations which clarify the nature of what is often referred to as 'the mind-body problem' in general. If my argument is successful then I will be able to demonstrate not only the practicality of the principle of impermanence, but the practicality of realising impermanence in an embodied, rather than purely intellectual, manner.

(b) Similarities and Differences with Related Disciplines

I will now take a moment to mention some philosophical disciplines which share conceptual similarities with Zen Buddhism with regard to dropping standard assumptions about the relationship between the physical and the mental, namely process philosophy, panpsychism and phenomenology.

Process Philosophy

In modern western philosophy the field which bears the closest resemblance to the concepts I will discuss throughout is process philosophy. This discipline centres on the concept that what is and what is becoming consists in change. Such a doctrine is conceptually suited to the idea of the practicality of impermanence. On a basic reading, process philosophy acknowledges that a static view of any phenomenon may be of limited insight given that phenomena never exist outside of continually shifting real world states and contexts. The

very idea of process chimes with the concepts of dynamism and organic movement central to Daoism, a tradition which itself had a profound influence on the development of Zen Buddhism. In the 2013 edition of the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* Johanna Seibt assesses the status of process philosophy in terms of its contrasts with more traditional western philosophy:

Given its current role as a rival to the dominant substance-geared paradigm of Western metaphysics, process philosophy has the overarching task of establishing the following three claims:

- (Claim 1) The basic assumptions of the ‘substance paradigm’ (i.e., a metaphysics based on static entities such as substances, objects, states of affairs, or instantaneous stages) are dispensable theoretical presuppositions rather than laws of thought.
- (Claim 2) Process-based theories perform just as well or better than substance-based theories in application to the familiar philosophical topics identified within the substance paradigm.
- (Claim 3) There are other important philosophical topics that can *only* be addressed within a process metaphysics.¹⁴

Each of the above claims are of relevance to my main concerns. The features of the ‘substance paradigm’ are at the root of many of the misguided initial movements made by analytic theories of mind. The term *substance* itself carries much philosophical baggage, in particular with regard to theories of mind. As I discuss in chapter two, the concept of

¹⁴ Website entry, October 15, 2012.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/process-philosophy/>

substance was employed by Descartes in his attempts to explicate the mind-body relation and yet, as seemingly limited as his philosophy is from a contemporary perspective, the shadow of just such a paradigm still hangs over theories of mind to this day.

The term *static* is one which I believe also points to the problems of the analytic perspective on mind. Many analytic theories of mind are comfortable using terms like *mental* and *physical* in entirely non-dynamic, context-free ways and proceeding with arguments reliant on those terms without much deep probing of how or why one could or should treat them differently. This points us to the concern in Claim 3, above: are there important philosophical topics which should only be addressed in a process, rather than a static or substance mode? I argue that there are, but I am not sure that process philosophy on the whole may have exactly the right approach when compared with the Zen perspective, in particular because of the aspect of practice in the latter. I will expand on this point presently.

Early process philosophy found practical application in the work of influential thinkers such as Alfred North Whitehead and Henri Bergson, though its wider application in canonical philosophy of mind seems limited. There is one important exception here if we accept that James's conception of 'pure experience' as neither mental nor physical exerted a direct influence on the development of Russell's neutral monism. Even so, it is arguable that the concept of neutral monism, in continuing to rely on familiar dualistic terminology, introduced (or preserved) greater rather than lesser complexity when applied to the mind-body problem. A process approach to mind should take any particular assertion as context dependent, similar to the Buddhist notion of interdependent arising which asserts that all phenomena arise in dependent relationships with other phenomena and are therefore irreducible. A substance ontology is invalid on this view as there is no possibility for the independent existence of a substance. While neutral monism, for instance, avoids commitment to a substance ontology by treating the mental and the physical as properties rather than substances, it nevertheless

echoes the dichotomous nature of the substance paradigm by recycling the very dualistic language that it is trying to avoid. This is an issue which I believe permeates all analytic theories of mind. A process approach should be able to explore a topic without deploying or committing to language which may limit the nature of the argument before the argument has even begun.

One other notable difference between process philosophy and Zen is their respective understanding of the relationship between change and time. Zen generally tends toward a view of time as a process of continual unfolding. This finds expression in Zen Master Dōgen's 'Being-Time' where time is not understood as an abstraction but rather as being or existence itself: "Time is already just Existence, and all Existence is Time." (Nishijima and Cross 1994, 110.)¹⁵ Process philosophy deals with time more so as a series of discrete changes in sequence, closer in character to the abstract treatment of time familiar to Western metaphysics.

So while the perspective of process philosophy differs in many respects to those of traditional Western metaphysics, it seems that it is not quite free of the conceptual roots of that paradigm. Therefore I am not convinced that process philosophy could arrive at an equivalent understanding of the principle of impermanence as I interpret it herein.¹⁶

¹⁵ Although the *Uji* manuscript makes reference to *moments* of time, this can be understood as Dōgen acknowledging the relative within the absolute. So while time is existence, there is still a human conceptions of time as a series of individual moments. Nishijima and Cross clarify Dōgen's conception of linear time thus: "Time which retains the form of leaving and coming" means linear time. If we see time in this way, even though the moment of the present has arrived and it will depart, it exists now. Master Dogen's view of real time embraces both the view of time as a point and the view of time as a line, as well as the view of time as reality itself." (Nishijima and Cross 1994, 111fn) This fluid yet pragmatic conception of time is not so familiar to western traditions.

¹⁶ See chapter four, section one.

Even so I believe that in practical terms process philosophy is a step in the right direction toward highlighting the potentially misguided assumptions of analytic philosophy of mind.

Panpsychism

The literature and history of panpsychism shares one feature of the Buddhist principles I will discuss in revealing the conceptual complexity which arises when we assume a strong distinction between the mental and the physical and then attempt to explain the former in terms of the latter. The reading of panpsychism I am here concerned with is expressed in basic terms by David Skrbina in *Panpsychism in the West* as "... mind conceived as a general phenomenon of nature." (Skrbina 2005, 2) While panpsychism is an interesting alternative to other analytic theories of mind in terms of dropping off the usual dichotomous assumptions about the mental and the physical, I see one issue which would exclude it from being entirely compatible with the Zen perspective as I relate it throughout; panpsychism seems irretrievably locked into the framework of the very type of theory that it refutes: "In order to qualify as a complete theory, a panpsychist outlook must be complemented by a positive theory of mind that explicitly describes how mind is to be conceived and how it is connected to physical objects." (Skrbina 2005, 3) It seems that reliance on duality is locked into the overcoming of duality. On one level, this may not be too serious a problem. A role that Zen Buddhist scholarship and practice could play in synthesising apparently mutually exclusive perspectives is to gain an appropriate understanding of duality.¹⁷

But if panpsychism is to act as a theory which transcends the duality of standard accounts of mind, then it is automatically at a disadvantage considering that the philosophers

¹⁷ With regard to the duality of the body and the mind for instance, Maraldo notes that the opening lines of Dōgen's *Shinjingakudō* ("Body-Mind Studying the Way") text "[make it clear] that the primary concern and object of study is the Buddha Way; *shinjingakudō* first of all means to study the Way, not the body and mind. Dogen's consideration of body and mind begins with a negation of their priority." (LaFleur 1985, 114)

on whom it should have the most impact are also, naturally, those that would have the most problems with accepting it as a general doctrine. Skrbina expresses this concern in his panpsychist critique of two assumptions which lie behind the western analytic approach to mind:

(i) Mind is limited to humans and perhaps 'higher animals.'

(ii) Mind is somehow dependent on or reducible to the physical substrate of the brain.

- This implies a belief that there is something fundamentally unique about human and animal brains, of all the physical structures in the universe only they can support mental processes. This is conceivably true, but no plausible account has yet been given as to how.

These assumptions are important; they form the basic foundations of the modern outlook on consciousness, especially influenced by Cartesian dualism. Important factors like this can explain why other outlooks (i.e. the belief that mind may be an essential aspect of nature) tend to get ignored. If they are ignored for long, when someone finally does present them as a strong thesis they are of course seen as far out, and even unacceptable in principle. (Skrbina 2005, 2)

That these assumptions occur seems undeniable. Far more concerning is Skrbina's final point, one which I will address throughout; that the seemingly reasonable assumptions which constitute a given philosophical paradigm are so entrenched that by the time one becomes

involved in discussing any particular idea within that paradigm, it is unthinkable that any opposing assumptions or perspectives could hold.

I would have a more balanced outlook on this concern (i.e. I would accept that philosophers of mind are really more open to views like this and not necessarily so dismissive in principle of ideas like panpsychism) were it not for the following: theories like panpsychism *are* weighed up and considered in analytic discourse, but are often treated in the manner of intellectual curiosities which are investigated and then put back to one side so that the default mode can be restored. In a video interview on the subject of panpsychism, Galen Strawson has gestured towards this kind of attitude, stating:

As I understand it in the analytic philosophy community, people who call themselves physicalists actually deny the existence of consciousness or experience. Sometimes they pretend that they don't; they deny that they deny it. But when you look at the details of what they say... almost always in the end it turns out that they have some kind of reductive programme. They still want to reduce the conscious or the experiential to the non-conscious or the non-experiential.

He goes on to clarify his own idea of physicalism as *inclusive* of conscious experience, as well as tagging the issue of philosophy as the place where the reality of consciousness is struck out:

Since nearly everyone I talk to is a physicalist, I tend to assume that the person I'm talking to is a physicalist and say if you want to be a real physicalist, well you *have* to be a realist about consciousness, because that's the most certainly known phenomenon there is. So you're going to have to go all the way and say that conscious states are themselves literally physical, just like electric charge. And when I say

‘conscious states’ I don’t mean anything reductive in any sense, I mean the thing that the so-called qualia freaks believe in... the real thing. The real thing that we all know about, and that we all know to exist, until, unfortunately, some of us do philosophy and decide that it doesn’t exist after all.¹⁸

Two years after *Panpsychism in the West*, Freya Matthews wrote her article “Why Has the West Failed to Embrace Panpsychism?” which attempts to assess why the western philosophical tradition has not readily adapted panpsychist ideas.

Phenomenology

One of the consequences of the development of phenomenology was a greater recognition of the explanatory role of first-person experience in understanding consciousness. The concept of bracketing and the *epochē* allowed for the suspension of questions about the natural world around us. The suspension of such questions allows also for the suspension of judgemental attitudes regarding metaphysical concerns which lead us to form and/or preserve assumptions about the ontological status of, for instance, the mental and the physical, in favour of examining the structure of our conscious experience itself.

Phenomenology has had an important role to play in understanding the first-person experiential aspect of consciousness as opposed to the purely objective attitude of the analytic tradition. This has culminated in the development of neurophenomenology, “a scientific endeavour that combines neuroscience and phenomenology to study experience from the perspective of the embodied condition of the human mind” (Gordon 2013, xii). In this way phenomenology has been an important alternative to the analytic method in that it does what some analytic philosophers of mind are hesitant to do: take consciousness seriously.¹⁹

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtDgCQ5vehE>

¹⁹ See Chalmers (1996)

The phenomenological method has undone much of the distrust of subjective experience passed down by philosophers such as Descartes and Plato by emphasising that human action is always embodied. However with the methodological drawback of lacking a particular embodied practice, this emphasis is descriptive rather than prescriptive and, as such, tends to obscure the possibility of realising and remaining mindful of, for example, impermanence in an embodied, rather than strictly intellectual, sense.

Thompson and Varela express this concern at the outset of *The Embodied Mind*. They point out that though the phenomenological method was intent on establishing the body as an intrinsic aspect of experience, such an intent did not play out in the history of phenomenology in a manner similar to the development of mindfulness practices. The phenomenological method improved the case for the body while underplaying the importance of an actual practice which can affect and highlight changes in experience:

The phenomenological tradition, from Husserl on, complained bitterly about [the] lack of self-included reflection but was able to offer in its place only a project of theoretical reflection *on* experience. The other extreme is to include the self but abandon reflection altogether in favour of a naive, subjective impulsivity. Mindfulness/awareness is neither of these; it works directly with, and so expresses, our basic embodiment. (Thompson and Varela 1993, 27)

Here Thompson and Varela express an important caveat about a potential turn in favour of first-person experience by reiterating the ‘middle way’ of mindfulness: to ignore the body may be a mistake, but to ignore the value of third-person investigation is just as misguided. The value of a mindfulness practice such as zazen is that it emphasises the relevance and importance of first-person experience without insisting that a subjective

approach is superior to an objective one; it reminds us that sides of a perceived duality work interdependently, rather than in opposition.

In *Philosophy in the Flesh*, Lakoff and Johnson examine the place of the body in philosophy. Of particular relevance to the analytic tradition is their assertion that while analytic philosophers make earnest attempts at objectivity through formal logic and a third-person approach, this does not necessarily equate to a rigorous scientific approach which they are trying to follow:

Consider a cognitive scientist concerned with the empirical study of the mind, especially the cognitive unconscious, and ultimately committed to understanding the mind in terms of the brain and its neural structure. To such a scientist of mind, Anglo-American approaches to philosophy of mind and language... seem odd indeed. The brain uses neurons, not languagelike symbols. Neural computation works by real-time spreading activation, which is neither akin to prooflike deductions in a mathematical logic, nor like disembodied algorithms in classical artificial intelligence... To a cognitive scientist, what could be stranger than to take thought as being external to the mind, with human biology and psychology irrelevant to the nature of thought? Why would so many philosophers find such a notion intuitive? Why don't most philosophy students and philosophers simply find such ideas of Anglo-American philosophy ridiculous? Why don't they just laugh when they are told that the meaning of sentences in a language have nothing to do with the human mind or any aspect of human psychology? (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 124)

Lakoff and Johnson suggest that what we believe to be intuitions are often in fact ideas arising from a metaphorical model. This is a tendency which can be tapped into by mindfulness practices, revealing what we thought was intuition as actually culturally

conditioned and accepted convention. As this dissertation progresses I will attempt to highlight how the objective attitude and metaphysical presumptions of the analytic tradition are less solid than those in the analytic tradition might assert and that embodied practices such as zazen can - despite all their reliance on first-person experience and dropping away of intellectual concepts - aid rather than obscure the study of mind.

Here I have presented three broad disciplines which share a tendency toward avoiding the standard analytic mind-body dichotomy. Why then have I chosen Zen Buddhism over any of these other approaches in order to highlight the problems - and potential solutions (or dissolution) - of analytic theories of mind? The one uniting factor in the above disciplines which, for my purposes, differentiates them from Zen Buddhism is the lack of embodied practice. Even in the case of phenomenology which emphasises the importance of suspending our natural attitudes, this methodology is almost entirely intellectual. There is no embodied practice with which to ground the conscious experience in question (it should be noted that neurophenomenology is increasingly concerned with examining the effects of mindfulness practices, though again there is no particular tradition of practice which accompanies the intellectual work of neurophenomenologists). Similarly, with panpsychism and process philosophy the alternative interpretations of the nature of duality rely on intellectualisation and theorising; there seems to be no place for embodied meditative practice from which a deeper realisation of non-duality arises. I will return to this topic in chapters three and four. Now I will turn away from considering these various intellectual disciplines to describe and discuss an indigenous people whose unique experience may have something to tell us about our standard conceptions of duality and in particular our distinction-making modes of thought.

II. The Pirahã Tribe

In chapter two I will argue that we are already philosophically and psychologically primed to think and behave in terms of categories and distinction, a factor which feeds back into the development of analytic theories of mind. In this section I present the case of a very unique tribe who seem to actively demonstrate a significant lack of categorisation and distinction in their linguistic, philosophical and cultural characteristics. The tribe in question is the Amazonian Pirahã, and the research I draw on is from the linguist and anthropologist Daniel Everett, the outsider who has had the most prolonged and regular contact with this people.

Combining an aptitude for languages with a missionary role of teaching the bible to remote peoples, Everett travelled to the Amazon with his family in 1977. He eventually realised that the Pirahã culture was not one which could easily - if at all - be converted to Christianity. The tribe's culture, and in particular the language, is so unique that Everett's role soon shifted from missionary to anthropologist and linguist. In the following discussion I draw on the field work that Everett has done in the intervening period, in particular his paper "Cultural Constraints on Grammar and Cognition in Pirahã."

There is little or no evidence of previous cultural contact between the Pirahã and the philosophies of other major civilisations (missionaries had been present for some years before Everett arrived, but had not successfully learned the language of the tribe). The Pirahã trade with Brazilian merchants and speak some very basic Portuguese.²⁰ Up until 2012 only

²⁰ "A final fascinating feature of Pirahã culture, which I will argue to follow from the above, is that Pirahã continue to be monolingual in Pirahã after more than 200 years of regular contact with Brazilians and other non-Pirahã. What we will see as the discussion progresses is that Portuguese grammar and communication violate the Pirahã cultural constraint on grammar and living, a profound cultural value, leading to an explanation for this persistent monolingualism." (Everett 2005, 622)

Everett, his family and a previous Christian missionary represented points of contact between the tribe and the world outside the Amazon. Unlike Western cultures and their particular philosophies, the source of the Pirahã tribe's unusual form of experience is difficult to trace. Even the more secular forms of Zen can be traced back to Ch'an Buddhism in China and earlier forms of Indian Buddhism, while also inheriting tenets of Daoism. So while these various traditions may well be tapping into universal concerns there is still a traceable lineage between schools of thought in which these concerns are expressed in various idiosyncratic ways. The Pirahã experience seems to be more primal than this. Everett's research represents a great opportunity to study the behaviour of a people whose reliance on categorisation and distinction making is minimal. I will begin by presenting the elements of Pirahã culture which are most relevant to the idea of non-distinction making modes of thought.

Relevant Elements of Pirahã Culture

According to Everett, the Pirahã have no numerical system: "There are three words in Pirahã that are easy to confuse with numerals because they can be translated as numerals in some of their uses: *hó i* 'small size or amount', *hoi* 'somewhat larger size or amount', and *bá a gi so* lit. 'cause to come together' (loosely 'many')." (Everett 2005, 623) A practical example of this lack of numeracy amongst the Pirahã is that they have no firm value on goods which they exchange with Brazilian merchants. The same item traded for one fish today may be traded for ten fish tomorrow; they do not (and, Everett argues, *cannot*) discriminate with regard to number in order to place a standard value on items with which they trade.

Everett also emphasises the Pirahã people's involvement with immediate experience. The tribe's behaviour, and in particular its language, demonstrates simplicity in the fashion in which I have intended that term from the outset. In the case of the Pirahã people the 'natural' aspect of the simplicity of their experience is that they do not invoke that which they do not

experience: “Pirahã culture constrains communication to non-abstract subjects which fall within the immediate experience of interlocutors.” (Everett 2005, 621)

Connected to this element of immediate experience is the following detail: “The Pirahã do not create fiction, and they have no creation stories or myths.” (Everett 2005, 632). As an extension of the idea of immediate experience, the Pirahã lack their own creation myth and do not engage in the creation of fiction, a marked difference from most cultures. Western cultures in particular often find their philosophical traditions obliged to account for the existence of a God, indicative of a widely shared creation myth. “When pressed about creation, for example, Pirahã say simply, “Everything is the same,” meaning that nothing changes, nothing was created.” (Everett 2005, 633) Once again the ‘natural’ aspect of simplicity comes through here. If invention of that which never was (e.g. fiction/myth) or that which may not have any real experiential basis (e.g. categories of substance like ‘mental’ as distinct from categories of substance like ‘physical’) creates complexity, then the Pirahã have a very simple existence compared to most other cultures.

I am not arguing that this group is morally or philosophically superior to any other culture, but the evidence at hand does demonstrate a potential organic (in this sense meaning naturally occurring and not imposed by an external or even overt internal philosophical system) state of conceptual simplicity closely tied to present moment awareness. It may also be of interest to keep the following question in mind throughout the course of this discussion: could a group collective experience be considered *more* philosophically sophisticated by being *less* conceptually complex? This will be worth asking again in the context of Zen Buddhism.

In addition to the three relevant aspects of Pirahã culture mentioned above, several other related features as reported by Everett are worth mentioning in passing: an “... absence of morphologically simple colour terms and of quantification... using colour” (Everett 2005,

628); an extremely simple and limited pronoun inventory; an extremely simple system of kinship (“Kinship terms refer only to known relatives; one never refers to relatives who died before one was born.” (Everett 2005, 632) and a lack of clear evidence that the Pirahã language utilises embedding.

Conceptual Complexity and Conceptual Simplicity: Comparison of Pirahã and Zen Perspectives

The most significant similarity I see between the Pirahã perspective and the experience and integration of zazen is that of a kind of extended present moment awareness, reflected in the tribe’s relatively short-term view of history. As Everett observes:

Because the Pirahã live in the present, they can’t get excited about the past. They have no creation myth of their own. They have words for grandparents, but no words for great-grandparents, because they never live long enough to meet their children’s children’s children. “One day,” he says, “a group of the men came to the house and said we know why you’re here. You want to tell us about Jesus.” He said that other missionaries before me had tried to tell them about Jesus. He said we don’t want to be Americans. We are Pirahã. We don’t want Jesus.²¹ We want to drink and we want to have many women, and we don’t want to live like you. But we like you, so if you want to stay here, you can stay here. But just don’t talk to us about Jesus.²²

I would not go so far as to suggest that what the Pirahã represent is a kind of universalised version of the principles that emerge from the practice of zazen. However, I do

²¹ Everett notes that the Pirahã reject Jesus on cultural perspectival - not religious or moral - grounds.

²² Website: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/authorinterviews/9186354/Daniel-Everett-lost-in-translation.html>

think it very noteworthy that this tribe, evidently untouched by the civilisations that foster a generally Cartesian worldview, seem to have little or no concept of the kind of dualities and categorisations which those civilisations demonstrate.

The lack of a creation myth or fiction is a very interesting trait. Most indigenous cultures have some creation myth, but this tribe seem to have no such account. When taken with the other details about their experience, this is further indication that the Pirahã are a very interesting people as far as lacking what we might generally consider to be otherwise universal cultural traits. It would seem that talk about creation myths would have no place alongside analytic accounts of mind, not least because of the divisive issue of the existence of religious deities. But there is ample evidence to show that, even if we disagree with a certain idea, we are often irretrievably affected by it and forced to think within certain limits because of it. Ideas of the origin of the universe are no different. Because we experience things arising and perishing, we may assume that phenomena in the world follow the same patterns of beginning and ending. The idea of an infinite universe is among some an uncomfortable idea, perhaps because of a background attitude that the non-reality of a beginning or an end to any phenomenon, including the universe itself, is an unbearable and indeed unimaginable state of affairs. So while we would not refer to the prevailing Big Bang theory as a myth, it would not be too controversial to refer to it as an account of creation²³ or, if that term is unpalatable, origins.

What is significant and most relevant to my argument from all the above is that the Pirahã appear to demonstrate modes of thought that seem improbable if not impossible to arrive at from a purely analytic perspective. The metaphysical assumptions and tendency toward distinction that are characteristic of analytic philosophy seem absent from this culture.

²³ I acknowledge that 'creation' is a loaded term, and I use it the same way that we could say a seed growing into a plant is an account of creation; it does not require a higher-power or outside force.

They exhibit little or no systemised philosophy or metaphysics; it seems that to do so would, for the Pirahã, be both a practical misstep (because they need to focus on subsistence in a harsh environment) and an intellectual misstep (because they have an immediate experience-based worldview without a tendency to create a systematised, hierarchical ontology).

I think that in some respects, the Pirahã experience is to be admired. Within analytic philosophy, and indeed within the more metaphysical side of Buddhist literature,²⁴ there can be an over-emphasis on systemisation, methodology and other hierarchical ways of thinking and acting. I say over-emphasis because if one *is* to commit oneself to grappling with ideas of mind, self, consciousness, existence and so forth, then a methodical approach certainly helps from a logistical perspective, but it is unrealistic to expect the world to stack up in a way isomorphic with how we think about it (or worse, thinking that because we can think about the world in a methodical, hierarchical way then that must be because *that's the way the world really is*).

The Pirahã as Non-Philosophers

While I do not believe that the Pirahã tribe exhibit a kind of naturally occurring Zen attitude, I do believe that their cultural experience, as researched and reported by Everett, serves as a great example of what integrated present moment awareness would look like. If the Pirahã experience is as Everett describes, then we have a culture which exhibits a kind of extended present moment awareness and an absolute minimum reliance on conceptual distinction. From Everett's research it would seem that the Pirahã do not have a theory of mind and that is for the same reason that they do not have a theory of creation: they do not need it. They are in tune with their environment to a sufficient degree that they are not

²⁴ See chapter four, section three for a further discussion of this issue.

compelled to invoke non-experiential concepts in order to understand specific facets of their existence.

This raises an interesting question for analytic philosophers of mind. If the Pirahã are not to be considered intellectually deficient because of their lack of concepts such as natural numbers, then their culture suggests that being reared without a reliance on strong conceptual distinction engenders language and behaviour that does not depend on boundary creation. If an individual or group of Pirahã were to go about constructing a theory of mind, would it be necessarily impossible that it would involve the kind of conceptual distinctions which are so basic to analytic philosophy of mind? Furthermore, would the idea of a Pirahã theory of mind even be possible given that to be able to abstract ‘mind’ from immediate experience requires just the kind of distinction-based thought that this culture seems to have minimal need for? Later I will discuss two major thinkers in two very different traditions; René Descartes and Zen Master Dōgen. At the time of writing they have been dead for 364 and 761 years respectively. If we take Everett’s account of Pirahã culture as accurate, then the Pirahã people would have a difficult time grasping why we still pay attention to and argue over them. Of course Dōgen, Descartes and others are involved with what we would consider universal concerns such as mind, but it is perhaps indicative of reliance on intellectualisation over experience that many people begin their philosophical exploration of such concerns using the frameworks (via writings, translations, commentaries and so forth) of others rather than their own experience.²⁵

Another conclusion of Everett’s research which I believe has connotations for sections of my argument to follow is that the Pirahã culture significantly constrains Pirahã language. In other words their experience has a formative influence on their expression of experience.

²⁵ Though of course there is Zen scholarship which is itself an intellectual activity, it is arguable that the only text one needs to read to begin engaging in the Zen experience is a guide to how to sit properly.

This has some conceptual overlap with the parts of my argument which deal with the tangible effects of zazen on practitioners, in particular the deconditioning effect which prolonged zazen can have on those who practise regularly.

In terms of my overall thesis, the most significant aspect of Pirahã culture is its relationship with immediate experience. The most relevant elements of this people's existence is that which they have directly experienced. I do not think the Pirahã experience is precisely equivalent to the present-moment awareness of zazen. Everett records that tribal ways of living are "restricted to concrete, immediate experience (where an experience is immediate in Pirahã if it has been seen or recounted as seen by a person alive at the time of telling)." Everett 2005, 622) Even so, the restriction of only thinking and talking about that which has been directly experienced is in stark contrast to most other cultures which indulge in discussing all kinds of ideas no matter how abstract or imaginary.

Conclusion

Everett's contention is that the Pirahã culture constrains its grammar. As such, his work is of most direct relevance to the concerns of linguistics and social anthropology, but it should also be of great relevance to analytic philosophers of mind. Not only for the reasons already presented (i.e. if a people have a natural lack of distinction-making in their culture, then perhaps that culture can teach us something about not making assumptions based on distinctions) but for one other quite specific reason. Philosophers of mind can be quite fond of invoking and creating thought experiments (e.g. Jackson's 'Mary's Room', Searle's 'Chinese Room', inverted qualia, zombies) in order to consider otherwise unimaginable scenarios which may have some bearing on issues in the mind-body problem. I contend that creating conceptual distinctions is one of the main sources of problems in theories of mind. If my contention is correct, then I could propose a thought experiment along the lines of 'What

would living without invoking distinctions be like?’ However this is not necessary because I believe that we already have a real world version of this question in the form of the Pirahã experience.

There are obviously caveats to this claim. It is as yet unclear whether the Pirahã experience as Everett outlines it is intrinsic to its culture, or whether any individual Pirahã could easily be educated out of such an experience. Even if they could, this does not quite invalidate the idea that categorisation and distinction-making lies at the root of unnecessary conceptual complexity. In fact it may even strengthen the position; if we can show that a person who has spent their life with a minimal reliance on distinction-based thinking can be taught to adopt more and more instances of such thinking, then it shows the conventional nature of creating distinctions. In other words, it may not be necessary to invoke strong conceptual distinctions, but it is possible, and even easy, to do so. With regard to the mind-body problem, the next question would be whether one mode is to be desired over the other.

Another caveat is that the philosophical relevance of the Pirahã experience should not be considered on entirely philosophical grounds. We are dealing with a people who have a uniquely fine-tuned experience of, and relationship with, their immediate environment. But this experience is neither developed from a philosophical system nor developing toward a philosophical system; it is just their natural way of experiencing the world. I will compare the Pirahã experience with the Zen experience but I have no reason to believe that the latter would represent an obvious, natural activity for the former. Similarly I am not convinced that a Pirahã critique of analytic philosophy of mind is an entirely realistic prospect. That said, I do still hold that the aspects of this culture which I have discussed here can be deployed as a unique way of investigating analytic philosophy of mind’s preoccupation with carving up the world into categories.

While Everett's claim that the Pirahã culture constrains its grammar is an argument for linguistics, I will adapt it a little to put it in a philosophical context in order to present the following question: does the Pirahã culture constrain intellectual activity such that a Pirahã philosophy, if one could develop, would rely minimally, or not at all, on the kinds of distinctions that analytic philosophy of mind repeatedly invoke?

If the Pirahã experience is one of conceptual simplicity, then the western analytic approach to mind rests on the opposite end of the spectrum considering the high level of conceptual complexity involved in analytic theories of mind. Such complexity relies on the kind of intellectualisation and distinction-making which the Zen tradition is wary of, and the question remains whether such complexity causes more problems than it solves. I will now turn to examine this complexity as well as the nature of the assumptions made throughout analytic theories of mind.

III. Self-Imposed Problems?

(a) The Problem of ‘Problem’

Analytic philosophy of mind centres around a core of universal concerns and questions often summarised using the term ‘mind-body problem.’ In just these three words lie some of the major issues which I feel face analytic philosophy of mind, and which could be aided by an adoption of principles best expressed in Zen Buddhist scholarship and practice.

Firstly, this term immediately presents a duality, i.e. the mind as opposed to the body. Is the assumption of this duality justified? We do seem to have two types of experience of the world, the private and the public, and this seems in parallel with the idea that the mental and the physical are two opposing types of phenomena. There is also ample evidence to show that when we damage or change the state that we consider the ‘physical’ part of our experience to consist in (i.e. the body, or more specifically, the brain) then there results some kind of change in states that we usually refer to using mental language (e.g. experiencing a pain or an emotion). This is a question I will address throughout: is it more justified to view the world as somehow divided into distinct categories, or does it make more sense to view and treat the world as unified, and to treat distinction as always entirely conventional?

In Zen Buddhist literature, this issue is not non-existent, but it is treated much differently. Curiously, English translations of the terminology used to address these issues are often close, but subtly different to their contemporary analytic counterparts. Dōgen uses the term ‘body-mind’²⁶ without adding to it the ‘problem’ part that the analytic method does. While somewhat tangential it is also interesting that the terms often appear in reverse order in Zen Buddhist texts; it is elegantly parallel to the idea that the body is foremost as the place of

²⁶ See Nishijima and Cross (1994) and Tanahashi (1995)

practice and the opportunity for undifferentiated experience, while the mind is the place of delusion, distraction and judgement. (Descartes played a prominent role in promoting the kind of ‘two worlds’ view I am concerned with here. The term Descartes uses which translates as ‘meditation’ could be used as a guide to what *not* to do in the meditation of zazen: introspection, trying to find foundations, philosophical assumption, distinction-making. Descartes is of course using a term that was, from his perspective, appropriate in order to give a general description of his work. But it highlights the inherent limits of language that a surface level reading of the term ‘meditation’ could imply the same thing in Zen as it does in Descartes’s methodology.) Even though the two terms are sometimes treated separately for rhetorical reasons, they are more often than not treated as different aspects of ultimate unity, rather than two distinct worlds, one of which could or should be explained in terms of the other.

Secondly, the above term relies on the use of the word ‘problem.’ In ordinary language terms, a problem is something to be avoided; an unwelcome and perhaps unnecessary and negative development. Is this what we think of when we consider the relationship between the mind and the body?²⁷ In the present-moment awareness of zazen the ‘body-mind’ is the source of the experience of non-duality; there is nothing problematic about it. Historically speaking, the analytic approach to the mind-body problem has certainly been an area of much frustration and disagreement but I would argue that this is almost always the case precisely because of the presupposed duality present in the core terminology. I will now examine some varied and influential conceptions of the mind-body problem from the analytic perspective in order to demonstrate the pervasive role of assumption and dichotomous thinking in analytic theories of mind.

²⁷ Other closely related terms like ‘the Hard Problem’ or ‘explanatory gap’ have a similarly troubled tone.

(b) Analytic Conceptions of the Mind-Body Problem

Insofar as a potential solution to the mind-body problem is deemed possible, standard analytic accounts generally depend on an assumed distinction between what are broadly understood as the physical and the mental. Many theories of mind operate on the general aim of learning enough about the former to explain the latter; a complete theory of mind would/will be one in which all mental states would/will be expressible or understandable in physical terms. Yet despite vigorous debate and disagreement between different thinkers on the solution to the mind-body problem the initial general conception of the problem itself, especially from the analytic perspective, is usually the same across the board. In basic terms it could be laid out thus: there *seem* to be some mental phenomena, there evidently *are* some physical phenomena, and we want to understand how one category emerges ('emerge' here used in ordinary language terms) from the other.

I argue that our terminology presupposes the nature, and even inter-relation, of these nominally distinct types of phenomena and that this leads to mistaken claims and/or conclusions in analytic theories of mind. In order to demonstrate this I will need to show that presuppositions about, for example, dualistic categories are not only a common feature of analytic theories of mind, but that these very presuppositions are rarely questioned. I will present a selection of what could be considered the starting points of many mind-problem debates (including the problem of consciousness), expressed as they are by eminent and influential philosophers in many different times and places across numerous texts. While this is a selective process, I think that the similarities in the patterns of language and terminology in the following conceptions cannot be ignored; each of these thinkers have decided to set the mind-body problem up in a certain way, and they all look remarkably similar; even despite

the variety of suggested solutions to the mind-body problem, the characterisation of the problem itself remains incredibly consistent.

Of course a simple objection to using this as one of the bases for a critique of the analytic approach would be to point out that this is a basic and necessary fact; the analytic approach to the mind-body problem, like any other discipline, uses specialised language in which to express concepts, concerns and questions. The fact that most or all analytic conceptions proceed along the same lines is not only to be accepted but to be expected. On this point, I would actually agree, but only insofar as analytic philosophy of mind represents a kind of language in itself; a language which is not all-encompassing with regard to the breadth and depth of the phenomena in question but which communicates certain very specific ideas from a very specific perspective. My concern is that the conceptions I present here do not quite recognise this but rather are set up as problems which, if solved, will actually serve as, or significantly work toward, a solution to the mind-body problem. It is also worth noting at this point that the term '*the* mind-body problem' presupposes that varying theories are working toward the same type of conclusion, when in fact the constraints which most theorists place on their individual theories would suggest that the phrase '*a* mind-body problem' would be more appropriate to use. The latter phrase would at least recognise the provisional, conventional nature of a given approach to the issue at hand.

With that in mind, what follows is a list of basic statements which serve as conceptions of the mind-body problem in the work of prominent philosophers:

· "... the various phenomena that compose what we call consciousness... are all physical effects of the brain's activities." (Dennett 1993, 16)

· “The problem of explaining phenomenal consciousness is the problem of explaining how consciousness can come from what is not conscious.” (Rowlands 2001, 13)

· “I am a realist and a reductive materialist about mind. I hold that mental states are contingently identical to physical - in particular, neural - states.” (Lewis in O’Connor and Robb 2003 197)

· “It seems to me that science is increasingly giving us a viewpoint whereby organisms are able to be seen as physicochemical mechanisms: it seems that even the behaviour of man himself will one day be explicable in mechanistic terms.” (Smart, 1959, 142)

· “It is widely accepted that conscious experience has a physical basis. That is, the properties of experience (phenomenal properties, or qualia) systematically depend on physical properties according to some lawful relation.” (Chalmers in Metzinger 1995, 309)

· “Eliminative materialism is the thesis that our commonsense conception of psychological phenomena constitutes a radically false theory, a theory so fundamentally defective that both the principles and the ontology of that theory will eventually be displaced, rather than smoothly reduced, by completed neuroscience.” (Churchland 1981, 67)

· “The famous mind-body problem, the source of so much controversy over the past two millennia, has a simple solution. This solution has been available to any educated person since serious work began on the brain nearly a century ago, and, in a sense, we all know it to be true. Here it is: mental phenomena are caused by neurophysiological processes in the brain

and are themselves features of the brain... Mental events are as much part of our biological natural history as digestion, mitosis, meiosis, or enzyme secretion.” (Searle 1994, 1)

· “Few things are more firmly established in popular philosophy than the distinction between mind and matter. Those who are not professional metaphysicians are willing to confess that they do not know what mind actually is, or how matter is constituted; but they remain convinced that there is an impassable gulf between the two, and that both belong to what actually exists in the world.” (Russell 1921, 10)

· “I think that what has permanent value in the outlook of the behaviourists is the feeling that physics is the most fundamental science at present in existence. But this position cannot be called materialistic, if, as seems to be the case, physics does not assume the existence of matter. The view that seems to me to reconcile the materialistic tendency of psychology with the anti-materialistic tendency of physics is the view of William James and the American new realists, according to which the ‘stuff’ of the world is neither mental nor material, but a ‘neutral stuff,’ out of which both are constructed.” (Russell 1921, 7-8)

· “We have been trying for a long time to solve the mind-body problem. It has stubbornly resisted our best efforts. The mystery persists. I think the time has come to admit candidly that we cannot resolve the mystery.” (McGinn 1991, 19)

Common Features of Analytic Conceptions of the Mind Body Problem

What do all the above statements have in common? They all make some reference to the physical (in the case of Rowlands this comes in the form of “what is not conscious” and in the case of Churchland, “neuroscience”). All of these statements also make reference to

mind/mental language/consciousness (and in the case of Smart “behaviour,” presumably including outward expressions of inner states). In most of the above cases it is made clear that there is some kind relation between the two, including the kind of relation where the mind reduces to the physical. If we take these statements as a more or less representative cross-section of the analytic approach to the mind-body problem, then it is evident that there are some significant distinctions being made, centred on the distinction between the categories of mental and physical.

When taken at face value, this distinction seems natural; we are at every moment experiencing the physical, but we also have mental experience like sensation, pain, memory, dreams and so forth that seem to exist in some less vivid (or perhaps causally puzzling) sense than the physical, but which seem to exist all the same. The former seems of a sufficiently different category than the latter for them to develop and demonstrate a dichotomous relation, and the analytic project then becomes obvious; how to explain the relationship between these two distinct things? But as I will argue there may be cultural, philosophical and historical reasons why the apparent intellectual necessity of this kind of distinction is a great mistake, and feeds back into theories of mind in negative ways.

While almost no contemporary philosopher would endorse a strong theory of dualism, the landscape of analytic philosophy of mind does appear, at least in its terminology, to deal in a mental/physical dichotomy. I argue that this is the case even for theories which rely on reduction and, by extension, an explicit rejection of any sort of dualism. Physicalist reductive theories do not claim that there are two types of thing, rather just one (i.e. the physical) and that the apparent existence of mental states is a (sometimes convenient) fiction. If reductive theories are sincere in their assertion that as far as mind goes, there really is only one kind of thing - the physical - then it bears asking whether there really is such a dichotomous approach as I have presented here. After all reduction seems at face value to be dispensing with

dichotomous thinking by arguing that phenomena traditionally regarded as two are in fact one. However I argue that the reductive approach, and the analytic approach in general, do buy into traditional dichotomies around mind and do not demonstrate principles of non-duality comparable to that of the Zen perspective.

One example which illustrates this idea is the eliminativist project of Paul and Patricia Churchland. The Churchlands might claim that they are not buying into a dichotomy/duality by virtue of their eliminativist project's claims. If there really are no such things as mental states then re-stating mental terms in neurophysiological language is not just another type of description, it is the only valid type of description. In this sense their project looks more monist than dualist: there is only one type of thing, it is understandable as/expressible by neurophysiological language, and we are mistaken if we think there is any other kind of substance or property beyond what this language allows. That being so, how different is the eliminativist/reductionist approach to mind from the Zen Buddhist approach? Are the Churchlands' claims that we are deluded in our personal beliefs about our 'selves' and our mental lives philosophically compatible with similar claims in Zen scholarship?

From a Zen perspective, the eliminativist project is misguided in a number of ways. For instance, Zen scholars and practitioners are pragmatic when it comes to emotional states. A misconception surrounding mindfulness practices is that the subject should be 'centred' in such a way that one avoids negative emotions. Quite the contrary is true in integration of zazen. If you are angry, be angry, if you are happy, be happy; do not try to shift from any state just because it is an overt emotional state. The present-moment awareness of zazen also applies to being aware of one's current emotional states and neither exaggerating nor suppressing them. So for the Zen practitioner the denial of emotional states is as unrealistic as the firm belief in a persistent self. The Churchlands may respond to this by claiming that being a realist about emotions just buys into the misguided mental language that

eliminativism will overturn. Despite the pragmatism of the Zen attitude, any type of acceptance of emotional states will violate their doctrine. But outside of a purely Zen response there are more technical philosophical reasons for both doubting the eliminativist approach and showing that it does indeed buy into the dichotomous mode of canonical theories of mind.

In his article “Neurophenomenology of Emotion”, Brent Dean Robbins states the following in reference to Patricia Churchland’s neurophilosophical project: “In my opinion, the path of Churchland’s neurophilosophy, if taken, would be an unnecessary detour that would set the field back several decades before it finally settled on the only genuine method for the study of experience: the phenomenological method.” (Gordon 2013, 7) This is a somewhat common and intuitive response to the eliminativist project: that it is unrealistic and takes the emphasis off factors that are going to have an influence on both theory and everyday life whether one finds them palatable or not. Robbins goes on to critique the reductive nature of eliminativism and hits on the main problem of the analytic/reductive approach to consciousness in general:

... reductionism is a problem because a reductive approach to explaining experience presupposes what it is supposed to explain. The study of consciousness is itself dependent upon the consciousness of the philosopher or scientists if it is to even get started. Therefore, a coherent approach to the experience of emotion would have to be a holistic and integrated perspective that appreciates what is unique about human experience and behaviour without forgetting that it is fundamentally rooted and always already situated in an embodied and worldly existence. (Gordon 2013, 7)

Eliminativism is by definition a reductive endeavour, and if reduction is flawed then eliminativism must be flawed, for more than just intuitive or common-sensical reasons.

Another major criticism of eliminativism, one which demonstrates that eliminativism cannot escape from the standard mind-body dichotomy, is the self-defeating nature of its theoretical end-goal. If one were to communicate, as the Churchlands deem appropriate, by expressing oneself using neurophysiological rather than mental or folk-psychological language, that does not get around the experiential fact that one must first internally recognise the type of state (e.g. 'pain') one wants to communicate *prior* to translating it into neurophysiological language. In not recognising experience as a holistic, interdependent relation between first and third-person perspectives, the eliminativist goes the long way round in order to arrive back at the dichotomous starting point of most analytic theories of mind; the question of how mental/private states relate to physical/public states.

Although less extreme in his reductive approach, a similar problem is evident in the work of Daniel Dennett, in particular with regard to conceptions of the self and the fallibility of conscious experience. Dennett's claims about the self are seemingly quite similar to the Zen perspective; we are mistaken in our conviction that we are individual selves who persist over time. In his presentation "The Illusion of Consciousness" Dennett opens with the claim that:

It's very hard to change people's minds about consciousness... The reason for that is that everybody's an expert on consciousness... With regard to consciousness [each] of us seems to think "I am an expert. Simply by being conscious, I know all about this". And so you tell them your theory and they say "No, no, that's not the way

consciousness is, you've got it all wrong" and they say this with an amazing confidence.²⁸

Dennett then proceeds to argue against the idea that we can have authority regarding our own consciousness. The latter point certainly seems reasonable; perception is fallible and it is not uncommon for such fallibility to feed back into one's character in such a way that one's conscious experience creates and perpetuates mistaken beliefs or assumptions. However if human consciousness is responsible for the development of formal logic and experimentation - two concepts which Dennett relies on to make his case - and human consciousness is less secure than we commonly think, then his argument is surely just as suspect as our perceptions/sense of self and so forth. In other words he is a person declaring that persons are mistaken about their consciousness; as with the liar's paradox one might ask "If Dennett is correct, then is *he* actually mistaken? And if so, is he *incorrect*?"

The themes of Dennett's argument seem not too dissimilar from the tenets of Buddhism: mistrust of apparently obvious truths, a reminder of human fallibility, scepticism about how much our conscious experience can really tell us about reality. The opening abstract for his paper "The Self as a Responding - and Responsible - Artifact" states that "[the existence of the illusion of self is]... an evolved feature of communicating agents, capable of responding to requests and queries about their own decisions and actions"²⁹. This demonstrates both Dennett's assertion that the self as traditionally understood is illusory, and that the concept of self is better explained in a basic sense as a series of functions which create the convenient fiction that we conceive as the self.

The most basic difference between Dennett's notion of self and the Zen approach to

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjbWr3ODbAo>

²⁹ (Dennett 2003, 39)

self can be explained by reference to the conventional/ultimate relation. Dennett's basic claim is that there is no substantial self, just a series of processes we identify as such. One could feasibly make the claim that Zen says the same, but there is one subtle and very particular difference. On Dennett's view the self is a convenient fiction, but ultimately an illusion; the idea of a self is just wrong, no matter how hard we assert it.³⁰ On the Zen view, the self is an illusion but it does have a conventional reality; we would be wrong to have a firm belief that it is a persistent phenomenon, but if we re-contextualise the self and explicitly see it as a conventional reality then we are no longer deluded; we have just shifted our perspective. Understanding the self as a convention is in fact one of the first steps in gaining insight from meditative practices. But claiming that the self is just an illusion and leaving the argument at that does not get us very far. So while Dennett does recognise some version of a conventional notion of self, it is not comparable to the Zen understanding of conventional truth/reality.

At the outset of the above-mentioned paper, Dennett states that: "Today, materialism has swept dualism and its insoluble mysteries of interaction aside..."³¹ Materialism may have swept aside Cartesian or substance dualism, but as I argue it does not appear to have swept aside duality, at the very least not in its framing and language regarding mind, and this is important because framing and language are factors which heavily influence any individual or group approach to mind. In my examination of Kim's description of mental causation in chapter four we see that the committed materialist does indeed still encounter the 'insoluble mysteries of interaction' in much the same way as the eliminativist still encounters mental states even as she explicitly denies them. In setting up a distinction, whether it be between mental and physical, public and private, self and no-self, one will eventually have to deal with the fact that the phenomena under observation do not re-order themselves to fit the

³⁰ While I acknowledge that Dennett does of course point out the benefits of perceived selfhood, I think his position on the matter can be illustrated by reference to Strawson's claim about physicalists, referenced in section one of this chapter.

³¹ (Dennett 2003, 39)

theoretical model being used. For this very reason I believe the holistic nature of the Zen perspective to be a more reasonable and effectual framework for approaches to mind.

Having outlined the issues with duality in modern analytic philosophy of mind, the next chapter will focus on this problem with particular regard to Descartes's influence on the mind-body problem and the intellectual activity of categorisation.

Chapter Two

Sources of Complexity in Philosophy of Mind

I. The Legacy of Cartesian Dualism

(a) Dualism and Distinction in Descartes's Philosophy

In his attempt to account for mind-body interaction René Descartes drew on an apparent distinction between the mental and the physical as well as establishing a lexicon from which most future theories of mind would draw their terminology. Throughout this section I will emphasise the idea that Descartes's philosophy, in particular his work in *The Discourse on the Method* and *Meditations* made an already seemingly dualistic problem even more explicitly dualistic and that his foundationalist approach to mind crystallised the mind-body problem in the form in which it is generally presented to this day. I will also briefly outline the general philosophical and historical precedent for dualistic thinking independent of Descartes.

The foundationalist procedure with which Descartes charged himself relied heavily on sceptical inquiry. In pushing scepticism as far as it would go Descartes believed he would reach the foundations on which the rest of his philosophy could safely be built. There is a passing resemblance between the scepticism adopted by Descartes and Buddhist mistrust in the surface-level appearance of the world. It is worth briefly comparing these outlooks in order to highlight the important ways in which they diverge.

Montaigne, a significant influence on Descartes and a writer of highly influential essays on scepticism, praises Pyrrhonism (the doctrine that all beliefs are subject to doubt) as an approach to understanding human weakness. He claims that “No system discovered by man has greater usefulness nor a greater appearance of truth [than Pyrrhonism] which shows us Man naked, empty, aware of his natural weakness, fit to accept outside help from on high.” (Clarke 2003, xix) Part of this statement echoes the sentiments of core Buddhist literature. Montaigne’s assertion of humankind’s weakness evokes the Buddha’s Noble Truths “... birth is suffering, decay is suffering, disease is suffering; separation from the pleasant is suffering; any desire that is not satisfied is suffering.” (Klostermaier 1999, 35) Both place a major significance on the natural place of suffering within existence.

Montaigne’s interpretation of Pyrrhonism offers an insight into the difference between western rationalist scepticism and the kind of scepticism apparent in Buddhism. Montaigne’s assertion that, through Pyrrhonism, man is “aware of his natural weakness” contrasts with interpretations of the Buddha’s message wherein humankind is deluded, and even *unaware* of its collective delusion. Such delusion occurs despite - or even because of - intellectualisation of reality³². Nishitani addresses the difference in approach between Cartesian scepticism and the ‘Great Doubt’ of Buddhist traditions.

[Descartes] was engaged from the very start in a process of methodical doubt. This is something fundamentally different from the self-presentation of the Great Doubt. It cannot be the sort of doubt in which the self and all things are transformed into a single Doubt; it is not the Doubt that makes itself present in the self as the basic reality of the self and things; nor, again, is it that Doubt the very realization of which

³² Though it should be noted that the Pyrrhonist tendency to place little or no value on any positive theory over any negative theory shares the Buddhist, and especially Zen Buddhist, spirit of definition or explanation by negation.

comes about within oneself, and in which the self realizes (appropriates) the fundamental uncertainty of the self and all things.

At the same time, the *cogito* of Descartes did not pass through the purgative fires in which the ego itself is transformed, along with all things, into a single Great Doubt. The *cogito* was conceived of simply on the field of the *cogito*. This is why the reality of the ego as such could not but become an unreality. Only after passing through those purgative fires and breaking through the nihility that makes itself present at the ground of the ego, can the reality of the *cogito* and the *sum*, together with the reality of all things, truly appear as real. Only then can this reality be actualized and appropriated. If we grant that Cartesian philosophy is the prime illustration of the mode of being of modern man, we may also say that it represents the fundamental problem lurking within that mode. (Nishitani 1983, 19)

One of the key differences, then, between scepticism as applied by Descartes and the Buddhist Great Doubt is that the former relies on the ultimate existence of some form of the self, while the latter extends to the destruction or rejection of this ego as it becomes subsumed in a singular, non-dualist Great Doubt. If we use the Buddhist Great Doubt to expose a weakness in Descartes's methodical scepticism, then it is a great weakness indeed. His assumption that he was building firm foundations of knowledge is mistaken in a crucial way; the one piece of knowledge he felt he could be sure of was a justification of the existence of the ego/self from which all delusions, and hence unfounded knowledge, arise.

In the above quotation Montaigne also implies a deity when he says that humankind is willing to accept help "from on high." Buddhism would avoid such a hierarchical deistic

invocation.³³ This tendency for the human intellect to appeal to an omniscient entity is of course not strictly a western phenomenon. There is plenty of superstition and belief in deities and spirits across various eastern cultures and traditions. The version of Zen I will present here, however, avoids this tendency.³⁴ Perhaps it is simply that in lived experience with full present-moment awareness, it becomes evident that deities or superstitions have no power or effect other than what we ascribe to them. This certainly seems to be the case in the example of the Pirahã tribe described in chapter one, where a lifestyle based in immediate experience negates the invocation or need for a mythical, invisible, or historically distant deity. Belief in a higher power makes a chaotic world seem at the very least more intellectually manageable in the sense that it creates a context for the search for actual or potential laws of nature. Akizuki Ryomin explains this tendency toward belief in a higher power from the Buddhist perspective:

Śākyamuni himself, to put it bluntly, was atheistic and aspiritistic. He did not believe in the existence of gods or spirits or any Absolute outside of the self that controls the world and the people in it. To the question ‘Does the soul survive after death?’ he could only reply ‘No comment.’ For one who lives a full life, awakened to one’s ‘original self’ in the here and now, past and future are no longer an issue. But if the all-important present *self* is missing, some will-o-the-wisp or other is bound to slip in and take its place - call it God or Buddha or spirit or what you will. (Ryomin 1990, 15)

³³ “We do not believe that this world is created and ruled by a God.” (Klostermaier 1999, 37)

³⁴ I will discuss potential exceptions to this in chapter four.

This message would have - and *should* have - resonated with Descartes, writing as he was in a period when figures like Giordano Bruno, Galileo, Campanella and Hugo Grotius were persecuted and even put to death for intellectual views that conflicted with religious dogma. Whether it was for philosophical reasons, reasons of placating the powerful religious orthodoxy of the time, or a combination of both, the problem Descartes had with accounting for God was a similar problem to that of accounting for mind-body interaction. In each case a conceptual assumption is made or accepted which creates unnecessary complexity (in the former, the assumption of a God, in the latter the assumption of a ‘real distinction’ between substances). In a contemporary context we may find it easier to excuse or ignore the God element of Descartes’s philosophy, or at least account for it in terms of the intellectual climate of his day. But it seems that the dualistic element present in Descartes’s philosophy is still present in some form today. Having stated the nature of Descartes’s foundational approach and its errors which are brought to light from a Buddhist perspective, I will now examine the dualistic and distinction-based aspects of Descartes’s philosophy of mind.

The biographical evidence for Descartes’s foundational approach lies in 1619 when “... [he] had his famous dream in which he conceived the project of a fundamental renewal and unification of the sciences.” (Clarke 2003, xvii) (It is somewhat ironic that a life’s work that would have incalculable influence on analytic philosophy, concerned with neutral third-person accounts of mind had its source in the hazy first-person experience of dreaming.) However influential, Descartes’s project was certainly not monolithic in the landscape of philosophy of mind during his time. Examining the correspondence around his *Meditations* confirms that many of his contemporaries were engaged in varied and open approaches to mind (though often perhaps leaning toward the conservative for fear of the above-mentioned religious persecution) dependent on terminology still familiar to the analytic philosopher of mind. So while it would be wrong to claim that Descartes is responsible for the creation of

the expressions which frame many debates within philosophy of mind, it is clear that his methodology relied on defining and defending certain concepts which left a lasting impression in the discipline. While Cartesian dualism has perhaps had the most lasting influence on modern philosophy of mind, this theory sprang from a broader and more fundamental concern of Descartes's, and that is his concept of distinction.

I maintain that the type of distinction that Descartes promulgated creates often unnecessary conceptual complexity in analytic philosophy of mind. That Descartes both made and proceeded along the lines of such distinction is explicit in his own texts. In *The Principles of Philosophy* Descartes puts forward a definition of what he terms 'real distinction':³⁵

There is a real distinction, in a strict sense, only between two or more substances.

We perceive that substances are really distinct from each other simply from the fact that we are able to understand, clearly and distinctly, one substance without the other.

... And even if we suppose that God has joined a physical substance so closely that they could not be more closely joined, and that he formed a single entity from the two substances, they are still really distinct. The reason is that, no matter how closely he joined them, he cannot lose the power that he had previously to separate them or to conserve one in existence without the other, and those things that can be separated by God or can be conserved in existence are really distinct. (Clarke 2003, 135)

³⁵ Descartes's conception of 'substance' on which his explanation of distinction depends adds further conceptual complexity to understanding mind. I will not deal with the intricacies of the concept of substance here other than to state Descartes's given usage of the term: "[T]he kind of thing that can exist on its own." (Clarke 2003, 38) A more specific explanation is provided in the replies to the second objections in the *Meditations*: "Something is called a *substance* if it is a subject in which resides, or by which exists, everything that we perceive, that is, every property, quality or attribute of which we have a real idea. Nor do we have any idea of the substance itself in a strict sense, except that it is the thing in which whatever we perceive exists either formally or eminently, or

Whatever the weakness of Descartes's explanation of the role of God in creating and preserving distinction between substances, it is clear that Descartes's philosophy of mind relies on a firm distinction between the mental and the physical. Descartes does concede that there are instances of 'unity of composition' where distinct properties are found in the same subject, but works this idea into evidence in favour of real distinction: "This supports the conclusion that thought and extension 'are said to be one and the same only by a unity of composition, in so far as they are found in the same human being, as flesh and bone are found in the same animal.'" (Clarke 2005, 244-245)

As I will discuss in chapter five, distinction-based thinking has ramifications for far more than just philosophy of mind. In this sense Descartes's work also had a lasting influence in that his conception of distinction did not just create the possibility of carving the world up into merely the mental and the physical, but any number of mutually exclusive, arbitrarily created categories. Secada observes that commentators on Descartes's idea of 'real distinction' often take him to be referring to a distinction between the human body and the human mind, when in fact "a real distinction holds between any two substances."

Descartes pointed out that he had satisfied the two requirements needed to establish that my thoughts and extension are really distinct essences constituting different substances... Having established that thought (n) and extension are real essences of possible substances, it remains to be determined whether they are separate essences each constituting a numerically distinct substance: can they be understood 'one apart from the other'? Descartes's answer is unambiguous: I can conceive extension clearly and distinctly while denying of it all attributes which I distinctly

whatever is present intentionally in one of our ideas, for it is known by the natural light of reason that no real attribute can belong to nothing." (Clarke 2003, 86)

perceive to belong to my thought, and vice versa, I can conceive my thought clearly and distinctly while denying of it all attributes which I distinctly perceive to belong to extension (see AT, VII, 223). Extension and thought (n) (assuming that what holds for myself holds for other thinking natures) are, therefore, each a different real essence, constituting a numerically distinct substance. (Secada 2000, 239-240)

This approach had an influence on Descartes's contemporaries and correspondents in that they approached the topic in the way in which Descartes framed it, whether they agreed with his overall argument or not.

Malebranche accepted Cartesian dualism: minds were thinking substances and the essence of matter was extension. But he tried to improve upon Descartes' account of the relationship between mind and body, long recognized as the weakest point in the Cartesian system. More consistently than Descartes, Malebranche argued that if mind was pure thought, and matter was pure extension, neither could act upon the other. (Kenny 2010, 545)

This is just one instance in which an immediate successor to Descartes continued to operate on the same mind-body dichotomy which Descartes crystallised. Malebranche wanted to improve the idea of the mind-body relation, but did not seem overtly worried about examining the general nature of the dichotomy that lay at the root of that relation. Just as with the analytic conceptions of the mind-body problem that I outlined in chapter one, it seems that the overwhelming tendency in modern western philosophy was, and is, to start any account of mind on a relatively untested assumption that the mental and the physical are distinct. Even the conceptual stances which would be inherently opposed to Cartesian

dualism, for example hardline materialism or Berkeleyan idealism, still proceed using the language of distinction with regard to mind and body.

“If we nowadays tend naturally to think of mind and matter as the two great mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive divisions of the universe we inhabit, that is because of Descartes.” (Kenny 2010, 528)

Descartes’s treatment of distinction as it relates to his dualism is also expanded on in Clarke, (1982)³⁶; Garber (2001)³⁷, and Cottingham (1986)³⁸.

(b) Philosophical Precedent for Dualism and Distinction

The philosopher concerned with the question of personal identity finds her/himself in the dilemma of either subscribing to the mysterious, as well as questionable, concept of a substance or forsaking the ethically crucial and seemingly empirical, self-evident notion of personal identity. Faced with this alternative, the criteriolgist establishes personal identity by identifying the necessary and sufficient criteria that constitute personal identity. This approach discloses two possible

³⁶ “It is a well known feature of Descartes’ philosophy that he adopted a dualist theory of mind and body and that the theory raised many more questions than it could have hoped to answer both for his readers and his correspondents. There is enough evidence in the failure to develop the theory in detail and in his apparently conflicting versions of it to suggest that Descartes’ discussion of dualism, or at least the substance language in which it was expressed, was an unfortunate incursion into the categories of classical Aristotelianism from which he could hardly have hoped to emerge unscathed.” (Clarke 1982, 24-25)

³⁷ “Once he realized that he resisted the arguments for the distinction between mind and body only because of this childhood error, this confusion between the mental and the material, the doubts he had simply fell away. No doubt he expected his readers to have the same experience that he had; as in the *Discourse on the Method*, the first-person narrative... constitutes a kind of argument to persuade his readers, an example for them to follow to lead them to the kind of enlightenment that Descartes, himself, has achieved.” (Garber 2001, 265)

³⁸ “Descartes’ belief that he is ‘really distinct from his body and could exist without it’ is reinforced by his perception that he *qua* thinking thing is something non-extended, whereas his body shares with corporeal matter in general the attribute of extension. Mind and body, for Descartes are not merely distinct: they are defined in mutually exclusive terms.” (Cottingham 1986, 116)

solutions, namely, the attribution of personal identity to bodily continuity or to psychological continuity. Such an alternative, however, warrants two immediate observations. First, this dichotomy obviously arises from and is reminiscent of, the mind-body dualism, which has received its ultimate philosophical expression in the European philosophical tradition by René Descartes, and, thus, reflects the Cartesian legacy. I believe that this revival of the Cartesian dichotomy reveals some of the fundamental issues and metaphysical assumptions involved in the criteriological controversy. Second, the discussion of the physical and the psychological criteria raises the question whether these approaches actually substitute the notion of substance with a bodily or a psychological continuity or whether they simply substantialize the human body or the psychological complex involving memory and consciousness. (Kopf 2001, 9)

The above quote by Kopf suggests how Cartesian dualism still feeds into areas of contemporary concern to analytic philosophy of mind such as personal identity. The legacy of Cartesian dualism is that it frames any subset of ideas about the mind-body interaction in a generally dichotomous and dualistic manner, even if those ideas have been developed long after Descartes himself was writing. My argument in this chapter thus far centres on the idea that, whether he intended it or not, Descartes's work - or more correctly, interpretations and applications of Descartes's work - has been responsible for influencing and shaping the mind-body problem as it is generally approached in contemporary philosophy.³⁹ This leads to the

³⁹ This has fed into other related fields as well. To give just one such instance, B.D. Robbins notes that "The old paradigm of affective neuroscience is built upon a dualistic understanding of cognition and emotion, which is one of the vestiges of the Cartesian mind-body split. In the field of neuroscience, this dualistic understanding manifests itself in the tendency to situate cognitive and affective functions in completely separate regions of the brain and nervous system, in which the systems are basically in opposition to one another." (Gordon, 2013, 5)

uncomfortable conclusion that the fact that Descartes may have been misinterpreted on some levels does not really matter. What does matter is the fact that the general framing of the problem has not fundamentally changed since his time.

Outside of this recognition there is ample evidence that even if Cartesian dualism had never been developed and promoted then dualistic thinking about the mind-body problem would still on the whole prevail. Are there already some fundamental tendencies in human beings that cause us to view the world dualistically, which in turn would make a dualistic philosophy all the easier to adopt?⁴⁰ I believe that the tendency towards dualistic thinking does not necessarily arise from our general intuition that there are two seemingly essentially different types of thing, i.e. the mental and the physical (although I will argue below that this is part of the problem), but from the psychological and mostly subconscious activity of categorisation that is constantly reinforced within us. I will examine some of these tendencies below and in more technical detail in the second section of this chapter.

The Sense of Self as an Instance of Distinction-Making

Perhaps the most obvious and immediate example of just such a tendency would be the belief in a distinction between the personal self and the world outside that self (other selves included). This sense of self seems so strong as to make the claim that it is a belief or a tendency seem ridiculous; there is probably no stronger feeling of attachment in the world than the feeling of attachment to one's own individual 'self.' From before one can even remember there is a continual stream of experiences that reinforces this sense of essential individuality.

⁴⁰ Here I mean the adoption not of a belief in a particular philosophy but rather the adoption of a particular basic framework. So in this case while one might disagree with Descartes's conclusions about the mind, the initial dualistic framework will still be taken as a given and the conclusions will be argued for on that basis.

The strength of the sense of self is highly dependent on, and interlocked with, a sense of distinction from others and from the world in general. Of course, within this sense of distinction will also be a sense of attachment: the fact that I am distinct from loved ones is the very reason I feel I love them because they become in some sense objectifiable; graspable as an entity that I have some affinity with and investment in. But even this sense of attachment rests on the foundation of a feeling of some kind of separateness. What could give us a stronger sense of separation than that? We can compare it to language acquisition to see how profound its influence might be. A first language, assuming a child is continually exposed to it, comes naturally and immediately to the speaker. Once we grasp the underlying structure of the language then new words, verb conjugations, sentence formations and so forth, come to us thick and fast, a fact which becomes all the more apparent when contrasted with the greater difficulty of trying to learn a new language from scratch later in life. The native language is a rich, involving experience which leads to the acquisition of tools and ideas that for the most part we are not even aware we are receiving. I think the same can be said for the sense of self, which, coincidentally may be the same reason it is so difficult to accept Buddhist 'no-self' ideas later in life. This being the case, then we have our most basic instance of the human tendency toward thinking of the world dualistically.

Religious Tradition

The Christian tradition which had such a heavy bearing on philosophy in Descartes's time also created a cultural and historical precedent for believing in realms of existence which were somehow distinct from each other. This tradition created and promoted a whole series of dualities; heaven and hell, good and evil, body and spirit. The fact that religious traditions had, and still have, such an influence on people's perception of the nature of reality has a significant bearing on a continued background belief in distinction and dualism.

Descartes's proof of - and arguments involving - god are virtually irrelevant for contemporary analytic philosophy of mind outside of historical interest. Yet the religious tradition within which Descartes operated encouraged the concept of real distinction which is still in some ways active in contemporary theories of mind.

The Forms

Going back to the origins of philosophy itself, the idea of the Platonic Forms creates a context for drawing boundaries which have no bearing on the natural world, but seem to grip and manipulate human thought. Again, any argument for or against such a worldview is arguably less important than the fact that there *is* an argument over such a worldview; the possibility and even probability of real distinction is what frames the discussion. In chapter one I touched on the idea that boundary/distinction based thinking may have some relation to people's inability to grasp the concept of boundlessness and/or infinity. This idea has a further historical basis which is introduced early on in Rudy Rucker's *Infinity and the Mind*. Speaking of *apeiron*, a translation of which could include infinite, unbounded, indefinite, or undefined, Rucker notes that:

There was no place for the *apeiron* in the universe of Pythagoras and Plato. Pythagoras believed that any given aspect of the world could be represented by a finite arrangement of natural numbers, (where "natural number" means "whole number.") Plato believed that even his ultimate form, the Good, must be finite and definite. This was in contradistinction to almost all later metaphysicians, who assumed that the Absolute is necessarily infinite. (Rucker 2005, 3)

It seems that any such claim of finitude is a self-defeating one; how can one reject the idea of infinity without awareness of the possibility thereof? And even if the concept of infinity is unpalatable, any rejection of it is in some sense reliant on distinction; in drawing a line between 'finite' and 'infinite' a distinction is made, even if one is insistent that one side of the distinction does not exist.

Plato's *Phaedo*, featuring the last arguments of Socrates before he dies, addresses the relationship between the body and the soul, as well as the role of the philosopher in understanding that relationship. The following extract demonstrates this, while also demonstrating the type of mistrust of bodily experience familiar from Descartes's work:

Do you think, he said, that in general such a man's concern is not with the body but that, as far as he can, he turns away from the body towards the soul?

I do.

So in the first place, such things show clearly that the philosopher more than other men frees the soul from association with the body as much as possible?

Apparently.

A man who finds no pleasure in such things and has no part in them is thought by the majority not to deserve to live and to be close to death; the man, that is, who does not care for the pleasures of the body.

What you say is certainly true.

Then what about the actual acquiring of knowledge? Is the body an obstacle when one associates with it in the search for knowledge? I mean, for example, do men find any truth in sight or hearing, or are not even the poets forever telling us that we do not see or hear anything accurately, and surely if those two physical senses are not clear

or precise, our other senses can hardly be accurate, as they are all inferior to these. Do you not think so?

I certainly do, he said.

When then, he asked, does the soul grasp the truth? For whenever it attempts to examine anything with the body, it is clearly deceived by it.

True.

Is it not in reasoning if anywhere that any reality becomes clear to the soul?

Yes.

And indeed the soul reasons best when none of these sense troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor pleasure, but when it is most by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it in its search for reality.

That is so.

And it is then that the soul of the philosopher most disdains the body, flees from it and seeks to be by itself?

It appears so. (Grube 2002, 102)

This same dialogue introduces the idea of the Forms, which represents just the kind of distinction-making mode of thought which has filtered down through the generations - crystallised through Descartes - which leads analytic philosophers of mind to retain a broadly dualistic attitude to the mind-body problem.

In order to establish the relevance of an application of Zen Buddhist principles to the analytic theories of mind which Descartes influenced, I will now briefly outline some key developments in the dialogue between Buddhism and Western culture in general.

II. Buddhism's Early Encounters with the West

There is philosophical precedent for the preference of Buddhist methodology over dualism in, for example, Nietzsche's admiration of the former: "...what [Nietzsche] praises about Buddhism is precisely its 'philosophical clarity' and 'high degree of intellectual spirituality' – above all because it achieves this without recourse to a 'two worlds' doctrine." (Parkes 1991, 40-41) This attitude expresses the appeal and philosophical relevance of Buddhism outside of a merely religious context. This brings me to a related question, one which is important to consider with regard to the adoption of Buddhist principles as they stand in opposition to the history of dualistic thinking in western philosophy.

If Zen Buddhism has so much to teach us about the nature of mind, where was its influence through the development and propagating of the Cartesian worldview? In *Buddhism and Science*, Lopez presents three particularly influential developments in the meeting between Buddhism and western science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From the dates of these developments alone we can see that the emergence of a dialogue between Buddhist teaching and scientific disciplines occurred long after the establishment of the Cartesian worldview outlined above. When this is coupled with the nature of the dialogue as it emerged in this time period it becomes clear that the initial relevance of Buddhist - and, by extension, Zen - principles to western philosophical and scientific traditions did not extend to the Cartesian style mind-body problem. The three influential developments are as follows:

Eugène Burnouf

Eugène Burnouf served as an early pioneer of Buddhist studies in the west. His standing as a scholar of Sanskrit allowed a more direct communication of Buddhist teaching. Burnouf's *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism*, first published in 1844, was a

landmark text for the introduction of Buddhist thought to the west,⁴¹ offering accurate translation and important philosophical insight, though not entirely independent of his own intellectual goals.

Burnouf's preference for style and the language of what he called "the simple sūtras" over what he called "the developed sūtras" (that is, the Mahāyāna sūtras) was not simply a matter of taste, although it was also that. He discerned in the difference a historical key that would open the door to what he regarded as perhaps the most important question in his endeavour: among the thousands of pages of manuscripts he had received from [Buddhist researcher] Hodgson, which represented the Buddha's original teaching, unadulterated by the tradition? (Lopez 2008, 173)

It is arguable that Burnouf's concerns about the legacy of the Buddha's teaching finds a parallel in the legacy of Descartes; here are two thinkers whose philosophies had an incalculable influence on those who shared their basic concerns, to the extent that their work would be adapted, interpreted and argued over in countless forms for generations to come. In any case it is worth noting that Burnouf was making an earnest attempt to reach back to the origins of Buddhist teachings, removing the conceptual complexity which had become attached to them in the intervening centuries in order that the basic message could be more clearly understood. Lopez selects a piece of Burnouf's writing which acknowledges the role Buddhism could play in metaphysical concerns, but which mainly emphasises the moral nature of the Buddha's teaching:

⁴¹ Dumoulin notes the following influential figures who read this book: Emerson, Thoreau, Schelling, Wagner, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche.

The ordinary sūtras show us Śākyamuni Buddha preaching his doctrine in the midst of a society that, judging from the legends in which he plays a role, was profoundly corrupt. His teaching is above all moral; and although metaphysics is not forgotten, it certainly occupies a less grand position than the theory of virtues imposed by the law of the Buddha, virtues among which charity, patience, and chastity are without objection at the first rank. The law, as Śākya calls it, is not set forth dogmatically in these books; it is only mentioned there, most often in a vague manner, and presented in its applications rather than in its principles. (Lopez 2008, 173-174)

This concentration on the moral aspect of Buddhism is not philosophically disconnected from metaphysics, given that both Buddhist metaphysics and Buddhist ethics ultimately have the same source. But given Burnouf's influence in introducing this tradition to the west, it is inevitable that his continual return to the inherently moral character of the Buddha's teaching would have the knock-on effect of shifting emphasis away from more overtly metaphysical concerns such as the mind-body relation.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1875

Thomas Rhys Davids's entry on Buddhism in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* credits the Buddha's teachings as philosophical and ethical, yet mainly describes Buddhism in a religious context. "He describes Buddhism as a religion; some advocates of Buddhism and Science would later dispute this characterization, calling Buddhism instead a philosophy, a way of life, even a science." (Lopez Jr. 2008, 5) While Davids did state the non-religious and philosophical aspect of Buddhism, his entry on the subject did not give the overt impression that this tradition could contribute to theories of mind. Given the relatively

limited access to expansive commentaries on Buddhism (Burnouf's work notwithstanding), coupled with the influence of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as an entry point to unfamiliar subjects, it is possible that the general western treatment of Buddhism at this time, centred as it was on religious and ethical concerns, stalled Buddhism's contribution to theories of mind.

Anticlerical Interpretations of Buddhism

An early example in the west of a subset of people manipulating Buddhist doctrine to their own ends is the anticlerical movement. On Lopez's account, this movement made an unsophisticated and uncritical reading of Buddhism, resulting in the presumption of basic tenets which were then morphed and projected onto this group's own concerns without a greater background understanding of the basis and goals of Buddhist teaching. Lopez recounts the following description of Buddhism by Thomas Huxley in 1894:

A system which knows no God in the western sense, which denies a soul to man, which counts the belief in immortality a blunder and the hope of it a sin; which refuses any efficacy to prayer and sacrifice; which bids men look to nothing but their own efforts for salvation; which in its original purity, knew nothing of vows of obedience, abhorred intolerance, and never sought the aid of the secular arm; yet spread over a considerable moiety of the Old World with marvellous rapidity, and is still, with whatever base admixture of foreign superstition, the dominant creed of a large fraction of mankind. (Lopez 2008, 6)

Even if we accept that it is natural for institutions to look for philosophically compatible traditions from which to draw support, it is evident that there are some glaring contradictions in Huxley's interpretation of Buddhism which would seem particularly off-

base from the Zen perspective. Huxley seems impressed with Buddhism's denial of religious features such as God, the soul, and immortality, yet backs up this recommendation by claiming that the affirmation of the latter is 'a sin' and that we need 'salvation'. Even assuming an ordinary language interpretation of *sin*, it seems difficult to deploy it without presuming that there is something or someone to sin against; if Buddhism was as entirely non-religious as Huxley makes out, it would surely avoid invoking such language. Even though Buddhism does avoid reliance on god(s) in the sense in which Huxley understands the term, it cannot be claimed that it is as spiritually nihilistic as the above passage makes it out to be.

It also seems contradictory that Huxley's impassioned tirade against religious norms, in contrast to his interpretation of Buddhism, is supported by his claim that the latter abhors intolerance. He is, broadly speaking, correct and his opinion would most likely represent just the kind of intolerance that Buddhism does abhor. Huxley's attitude may simply reflect the limited nature of the dialogue between Buddhism and the west at this time. Lopez clarifies the intentions which Huxley and others read into their own particular interpretation of Buddhism:

For Huxley and other Victorians, Buddhism was a tradition that saw the universe as subject to natural laws, without the need for any form of divine intervention. This led many European enthusiasts to declare Buddhism most suited to serious dialogue with Science, because both postulated the existence of immutable laws that governed the universe. This claim would continue to be made over the next century as one immutable law was vetoed and another was ratified in its place. (Lopez 2008, 7)

In this last sentence, Lopez touches on the dangers of an uncritical interpretation of Buddhist doctrine. The paradigm shifts of scientific traditions are large-scale instances of impermanence. In the case of Huxley and others, it is likely that their admiration of Buddhism as a tool for supporting their position would turn to disdain if exposed to the Buddhist principle of impermanence.⁴² This principle applies to ideas as well as objects, and therefore both the religion the anticlericals were opposed to, and anticlericalism itself will eventually disappear and/or fundamentally change.

Conclusion

Each of the three historical developments just presented happened long after Descartes had already crystallised the mind-body problem as it would be understood from his time forth. And (particularly in the case of the anticlerical movement) we can see that even just over a century ago the western understanding of Buddhist teachings could be quite unsophisticated. The same can be said of Zen given that it arose as a particular school of Buddhism. If we accept that philosophical paradigms can, if given enough time and attention, develop a certain inertia, then it is no wonder that, firstly, the principles of Zen Buddhism would seem somewhat alien to those coming from the analytic tradition, and secondly that those principles would take such a long time to assert and integrate their philosophical relevance. I will close this chapter with a quote from Nishitani which places Descartes's distinction-making methodology in the context of the broad and lasting effect it had on philosophy, science and notions of selfhood.

On the one hand, [Descartes] established the ego as a reality that is beyond all doubt and occupies the central position with regard to everything else that exists. His

⁴² Or Nishitani's rendering of the Buddhist Great Doubt from earlier in this chapter.

cogito, ergo sum expressed the mode of being of that ego as a self-centered assertion of its own realness. Along with this, on the other hand, the things in the natural world came to appear as bearing no living connection with the internal ego. They became, so to speak, the cold and lifeless world of death. Even animals and the body of man himself were thought of as mechanisms. That such a mechanistic view of the world would come into being and that the world itself would turn into a world of death were, we might say, already implicit in Descartes' identification of matter with extension and his consideration of that extension as the essence of things. This did enable the image of the world we find in modern natural science to come about and did open the way for the control of nature by scientific technology. But it had other consequences. To the self-centered ego of man, the world came to look like so much raw material. By wielding his great power and authority in controlling the natural world, man came to surround himself with a cold, lifeless world. Inevitably, each individual ego became like a lonely but well fortified island floating on a sea of dead matter. The life was snuffed out of nature and the things of nature; the living stream that flowed at the bottom of man and all things, and kept them bound together, dried up. (Nishitani 1983, 11)

Having examined the philosophical precedent for dualism and distinction-making, in particular with regard to the influence of Descartes, I will now look at a more general psychological account of the human tendency toward dualistic thinking, specifically the activity of category creation.

III. Categorisation

The following discussion will draw in part on Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander's work on analogy and categorisation from their book *Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking*. Their work in this area has many parallels with, and implications for, critiques of analytic philosophy particularly as it relates to the mind-body problem throughout this dissertation. Therefore I will use Hofstadter and Sander's accounts of analogy and categorisation as working definitions of those terms from this point onwards. I will begin by stating the definitions of these terms and exploring some examples thereof, and then explain the relevance of this analysis to the mind-body problem.

(a) Categorisation

(i) Analogy and Categorisation: Definitions and Usage

An exploration of our capacity for, and usage of, categorisation and analogy-making helps greatly in revealing habits about thought in general, thought surrounding the nature of consciousness and the mind-body problem and, by extension, the formation of theories about these subjects. And when explored in sufficient depth we may find that, like many other types of habit, we are not aware that we are indulging it, nor what long-term affects it might be having on us. This section examines Hofstadter and Sander's work on categorisation and analogy-making, which in the main deals with these phenomena as unconscious habits. Later I will expand on these ideas to examine the significance of conscious categorisation in context. Hofstadter and Sander offer thorough and revealing insights to the activities of both analogy-making and categorisation which I maintain have major implications for the

fundamental way that analytic philosophy traditionally conceptualises the mind-body problem. These insights take on an even greater significance when we twin them with specific lessons learned about impermanence from the Zen Buddhist perspective. Below I lay out Hofstadter and Sander's working definitions of analogy-making and categorisation.

Analogy-making: "The perception of common essence between two things."

Hofstadter adds two caveats to this. (i) By 'essence' he simply means "the essence that you perceive at the particular time in the frame of mind that you happen to be in" and (ii) "analogies happen inside your head; they are connections between two mental representations... which we project to the outside world."⁴³

Before I present Hofstadter and Sander's definition of categorisation it is necessary to state their understanding of 'category' which is as follows: "A category is a mental structure that is created over time and that evolves, sometimes slowly and sometimes quickly, and that contains information in an organised form, allowing access to it under suitable conditions." (Hofstadter and Sander 2013, 14)

Categorisation: "The act of categorisation is the tentative and gradated, gray-shaded linking of an entity or a situation to a prior category in one's mind." (Hofstadter and Sander 2013, 14) In the discussion that follows I will use this as the working definition, with one amendment, and that is my belief that the act of categorisation can, in many cases, include not just a 'linking to' but a 'placing within',⁴⁴ i.e. we do not just treat entities or situations as

⁴³ "Analogy as the Core of Cognition," YouTube video, 1:08:36, posted by "Stanford", September 10, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8m7IFQ3njk>.

⁴⁴ In everyday language this would equate with a kind of 'box-like' thinking about the world where certain phenomena sit together with related phenomena in strict distinction to other, seemingly unrelated, phenomena. This would appear to conflict with Hofstadter and Sander's above outlined definition of categorisation as "gradated [and] gray-shaded." I argue (for reasons which should become clear in the following argument) that while the mental act may well seem gradated and gray-shaded, often it results in

connected in some meaningful way; sometimes we treat them as one (a specific entity or situation) placed within the other (a general category). I do not think this conflicts with Hofstadter and Sander's view, but it is an important clarification for the argument to follow. Hofstadter and Sander's discussion includes two further clarifications which are of particular importance. Firstly:

The spontaneous categorisations that are continually made by and in our brains, and that are deeply influenced not just by the language we are speaking but also by our era, our culture and our current frame of mind are different from the standard image, according to which categorisation is the placing of various entities surrounding us into preexistent and sharply defined mental categories...⁴⁵
(Hofstadter and Sander 2013, 13)

This is an important distinction although I do not fully agree with the idea that the standard image *always* implies mental categorisation. If we are ascribing the activity of categorisation to all people, then we have to include a large majority of non-philosophers, many of whom will feel that categorisation is not just a projection *onto* the world but a real interaction *with* the world. Of course an objection to this view would be that the philosophical interpretation that Hofstadter and Sander outline shows precisely why people who think this are mistaken. However I believe it would be more instructive to get to the root of *why* people think this way, even if we already have a reasonable explanation as to why

thought and behaviour which presents just such a box-like, distinction-invoking view of the world.

⁴⁵ Note the inclusion of an experiencing subject implied by the use of the term 'perception.' The main definition of analogy in the Oxford English Dictionary is: "A comparison between one thing and another, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification." The latter definition, while implying the presence of a subject(s), places less emphasis on the importance of analogy's role in cognition, which is crucial for Hofstadter and Sander's overall argument.

they are mistaken. My reason for this approach is that it would tell us a lot about how people - including, of course, philosophers - absorb certain information in a way that informs their thinking and idea-formation about the world (and Hofstadter and Sander make reference to this issue by mentioning the unconscious influence of language and culture on thought). Just knowing and proving that these ideas are mistaken is only part of the issue; knowing *how* and *why* these ideas come about in the first place covers a lot more ground. This brings us to their second clarification of their understanding of categorisation:

The tentative and non-black-and-white nature of categorisation is inevitable, and yet the act of categorisation often feels perfectly definite and absolute to the categorizer, since many of our most familiar categories seem on first glance to have precise and sharp boundaries, and this naïve impression is encouraged by the fact that people's everyday, run-of-the-mill use of words is seldom questioned. (Hofstadter and Sander 2013, 13)⁴⁶

This point will become particularly important later in the discussion when we look at what a Zen Buddhist approach to such issues might look like.

The Link Between Analogy and Categorisation

It is important that we have an explicit understanding of the link between the closely related concepts of analogy-making and categorisation. For Hofstadter and Sander, "... analogy-making is the machinery behind the pulsating heartbeat of thought: categorisation." (Hofstadter and Sander 2013, 17). In a lecture given prior to the publication of *Surfaces and Essences*, Hofstadter puts this in slightly less abstract terms: "Analogy allows categorisation

(deciding what the essence of something is) to happen.”⁴⁷ So for Hofstadter and Sander, a simplified version of this relationship is that analogy is the perception of common essence between two things and this perceptual habit allows the creation of mental categories which then find relations in the outside world (or are formed because of experiences in and of the outside world). It is worth noting that the use of ‘analogy’ here is extremely broad. In everyday speech and action an analogy tends to be a novel, sometimes humorous and/or edifying event (here we would include metaphors, proverbs and other related figures of speech). For Hofstadter and Sander analogy-making is a crucial tool, but not particularly novel. Indeed it is happening continuously in our mental lives, often, if not mostly, when we are not even aware of it.

(ii) Analogy and Categorisation in Action

It is the automatic, repetitious nature of analogy-making that allows us to make the leap to the creation of general categories, which have the added benefit of allowing us to ‘chunk’ information which lightens our information-processing load. For example, a sufficiently experienced driver who finds herself in a situation where she needs to rent or borrow a car, will not need to re-learn everything about cars and driving, precisely because of the efficiency and general reliability of everyday analogy-making and categorisation. Despite the fact that she is in a possession of a car which is non-identical with the one that she usually drives, she will still be able to display recognition and ability equivalent to that which she displays while in charge of her own vehicle. The list of easily observed evidence for this is long. To name but a few: the pressing of the switch on the keys to unlock the car, the

⁴⁶ This quote in part acknowledges my above concern that people really do see categorisation as a practical and not exclusively mental activity.

⁴⁷ “Analogy as the Core of Cognition,” YouTube video, 1:08:36, posted by “Stanford”, September 10, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8m7IFQ3njk>.

recognition of the location of the door handle in order to open the car, the familiarity with the location of the steering wheel, pedals and gearshift in order to operate the car, the knowledge that operating these features of the car will make it move in specific ways, e.g. first gear to start, reverse gear to go backwards, turn the steering wheel right to turn the car right, and so on. Despite the apparent complexity of the operations involved, the experienced driver will, despite perhaps one or two idiosyncratic differences between her old car and the new (e.g. the positioning of the mirrors, location of the switch for the window wipers; the positioning of which will be less well-defined and obvious than, say, the location of the steering wheel) find herself driving comfortably and assuredly as soon as she starts the engine.

All of this is due to her ability to make even the simplest analogies ('steering wheel on this car' = 'steering wheel on my old car'), and placing objects and ideas in appropriate categories, most of them entirely unconsciously. This is a good example of the great stress that categorisation saves us. The amount of important information that does not require our direct attention allows us to focus on more pressing information, in this case driving safely on the road. This is just one example of an indefinitely long list of categorisations that take place - mostly unconsciously - and translate into action, on a daily basis. When looked at in light of the above analysis, Hofstadter and Sander's claim that analogy, and its close cousin categorisation, is the core of cognition is persuasive. As a fundamental part of cognition, it certainly seems like we could not escape it even if we wanted to.⁴⁸

It may be worth taking a moment to test this out in a thought experiment: is there any action or idea so unique that it cannot somehow map analogously onto another action or idea? Taking this question even further we could ask: is there any action or idea that does not come from some previous experience by which we projected it into a category from which we are

⁴⁸ See Appendix II for a literary example of why we might *not* want to avoid categorisation.

now, consciously or otherwise, extracting it? (I will leave this question open-ended, but I will admit my own difficulty in trying to come up with an example, with one caveat. This is that we must all have initial experiences to draw from at some point in our lives; we are not born with the immediate ability to drive cars, so learning a process which can then be deployed in an analogical fashion must still take place at some point. However, most of our formative experiences from which we learn important, fundamental and adaptable lessons about the world happen at a time prior to the beginning of the formation of memories vivid enough for us to be able to access directly.⁴⁹ In this sense, it may make the job of finding an ‘analogy-free’ thought process or action more difficult as we lack direct access to a likely source of just such examples. Yet if all we ever have to draw from in thought and action is our direct memory then this objection may be moot.)

I would like to point ahead to implications that Hofstadter and Sander’s analysis of analogy-making and categorisation has for the mind-body problem. It would be worth being aware of such implications in advance of the discussion to follow, as it will cast the relevance of that discussion in the light in which it was intended. Taking the brief explanation and examples of analogy-making and categorisation above, I will leave everyday examples like driving and turn to the intellectual activity of thinking and theorising about the mind-body problem. If analogy is the core of cognitive activity, then its effects will manifest across the full-range of human intellectual ability and action, from using a can-opener to designing a

⁴⁹ Lee Braver outlines Wittgenstein’s understanding of just this idea by using the example of being told about colours as children. “We can see that aspect of the world [i.e. colour] perfectly well... but only because of what Wittgenstein calls a lot of ‘stage setting’ that happened way, way back when we were still extremely young. We don’t *remember* that stage setting, and it’s now so painfully obvious to us that... it feels like anyone would be able to pick out the aspects that we’re pointing at... But all of that rests on years of training that we all went through when we were so young we don’t remember it anymore.” (From Lee Braver, “Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger.” <http://newbooksinphilosophy.com> <http://newbooksinphilosophy.com/2012/08/15/lee-braver-groundless-grounds-a-study-of-wittgenstein-and-heidegger-mit-press-2012/>)

nuclear bomb. And if this is so, then one cannot claim that work in philosophy of mind operates independently of such a cognitive process; it is people, after all, who are doing it. Of all the various fields of philosophy, the history of the mind-body problem is one full of an almost obsessive and certainly overt preoccupation with categorisation. The briefest glance over the history of the mind-body problem shows this to be the case. Descartes wanted to get to the bottom of how two seemingly fundamentally distinct categories ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ could interact. He offered an ultimately unconvincing explanation, yet the general framing and terminology of the argument have changed very little from his day to the present. Is it possible that the cognitive process of categorisation which allows us to think and act so (generally) efficiently leads us astray when we assume that consciously acknowledged categories, such as ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ are correct approximations of relevant phenomena, and not merely conventional terminology which allows us to communicate familiar ideas with each other in a more broadly applicable way? (To give the game away somewhat, I will argue that this very issue is problematic no matter what one’s theory of mind happens to be; reductionist, dualist, panpsychist; all of these outlooks have flawed starting assumptions which follow them throughout their development. See section one of chapter four.)

There is one further important observation to be made pertaining to Hofstadter and Sander’s claim that analogy-making and categorisation is a crucial tool for human beings. Just because categorisation works most of the time, it does not follow that we must have a capacity for it because it offers us an optimal relationship with the world around us. Indeed in some senses categorisation is by its very nature quite slippery; in order to deploy it for practical purposes we have to be able to shift vertically from understanding on one level of detail or relevance to another and shift horizontally, taking lessons we learn in one area and applying them successfully to operationally compatible areas. Otherwise we would be faced

with the prospect of, for example, learning how to drive again every time we got behind the wheel of an unfamiliar car, or would be hopelessly unable to get out of a large building when faced with an 'Exit' sign we had never perceived before. However, returning for a moment to the above use of the term 'tool' in relation to categorisation reminds us that our ability for categorisation allows us to have an easier *relationship with*, not necessarily *understanding of*, the world around us. Later, I will argue that this very ability is at the root of problems related to assumptions made about the mind-body problem, and that realising the practicality of impermanence via the Zen Buddhist perspective will go a long way in re-positioning these assumptions as just that: assumptions. In this way we can begin to see the potential for a re-contextualisation of the mind-body problem in its current paradigm.

Map, Not Terrain

Maps, like dictionaries as described by Hofstadter and Sander,⁵⁰ offer a very shallow understanding of that which they are meant to represent. A map of a section of terrain can offer only a very crude approximation of the terrain itself. Even so, any appropriately constructed map should be enough for us to navigate successfully through the corresponding terrain, but it offers nothing like the incomparable richness of the experience of actually being *in* the terrain. Yet for many, the terrain is only seen as significant insofar as it relates in a meaningful, comprehensible way to the map. Anything other than this may result in danger of many sorts; going in the wrong direction, walking toward, instead of away from, a cliff-edge, heading toward a river crossing that may not really be there, and so forth.

Despite the relevance of the map, then, to our survival and successful navigation through the terrain that we have chosen to travel in, its relationship to the actual experience of that

⁵⁰ "Although dictionaries give the impression of analyzing words all the way down to their very atoms, all they do in fact is graze their surfaces." (Hofstadter and Sander 2013, 4)

terrain is impoverished indeed. The analogical application of this idea (i.e. the map not equalling the terrain) is one which can be scaled up and down, and projected in many different directions. For example, my pressing of the 'M' key on my computer and the practically instantaneous appearance of that letter on the screen, allowing me to start to spell out the word 'map', masks a computational process so complex that in order for me to properly understand it in its full depth, I would most likely have to live my life over again and study the world of computers rather than philosophy (much like in Searle's 'Chinese Room' thought experiment, my understanding of the process involved is as shallow as it can possibly be while still yielding successful results).

Similarly, the relationship of the car to its driver is one where the complex mechanical activity of the engine needs to be actively ignored by the driver if she is to safely and successfully travel with the vehicle, despite the fact that this mechanical activity is precisely what allows the travel to take place. A properly constructed vehicle needs only a driver to perform the appropriate manual actions in order for it to work exactly as intended. There is a similar relationship between a person and their mind/brain; we can perform incredibly complex tasks while never being able to explain in any meaningful depth how we are doing so. I believe the similarity between these cases is not superficial, because it is precisely our ability to ignore that which is going on below the surface level which allows us to have such physical and intellectual adaptability as a species.

As noted above, we must be cautious in attempting to understand exactly what categorisation provides us with, and how we reconcile that understanding with a philosophical enquiry of basic questions about the nature of mind. To reiterate: does our capacity for categorisation provide us with a generally efficient and successful *relationship with* the world around us, or does it provide us with a generally efficient and successful *understanding of* that world? Given that the former case would only tell us that we are well-

adapted to our intellectual and physical environments, while the latter would tell us that we have figured something out about the fundamental nature of those environments, I believe the answer must be one or the other.

I maintain that what categorisation gives us, indeed what it ultimately is, is a kind of relativism in action; the best evidence available that human beings are incredibly intellectually adaptable, and that this adaptability, impressive as it is, lies at the root of many mistaken and misleading assumptions about the nature of mind.

The act of categorisation and analogy-making as outlined above is relatively straightforward when viewed in practical terms. Yet there are, I believe, significant insights into the more general nature of thinking regarding mind to be gained from examining firstly how we regularly chunk information into categories for philosophically innocent reasons, and secondly how categorisation with regard to issues related to mind (e.g. mental causation, personal identity) feeds back into our beliefs and assumptions about these issues such that it has a working impact on how we deal with them.

(b) Distinction, Analogy, and Malleability of Thought

I will now offer some further thoughts on the role of categorisation and analogy making in both everyday life and philosophical inquiry. I will start by examining the tendency to make statements which seem to be about certain broad types of category (in this example the categories are ‘self’ and ‘weather’) yet which on further investigation seem far too nebulous for it to be possible to draw any specific boundary around them. The first claim I make about these language examples are that they are in some sense *mistaken* in that what they point to is different from what they describe. This should be a simple claim to accept. The second claim is that in using the language of these examples in the way that we do, we do not just make trivial conventional mistakes, but rather we feed those mistakes back into

the world in general and in fact spread the very type of categorisation-based mistakes that we should try to avoid. And we reinforce this in all sorts of ways: to ourselves, by subconsciously reminding ourselves that the mistakes we are making are in fact true statements. To others, by pursuing dialogues which seem reasonable, but contain these mistakes within them; to readers and students, by being critical about certain issues in, e.g. philosophy of mind, but being uncritical about the background framing and terminology of such issues.

The two examples I will deal with are the ‘self’⁵¹ and the ‘weather’. I will present two statements using these terms in everyday instances, and I will then examine both the problems with accepting these as ‘true’ statements (in anything other than the conventional sense) and what the use of such terms tell us about our usually uncritical use of language⁵².

A. The weather is bad today.

B. John is in a bad mood today.

The subjects of both of these sentences seem, in the everyday sense, definite. Just casting a glance around or out a window will tell us the state of the phenomenon that we collectively refer to as ‘the weather’ and knowing a person with a certain appearance, characteristics and behaviour confirms the existence of the ‘self’ known as ‘John.’ There does not appear to be a problem with these two statements when taken at face value. But if we examine them to find a more precise meaning, we encounter problems with subtleties in the language of each statement which reveal the negative traces of the act of categorisation.

⁵¹ In this case not in a rigorous philosophical sense, but in an everyday sense, more like the ‘self’ as it is known to interact with general society with all the attendant factors: a name, an occupation, recognisable characteristics and so forth.

⁵² Unless we are consciously engaged in a critique of language.

Consider B: this makes reference to a subject, a 'self' which is a phenomenon that many spiritual and philosophical traditions argue may just be a conventional truth, and ultimately a fiction. According to this view, there really is no John, no self to which a bad mood can be ascribed. (It may be that the self in question is merely many psychophysical states in continuity, which - depending on your interpretation - amounts to the same conclusion). However, outside of the purely intellectual endeavour of a philosophical paper or debate, how rigorous is the treatment of 'John' as a fictitious entity? Not very. One's birth-certificate, passport, bank account, phone number, address; all these things reinforce the belief in and, more than that, the persisting *feeling* of a substantial self, at least insofar as John and others feel that there is some nebulous psychophysical location in which his 'John-ness' seems to hold. Behaviour in which one might be able to guess John's mental or emotional state will most likely occur in the same general location as John's body. Once again, this reinforces the idea that there really is a self which is exhibiting such behaviour. One might suppose that this problem - if it even *is* a problem - comes down to a question of drawing the line between theoretical knowledge and everyday behaviour. After all, a physicist's deep understanding of gravity is unlikely to intrude on her daily life, which may include things falling to the ground, so why should a philosopher of mind or Zen Buddhist who denies the existence of a substantial self go about their daily life denying their own existence at every turn? If we *do not* believe there is a substantial self⁵³, is it our responsibility to act on this belief in order to practise what we preach, as it were, or should we just confine this belief to the realm of the purely intellectual?

Turning to statement A: in all likelihood, anyone involved in making or hearing the

⁵³ Here I should point out that since, in my experience at least, the prevailing view among non-philosophers (and some philosophers I'm sure) is that there *is* a substantial self, i.e. there is some 'I' that comes about when 'I' am born and disappears when 'I' die, the burden of proof seems to lie more with those who oppose this view, hence my couching of the argument in those terms.

statement 'the weather is bad today' will understand and agree on the term 'weather' in the context of the statement (and will agree or disagree with the statement on that basis).

However when we refer to 'the weather,' what we are talking about is very vague and ambiguous. Just as with the self we might argue that 'the weather' is a nebulous formation of certain observable states in a generalised location: a series of dark rainclouds and a measurable local temperature over a city, for example. But the statement 'the weather is bad today' does seem quite monolithic, and masks the need to examine the delineations of what we mean when we say it. Where is the edge or limit of the thing that we refer to as the weather? If it is bad in one part of the country and good in another, where does the distinction between the two occur? In the context of general conversation these questions are needless. But the point I would like to convey here is that just such an attitude does not occur in a vacuum; even philosophers who might be the only subset of the population interested in such analysis start out life repeatedly exposed to, and involved with, just such statements. Is it possible that this feeds back into our attitudes about other phenomena? Is the practice and scholarship of Zen, with its lessons of impermanence and non-duality, harder to accept (or even approach) after a long stretch of life spent hearing and talking about supposedly discrete states, objects, selves and so forth?

There is an easy comparison to draw between statement A and statement B above. Each refers to something agreed upon in everyday conversation, but when scrutinised seem impossible to delineate in a way that we can comfortably agree on exactly what constitutes their existence. Even though one might argue that the case of the self is much trickier because it involves problematic issues like mental causation, is the example of the weather all that much clearer?

There are other similar instances that may be worth considering with regard to the above argument. For example a common major distinction that we make, one so common

that it serves as a metaphor itself is the day/night distinction. It is common in English to describe the difference between two things as ‘night and day’ in order to imply that there is as much difference between those two things as there can possibly be. It seems like a reasonable distinction, until one considers that the main reason we consider it a distinction at all is that we observe two apparently separate light conditions on either side of sleep. If we stayed up and watched the dawn slowly merge into the morning which slowly merges into the afternoon, then evening, then night, there would be no one moment when we could say ‘now it is night’ in any sense other than as a comparison to a more or less arbitrary state which we refer to as day. So even the fact that we need to sleep disguises the fictitious or purely conventional nature of the distinction between day and night, yet this distinction is seemingly so important that we deploy it in metaphors and analogy to explain *other* situations.

The night and day distinction brings to light another issue around categorisation that I believe maps onto issues in philosophy of mind. This is the idea that when one makes a claim about something which makes it appear as an existent phenomenon, the phenomenon that is pointed to is seen as existent without the conscious awareness or acknowledgement of the provisionality of its nature. In other words, talking about a ‘thing’ that one can observe almost never takes into account that that thing once did not exist, and at some point will return to a state of non-existence. This relates back to the problem of viewing a given phenomenon as a thing rather than a process. If all of reality is just one big process being witnessed as a collection of arbitrarily defined processes, then how meaningful would the designation of the status of ‘existing’ be for any given phenomenon? An analogy by Kurt Gödel expands on this question.

Rudy Rucker recounts the following argument by Gödel about the independent existence of natural numbers:⁵⁴

Everyone believes that the Empire State Building is real, because it is possible for almost anyone to go and see it for himself. By the same token, anyone who takes the trouble to learn some mathematics can “see” the set of natural numbers for himself. So, Gödel reasoned, it must be that the set of natural numbers has an independent existence, an existence as a certain abstract possibility of thought. (Rucker, 2005, 169)

This is a very weighty analogy given that it is presented as a proof of the independent existence of a mathematical concept, at least as a “possibility of thought.” Granted, Gödel is not endowing independent numbers with an identical type of existence as the building in question, but nevertheless there are some features of this analogy which are worth examining with regard to what this kind of analogical reasoning tells us about how we create and build on assumptions.

The statement that the Empire State Building exists is true, but only conventionally or provisionally. The Empire State Building is a construction which once did not exist, and in all likelihood there will come a time where it will cease to exist. So either Gödel has made a bad analogy or the independent existence of natural numbers is the same as the independent existence of the Empire State Building in the sense that it is a human construct which once did not exist and will probably change beyond recognition given enough time.

⁵⁴ It is unclear if Gödel specifically chose the Empire State Building as an example for this line of reasoning or if Rucker added it later, but the structure of the argument remains the same regardless.

Even an attempt to make the analogy stronger by switching out a non-human construct in place of the Empire State Building will run into the same problems. Let us say that “Everyone believes that the Empire State Building is real, because it is possible for almost anyone to go and see it for himself.” This seems like a fair statement. But it is also the case that the moon, for instance, once did not exist and will reach point of non-existence in the future. This is impermanence in action. All phenomena arise and perish, and during the time in which we think of them as ‘things’ in some substantive sense, they really seem like they have independent existence. In the case of phenomena like the Empire State Building and the moon, their existence is sufficiently long that most people who experience them have an awareness of them as items that have been there throughout their whole lifetime. This reinforces the notion that there are phenomena with persistent, substantial existence.

Applying the idea of arising and perishing does not quite go far enough in explicating the workings of impermanence. These two terms suggest a kind of dropping in and out of existence of persistent entities when the actuality is closer to “becoming in time” (Kim 2007, 142) whereby all existence arises and perishes moment by moment and phenomena persist in nothing other than a conventional sense. In the example of the Empire State Building there is a time in which the constituent parts of it exist as raw material. The right conventions of engineering, planning and construction bring it into (provisional) existence, but even this happens bit by bit, such that there is no one particular moment in which the Empire State Building has been built (events like opening ceremonies and dedications are also conventions which tie off a continually unfolding process by invoking an arbitrary date and time from which the object is seen to ‘exist’). Once the building is open for business it is not now a substantial existent object either. People walk in and out, businesses come and go, weather and pollution stain the exterior. To paraphrase Heraclitus, one never sets foot in the same Empire State Building twice. As for the perishing, if there is a point in the future where the

building needs to be demolished for some reason, it will not just blink out into non-existence. Even something as stark and abrupt as a controlled explosion is an unfolding process, the aftermath of which leaves the constituent parts of the building, albeit in more disarray than when they were brought in for construction. These parts will go on to become something else; content of a landfill, or museum pieces perhaps. And on, and on; continual arising and perishing, permanent impermanence.

I claimed above that categorisation is a kind of relativism in action, giving us the ability to morph and adapt our understanding, sometimes to create original information, and sometimes just to be able to understand one set of information in terms of another. From this point forth I will refer to this capacity in general terms as malleability of thought. One straightforward way of understanding this capacity is by observing its role in making and comprehending the type of analogy which Hofstadter calls pluralization. One such example he cites is the following: “Beirut is the Paris of the Middle East.”⁵⁵ There are endless examples of this type of analogy and the structure is quite basic: the essential features of that which is being described are sufficiently similar and obvious in nature to give a good, reliable impression of that which it is being compared to. In this case if one wants to know what Beirut is like, this analogy - assuming one is familiar with Paris - implies a lot of instructive information in the space of just eight words, such as:

- The Middle East is a major land mass, and so is Europe. Therefore Beirut must be comparably similar in significance to the Middle East as Paris is to Europe.⁵⁶

- Paris is a very popular tourist destination, so Beirut must attract a lot of tourists.

⁵⁵ “Analogy as the Core of Cognition,” YouTube video, 1:08:36, posted by “Stanford”, September 10, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8m7IFQ3njK>. (34.40)

⁵⁶ This is an extra layer of analogy in itself.

- Paris is a major urban area which is has a high population concentration; Beirut must be the same.

- Paris is considered to be a beautiful city; Beirut is probably a beautiful city too.

If we did not have the malleability of thought then we would not be able to take such a simple sentence and move between one concept (Paris) and other (Beirut), picking up all the implicit commonalities between them along the way. This is the kind of analogy which happens in thought all the time. I maintain that this malleability of thought has implications for theories of mind in that it plays a role in the creation of new terminology to understand old concepts, and that the mismatch between the old and the new imposes the necessity of bridging this new explanatory gap.

In the field of mathematics the proof of Fermat's Last Theorem, demonstrates the malleability of thought I present here. Fermat wrote his famous theorem (that there are no three numbers which would perfectly fit the equation $x^n + y^n = z^n$ where n represents 3, 4, 5...) in a marginal note in 1637, yet neglected to write out a proof. He died before ever providing it, and for the next 358 years the demonstration of this proof would remain one of the great unsolved problems of mathematics. The final proof by Andrew Wiles in 1999 relied on the use of mathematical techniques created and adapted long after the time of Fermat himself.⁵⁷

During Wiles's eight-year ordeal he had brought together virtually all the breakthroughs in twentieth-century number theory and incorporated them in one almighty proof. He had created completely new mathematical techniques and

⁵⁷ While the quotes I draw on here are from a historical/biographical account of Fermat's Last Theorem by Singh (2005), a condensed mathematical account is provided by Boston (2003)

combined them with traditional ones in ways that had never been considered possible.
(Singh 2005, 304)

The case of Fermat's Last Theorem shows that in spite, or because of, the complexity of any one idea, it can be adapted to offer insights to another idea, assuming they are closely and appropriately related.⁵⁸ Singh acknowledges this by highlighting the often overlooked role of creativity in mathematics:

Relationships between apparently different subjects are as creatively important in mathematics as they are in any discipline. The relationship hints at some underlying truth which enriches both subjects. For instance, originally scientists had studied electricity and magnetism as two completely separate phenomena. Then, in the nineteenth century, theorists and experimentalists realised that electricity and magnetism were intimately related. This resulted in a deeper understanding of both of them. (Singh 2005, 204)

This example demonstrates that the capacity for creatively linking concepts does not just happen on a trivial everyday level, but also manifests in profound ways through major inter-disciplinary developments. Such linking is also evident in the history of philosophy of mind. It is often the case in analytic philosophy that we spend less time paying attention to conscious experience and more time arguing about the *source* of that experience. In our attempts to understand the nature of mind we will reach for whatever conceptual scheme

⁵⁸ This, along with the Paris/Beirut example match up with Hofstadter's definition of isomorphism: "The word "isomorphism" applies when two complex structures can be mapped onto each other, in such a way that to each part of one structure there is a corresponding part in the other structure, where "corresponding" means that the two parts play similar roles in their respective structures." (Hofstadter 2000, 49)

seems to work best at that particular moment. This often manifests in the form of the body, brain or mind being understood in relation to the technological progress of that time.⁵⁹

Descartes took the mechanical workings of the moving statues of St. Germain as a model of animal behaviour; in the 19th century railroad and telegraph systems were used to explicate the nervous system;⁶⁰ in 1961 Putnam proposed the Computational Model which likened the brain to a form of computer and thought to a form of computation. In each of these cases a recent technological development is used as way of explaining phenomena which have taken aeons to evolve. Would it not be a staggering coincidence that, at any given time, the technology of the day is just the right one to explain the phenomena we are concerned with? Or is it more likely that with our capacity to adapt our thought and explain systems in terms of each other that we have a more creative role than we think in explaining phenomena such as mind?

Kasulis lays out the Zen idea of Nonbeing as *preontological*; it neither exists nor doesn't exist. "... Nonbeing as the source of Being." (Kasulis 1985, 35) Could the malleability of thought be indicative of the provisional nature of *all* systems of thought? From Nonbeing, or unity, comes Being which is necessarily differentiated and fragmented. Part of Being are systems of thought which rely on conceptualisation, distinction and, as outlined above, analogy; all features which are conventional realities within ultimate reality.

⁵⁹ This idea also extends to systems of rational thought. In *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reasoning* Gutting relates how Kant's a priori analytic of principles was collapsed by relativity and quantum mechanics: "What initially seemed to be a priori constraints on thought as such turn out to be contingent conditions derived from philosophers' inability to think beyond the framework of modern science. There are, then, no viable accounts of rationality except those derived from the historical development of scientific reason." (Gutting 1995, 13)

⁶⁰ "From the mid-19th century on, the nervous system has been conceived as a kind of communication system. Railway stations and train timetables were as emblematic of the culture of the late 19th century as airports and computer reservations are of our own culture... In the 1870s and 1880s the analogy with the railroad network was preferred, but later the analogy with the telegraph exchange became more popular and persisted until the mid-20th century, when it was replaced by the computer analogy." (Jacobson 1993, 25)

It is these conventional realities, which we cannot get outside of, that are the source of the delusions we often find ourselves stuck in. As this dissertation progresses I aim to show that the mystic tones of such proclamations are not meaninglessly esoteric, but point in practical ways to the roots of intellectual problems such as those experienced in theories of mind.

In this chapter I have assessed the philosophical and psychological precedents for the type of dichotomous thinking which lies at the root of problems in the analytic approach to mind. In chapter four I will discuss how these problems might be highlighted and addressed more directly. To do to that I will first present and discuss the embodied practice of Zen Buddhist meditation.

Chapter Three

Zazen and a Return to Simplicity

I. Actuality/Mysticism and Logic

Philosophy is seemingly distinct from everyday life insofar as it relies on a suspension of subjective experience in favour of objectivity. But does a methodology of objectivity imply that the conclusions we reach using such a methodology are necessarily as reliable as possible? In this chapter I will examine the difference between the terms ‘reality’ and ‘actuality’ as they apply to my overall argument. I will assess the connection - if any - between formal logic and the kind of experience that, in relation to meditation, is often described as mystical. I also describe the practice of zazen, philosophical issues around this practice and neuroscientific investigations of meditation centred on the evidence for neurophysiological change in long-term meditators, in order to assess the importance of first-person experience in understanding consciousness.

(a) Actuality

Philosophy and Zen share a common trait in dealing with fundamental questions about the nature of reality. The pragmatic implications of such questioning are easily obscured by layers of metaphysical theorising and speculation. In the case of Zen in particular this can sometimes have the adverse effect of creating an impression of ineffectual mysticism and an accompanying sense of suspicion or indifference about the philosophical and sociological practicality of Zen as a practice. The rest of this dissertation will serve as an attempt to end

such suspicions and offer firm evidence for the philosophical and sociological practicality of the adoption of certain principles which find appropriate representation in zazen. Despite this emphasis on practicality, the subject will occasionally hinge on broader questions about the nature of reality. The term *reality* is used widely in philosophical discourse and often seems to be open to misinterpretation in the sense that it is easy to co-opt for one's own purposes. For example, a philosophical idealist might argue that 'reality' is really 'all in the head' (a hardline materialist or neuroscientist might argue something similar but on a different basis!) which is conceptually distant from the generally grounded Zen approach to reality. Indeed it is one of the unfortunate side-effects of Buddhism's encounters with mainstream western culture that the rigorously practical school of Zen⁶¹ maintains an aura of esoteric mysticism.⁶²

In any case, I believe the term *reality* can, depending on the context in which it is deployed, seem as vague as it does profound. Therefore from this point on wherever I would have tended to use the term *reality* I will opt to use the term *actuality*. This term lines up more coherently with the idea of present moment awareness and lived experience which are so crucial to understanding Zen practice and scholarship. While *reality* suggests a kind of behind-the-veil understanding of the nature of things; a transcendent, distant or perhaps background state, actuality encapsulates the idea of 'this moment', i.e. what is happening right now, no matter how trivial or profound (though not necessarily from the point of view of any one particular subject). This idea of 'presentness' is the only addition I would make to

⁶¹ For example, see Dōgen's text *Senjo* in *Shōbōgenzō* Book One which includes detailed instructions on how to go to the bathroom properly - hardly mystical subject matter!

⁶² This is not limited to a general mindset but has a material aspect also; John Daido Looi's book *Mountain Record of Zen Talks* is an important text in terms of balancing the religious and purely practical aspects of Zen. I first came across it in a local bookshop where it had been shelved in the 'New Age' category directly between books about crystals and guardians angels. That literature certainly does not deal with grounded everyday concerns with the same lucidity as Zen, yet the latter was lumped in with the former, as is often the case. Here is yet another example of how our capacity for categorisation spills over into lived experience, and not always in the most appropriate manner.

an ordinary language understanding of the term actuality in order for the term to be appropriately deployed in place of the term reality for the remainder of my argument. Put simply, actuality just refers to the world as it is.

In analytic philosophy of mind a lot of time is dedicated to modes of inquiry which are purely intellectual e.g. metaphysical explorations of the nature of the mental, thought experiments and so forth. These are all essentially purely intellectual activities. Even allowing for the fact that one uses one's body to read a book or write a paper, these are just the means to an intellectual end (the growing influence of neurophenomenological and enactivist literature on cognitive science often relies on first-person accounts of meditative practice, but accounts of zazen are not themselves zazen; the lucidity of embodied experience, including any attendant insights, is far greater than that of reading about such experience. This is analogous to the *map, not terrain* idea from chapter two. In this case 'account of meditation' is the map and meditation itself is the terrain). The philosopher could exist as the figurative brain in a vat and still carry out their work. The same cannot be said of meditators. So if analytic philosophers of mind and Zen Buddhists share mutual concerns, what might the former be missing out on by lacking a tradition of embodied practice? I will return to this issue in more depth in chapters four and five, but for now I will suggest that it is the importance of first-person experience which meditative practices makes evident. It would of course be wrong to claim that analytic philosophers of mind are not concerned with first-person experience; what I would claim is that the detached nature of the dialogue around such experience is part of the reason that consciousness is treated as so mysterious. Could it be that an adoption of principles gained from zazen would fill the gaps that the analytic approach to mind leaves open?

(b) Mysticism and Logic

The explanatory gap in analytic theories of mind is reminiscent of Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem which demonstrated "that the consistency of formal systems containing arithmetic is not internally provable" (Honderich, 2005, 347). This was a theorem which laid bare the problems of attempting to create a comprehensive and closed formal system of mathematics. Given the highly analytic nature of Russell and Whitehead's project, is there any parallel to be made with their attempts to create a closed formal system of mathematics and the analytic project of creating a complete theory of mind, i.e. is there some fundamental, crucial piece of information that is not accounted for which leaves the system incomplete? The parallels do not appear to be entirely superficial. Russell did see an application of the formal systemisation of the *Principia* to other problematic propositions in philosophy using his philosophical logic:

... recasting problematic propositions in their 'logical form' using a language with the formal structure of *Principia Mathematica*... He felt that ordinary language enshrines 'the savage superstitions of cannibals (Mind and Matter, 143) and other errors, confusions and vagueness, and makes it impossible to give correct expression to some fundamental philosophical truths. (Honderich 2005, 825)

In his analysis of Gödel's Theorem Hofstadter addresses this question:

It is natural to try to draw parallels between people and sufficiently complicated formal systems which, like people, have "self-images" of a sort. Gödel's Theorem shows that there are fundamental limitations to consistent formal systems with self-

image. But is it more general? Is there a “Gödel’s Theorem of psychology” for instance?

If one uses Gödel’s Theorem as a metaphor, as a source of inspiration, rather than trying to translate it literally into the language of psychology or of any other discipline, then perhaps it can suggest new truths in psychology or other areas. But it is unjustifiable to translate it directly into a statement of another discipline and take that as equally valid. It would be a large mistake to think what has been worked out with the utmost delicacy in mathematical logic should hold without modification in a completely different area. (Hofstadter 2000, 696)

I certainly agree with Hofstadter’s wariness about co-opting such a complex and intricate theorem for other means. But I also think that his idea of Gödel’s Theorem as a metaphor could be pushed a little further. Hofstadter notes that it is natural to draw parallels “between people and sufficiently complicated formal systems”, but could it be instructive to modify this to draw parallels between analytic theories of mind and sufficiently complicated formal systems? In this context Gödel’s Theorem may be less than a work that we could directly translate and apply, but more than a mere metaphor. It may point to a wider principle - one in which the intricacies of mathematical logic are irrelevant - that applies to any attempt to create a formalised system (we might think of Gödel’s Theorem as the vessel and any other formal system as the content). In terms of Zen practice, the implications are evident; no account of experience *is* that experience. This type of claim is arguably the very reason that zazen exists in the form that it does; we spend so much time conceptualising the world that we forget or ignore the world as it is in the present moment. On this view, analytic theories of mind will always be incomplete insofar as they only ever attempt to provide an *account* of

experience. Below I offer a selection of Gödel's own thoughts on this matter, where he uses the term mystical to refer to what I have presented here as 'ultimate truth'.

Incompleteness and Mysticism

"A mystical experience is an experience that transcends the subject-object structure of seeing and that therefore cannot be adequately expressed in ordinary language belonging to that structure." (Parkes 1991, 21)

Rudy Rucker offers an invaluable insight into Gödel's opinion on the relation between Incompleteness and other disciplines. Rucker had first-hand interaction with Gödel himself, posing questions about the Incompleteness Theorem as it related variously to physics, artificial intelligence and even mysticism. Gödel's own words on mysticism might even answer one of Hofstadter's questions about Incompleteness and the mind: "[M]ight there not be some vaguely Gödelian loop which limits the depth to which any individual can penetrate into his own psyche?" (Hofstadter 2000, 697)

Gödel shared with Einstein a certain mystical turn of thought. The word 'mystic' is almost pejorative these days. But mysticism does not really have anything to do with incense or encounter groups or demoniac possession. There is a difference between mysticism and occultism.

A pure strand of classical mysticism runs from Plato to Plotinus and Eckhart to such great modern thinkers as Aldous Huxley and D.T. Suzuki. The central teaching of mysticism is this: *Reality is One*. The practice of mysticism consists in finding ways to experience this higher unity directly.⁶³

⁶³ Graham Priest has used aspects of formal logic to talk about the reality of unity in his book *One* (2014)

The One has variously been called the Good, God, the Cosmos, the Mind, the Void, or (perhaps most neutrally) the Absolute. No door in the labyrinthine castle of science opens directly onto the Absolute. But if one understands the maze well enough, it is possible to jump out of the system and experience the Absolute for oneself. (Rucker 2005, 170)

Despite the different situations of a mathematician such as Gödel and a Zen teacher such as Dōgen, I think the latter would be sympathetic to this view given his conviction that a life of monkhood allows one to, in Rucker's words, "jump out of the system," i.e. the conventional, and "experience the Absolute" i.e. the ultimate. Rucker goes on to quote Gödel's basic treatment of mysticism directly:

... I had begun to think that consciousness is really nothing more than simple existence. By way of leading up to this, I asked Gödel if he believed there is a single Mind behind all the various appearances and activities of the world.

He replied that, yes the mind is the thing that is structured, but that the Mind exists independently of its individual properties.

I then asked if he believed that the Mind is everywhere, as opposed to being localized in the brains of people.

Gödel replied, "Of course. This is the basic mystic teaching."

We talked a little about set theory, and then I asked him my last question: "What causes the illusion of the passage of time?"

Gödel spoke not directly to this question, but to the question of what my question meant - that is, why anyone would even believe that there is a perceived passage of time at all.

He went on to relate the getting rid of belief in the passage of time to the struggle to experience the One Mind of mysticism. Finally he said this: “The illusion of the passage of time arises from the confusing of the *given* with the *real*. Passage of time arises because we think of occupying different realities. In fact, we occupy only different givens. There is only one reality. (Rucker 2005, 170-171)⁶⁴

We do not have to be mystics to have an understanding of reality as unified; zazen itself is the practice of realising that the varying aspects of existence that *seem* distinct are merely conventional or provisional divisions which all inter-relate in an ultimate oneness. Any constructive relationship between formal systems and meditative practice may rest on the ability (or perhaps even the willingness) of those involved in the former to recognise the provisional nature of theories as realised in/by the latter.

Prior to his work on analogy and categorisation with Sander, Hofstadter wrote about the tension between Zen and logic in *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*. While discussing the logic-defying nature of Zen kōans he writes: “Only by stepping outside of logic, so the theory goes, can one make the leap to enlightenment. But what is so bad about logic? Why does it prevent the leap to enlightenment?” (Hofstadter 2000, 251)

The place of Zen in overcoming duality is to recognise the oneness, not the separateness of such concepts. It is not necessary to renounce formal logic in order to attain enlightenment⁶⁵ but neither is it proper to deny the insights of enlightenment experiences because they seem incompatible with, or expressible in terms of, formal logic. A symptom of delusion is seeing such activities as necessarily mutually exclusive.

⁶⁴ For further commentaries on the relationship of mysticism and Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem see *Shadows of the Mind* by Penrose (2005).

⁶⁵ In terms of meditative practice of course logical thought is put to one side, but reflection before and after meditation does not have to be anti-rational.

The recent history of science has demonstrated similar concessions to the idea of inter-dependence which contradict previously assumed distinctions.

Probing inside the atom and investigating its structure, science transcended the limits of our sensory imagination. From this point on, it could no longer rely with absolute certainty on logic and common sense. Atomic physics provided the scientist with the first glimpses of the essential nature of things. Like the mystics, physicists were now dealing with a non-sensory experience of reality and, like the mystics, they had to face the paradoxical aspects of this experience. (Capra 1982, 60)

While we might not want to say that meditation itself is a non-sensory experience, it is certainly the case that it limits the attentional impact of sensory information. This decrease in stimulation provides the context for non-verbal, non-intellectual experience from which the category of *mystic* is created.

On this view, one might reformulate Hofstadter's above question thus: "What is so bad about mysticism? Why does it prevent a leap to logic?" If important insights into what is collectively referred to as the mind-body problem are experienced through practices which are traditionally referred to as mystical, then mysticism has a more or less direct role to play in explaining phenomena which were once the exclusive domain of the objectivity and formal logic. If formal logic can place these insights in a context in which those predisposed to purely analytic methodologies can relate meaningfully to them, then so much the better. Mysticism does not reduce to logic, but we may discuss it in logical terms.⁶⁶

I have not dealt with kōans so far and will not dedicate much time to discussing them here, but it is worth mentioning their relevance at this point. Kōans are unsolvable puzzles

⁶⁶ See Kukla's use of logic to analyse mysticism in *Ineffability and Philosophy* (2005)

intended to disarm the logical, problem-solving faculties of the student in order to better prepare them for the non-verbal, non-intellectual experience of zazen. Kōans are interesting in that they exemplify a point which Dōgen makes: in using words to demonstrate the limitations of words, it is possible to see that language, which is a very imperfect tool for describing actuality, can be used to prime oneself to experience actuality by transcending language: “Dōgen restored language, thinking and reason - the familiar tools of duality - to their fully deserved legitimacy in his Zen. At the same time he never lost sight of their ultimate limitations, as well as the supreme importance of non-duality.” (Kim 2007, x)

In terms of the relationship between mysticism and logic then, the kōans act as a peculiar meeting point between the two: they are constructed of words and intended to make some kind of point, but that point is that words, whether in the form of common sense or formal logic, are necessarily provisional as well as ultimately limited in their scope when compared to pure experience. So while a kōans placed next to a solid deductive argument will have the appearance of gibberish, it actually is playing an extremely important role in the process of clearing the subject’s intellect of pre-conceived notions in preparation for the present moment awareness of practice from which important insights arise (though not directing the subject toward to the goal of attaining insight).

Having discussed the more general understanding of the relationship of mysticism (as related to meditative practice) and formal logic, I will now present and discuss Zen practice more specifically.

II. The Practice of Zazen

(a) Description of Zazen

(i) Practice: Description and Clarification

In order to establish the relevance of a Zen understanding of impermanence for analytic theories of mind, it will be necessary to outline and examine the source of such an interpretation. This is best done by focusing on the practice element of Zen Buddhism, namely zazen. While I will draw on Zen scholarship and commentary, the conclusions I reach all find their source in the practice of zazen, in particular the mode of *shikantaza* or ‘just sitting’ which removes emphasis from intellectualisation in favour of regular and continued embodied practice.⁶⁷ I should also note that in this chapter my use of the terms ‘sitting,’ ‘practice’ and ‘meditation’ all refer to zazen, unless otherwise noted.⁶⁸

Zazen, apart from some slight formal variations, follows the same basic format wherever it is practised. For the purposes of the following discussion I will use the form of zazen as outlined by Zen Master Dōgen in the following passage, taken from his text *Fukanzazengi*.

If you wish to attain enlightenment, begin at once to practice *zazen*. For this meditation you need a quiet room; food and drink should be taken in moderation. Free yourself from all attachments and bring to rest the ten thousand things.⁶⁹ Think not of

⁶⁷ Loori notes that “the word *zen* is a derivative of the Chinese word *ch’an*, which in turn is derived from the Sanskrit term *dhyana*, or meditation.” (Loori 1999, vii) Even the etymological origins of Zen emphasise the practice rather than the scholarship.

⁶⁸ It also worth pointing out that there are modified versions of zazen outlined for those who have a physical disability or impairment in order that they too might be able to practise.

⁶⁹ In this context we can take ‘the ten thousand things’ to denote the many aspects of the world that we are constantly involved with and which lie at the root of distraction and grasping.

good or evil; judge not right or wrong; maintain the flow of the mind, will, and consciousness; bring to an end all desire, all concepts and judgements.

To sit properly, first lay down a thick pillow and on top of this a second (round) one. One may sit either in the full or half cross-legged position. In the full position one places the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. In the half position, only the left foot is placed upon the right thigh. Robe and belt should be worn loosely, but in order. The right hand rests on the left foot, while the back of the left hand rests on the palm of the right. The two thumbs are placed in juxtaposition. Let the body be kept upright, leaning neither to the left nor to the right, neither forward nor backward. Ears and shoulders, nose and navel must be aligned to one another. The tongue is to be kept against the palate, lips and teeth firmly closed, while the eyes should always be left open.

Now that the body position is in order, regulate your breathing. If a wish arises, take note of it and then dismiss it! If you practice in this way for a long time, you will forget all attachments and concentration will come naturally. That is the art of *zazen*. *Zazen* is the Dharma gate of great rest and joy.⁷⁰

There are numerous other texts which go into much greater detail on aspects of *zazen* including recommended food intake, duration periods, sleepiness, muscle pain and so forth. These are mostly surplus to requirements for the discussion which follows.⁷¹ A simplistic reading of the above passage might say that it is just a guide for sitting, breathing and concentrating. But this short selection alone is a rich and informative text, in keeping with the rich and informative experience of the seemingly simple practice of *zazen*.

⁷⁰ Taken from Dumoulin (2005)

⁷¹ For a collection of texts with more detail on specific logistical aspects of *zazen* see Looi (2002)

The phrase “to attain enlightenment” could be taken as an invitation to goal-oriented action. The notion of ‘attainment’ here should not be confused with the idea of effortful gain. The analytic method often places most importance on activities which ‘get’ you something, or somewhere, or solve some pre-existing or even self-imposed problem. In zazen, such problems, conceptualisations and ideas of attainment are put to one side to make the way clear for uninterrupted present-moment awareness. Even so, zazen is not an entirely static activity. The sitter will experience states which seem to have been reached because of practice, which in turn may make it seem like the practice is leading somewhere. And while I do not believe there is anything inherently wrong with acknowledging that one comes away from practice with slightly different psychological or neurophysiological states than when one began,⁷² it is misleading to proceed on the assumption that something should be achieved; *trying* is one of the habits curbed during practice. This demonstrates the need for *shikantaza* in its role of phasing out reliance on outcome or tying oneself in knots trying to understand and express the nature of enlightenment.

Yasutani comments on the potential tension between Buddhist conceptions of rebirth and the simplified practice of zazen:

Certain sects, we know, practice Zen in order to be reborn in heaven. This is not the object of Zen Buddhism. While Zen Buddhists do not quarrel with the idea of various strata of heaven and the belief that one may be reborn into these realms through the performance of ten kinds of meritorious deeds, they themselves do not crave rebirth in heaven. Conditions there are altogether too pleasant and comfortable and one can all too easily be lured from zazen. Besides, when one’s merit in heaven expires one can very well land in hell. Zen Buddhists therefore believe it preferable to be born into the

⁷² This change could refer to both long-term sitting and/or a specific sitting.

human world and to practice zazen with the aim of ultimately becoming a Buddha.

(Kapleau 2000, 50)

This suggests the benefits of detaching the practice itself from the deep roots of Buddhist preoccupation with rebirth. More importantly it reaffirms the idea that practice is endless. Even the attainment of heaven would provide the opportunity to cease practice, a temptation which is to be avoided.⁷³

The motivation of achievement which is present in so many other places in daily life is an impediment to appropriate practice for two main reasons. Firstly, the underlying feeling of the need to gain something, or that some effect will spring up at any moment in which all other distractions dissipate, keeps one concentrated on the future rather than rooted in the present. So while one could be following Dōgen's guidance to dismiss wishes as they arise, it may be difficult to dismiss the thought of 'what am I gaining from this?' or a more general thought of 'what is the point of this?' Secondly, understanding the physical and psychological state of zazen requires a slight modification of our understanding of the term 'effort.' The idea of 'effortless effort' is one of the seemingly contradictory ideas which zazen forces the practitioner to confront. In zazen, the effort one feels is one's body-mind relaxing into a non-judgemental stillness, one which has been covered over by years of psychological and neurophysiological conditioning; feeling that one must move, must think, must progress. So the effort in question is not a dominator mindset of gaining mastery over one's mind and body (a mindset which would potentially be quite easy to slip into) but rather the effortlessness of, for once, *not trying*. This also reorients our notion of 'I-ness' in general;

⁷³ The idea of practice as endless finds expression across many disciplines. The cellist Pablo Casals was asked why, at the age of 93, he still practised for three hours a day. His response was "I'm beginning to notice some improvement." It seems that for Casals, as with most Zen practitioners, the point of practice was to integrate, not to reach an illusory endpoint.

as practice progresses and the practitioner realises the boundlessness between one 'I' and another, the concept of the self emerges as just another convention (although a persuasive one) among many, and the concept of achievement for the sake of an individual means less and less.

The above passage proceeds with Dōgen providing some short but sound advice on the ideal state of the body in zazen: food and drink are to be taken in moderation. This type of simple yet sensible advice contradicts what I believe to be a significant general misconception around Zen, which is that it is a kind of cloistered asceticism in which the usual necessities of living are rejected outright. While it is the case that Dōgen was running a formal monastery with strict and sometimes even conservative rules for behaviour, a general pragmatic sensibility prevails in his and most other Zen monks' teaching. There is no use in starving oneself; this will not help one focus attention. There is also no need to over-indulge oneself; this is also a hindrance to sitting in that it generates attachment and over-stimulation. Even for those who are committed to long and repeated sittings there is a prevailing sense of the need for moderation in all things.

Dōgen then describes that which may be the greatest discouragement to beginners; letting go of attachment and judgement. Attachment can take many forms. Probably the simplest form of attachment we indulge in which is highlighted in zazen is distraction; i.e. our constant preoccupation with, and need for, some physical or intellectual activity. There probably has not been a more appropriate time in human history (in developed countries at least, but increasingly in developing countries also) to consider the implications of distraction.⁷⁴ Whether it is for practical, occupation-related reasons or for sheer entertainment

⁷⁴ For an in depth study of the effects of exposure to, and integration of, technology in the private and social lives of children and young adults see Turkle (2005)

or passing the time, we are bombarded with information at every turn.⁷⁵ Even if we dismiss this as a non-issue because it is evidently something we can control (i.e. if we *really* want to we can switch off the television, phone, computer, radio) that does not change the fact that silence and stillness are increasingly rare experiences. The attention is usually busy enough at the best of times; it can become unbearably so when one is surrounded by limitless sources of sensory stimulation. Here then is the first impediment; the initial moments of a zazen session, particularly for the beginner, will have the feeling of a *settling down*. But once this settling down has been accomplished, the feeling of having ‘nothing to do’ begins to take its toll on minds that are conditioned to be continually active. This has the undesired effect of making beginners uncomfortable to the point of giving up at the first opportunity. It just does not *feel* right to not be doing anything, principally because we spend all day *doing*, over and over again. Similarly it does not feel right to not be thinking of anything because we spend all day being assailed by a continuous stream of internal and external information. The bright side is that if and when the beginner gets past these difficult initial experiences, the task of deconditioning can begin.

The activity of judgement provides similar obstacles to the sitter. As with attaching to ideas and activities, judging is something that we do constantly, sometimes for purely practical reasons (e.g. judging if it safe to cross a road, judging if a person is trust-worthy for a particular reason) and often for no good reason other than following our conditioning.

⁷⁵ At the time of writing there is an increasing concern around the issue of informational overload for both children and adults, sometimes referred to as ‘digital obesity.’ Mainstream discussions on this topic can be found in the following articles:

<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/digital-obesity-high-tech-health>

<http://www.fastcoexist.com/3026862/how-tech-is-creating-data-cravability-to-make-us-digitally-obese>

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/parenting/we-need-to-start-talking-about-digital-overload-for-our-children/article19788706/>

Many highly prized forms of judgment have, speaking from the point of view of survival or subsistence, absolutely no value whatsoever. Judging the value of a piece of music, a painting, a play or a book, judging whether a certain style of clothing is fashionable or not; these are all common experiences, yet they are ultimately unnecessary. Again we might dismiss such judgements as trivial; they do not ultimately matter, so why worry ourselves about them? Because continual and repeated judgement, no matter what it is aimed at, keeps us conditioned to the act of judgement itself. This is particularly evident during zazen when, in a situation where judgement should be curbed, it becomes very difficult to avoid. It might be because we have cleared our minds to such an extent that we can now think about things that we previously buried (e.g. the bills we have to pay, the projects we have to complete) and make judgements on them. It may even be that we start judging the sitting itself (“I’m doing well,” “This is good because it’s making me calmer,” “I’m getting distracted, I must be doing something wrong.”) Without deconditioning from such an activity it can spill over into other areas; ethics, personal relationships, philosophy.

The middle section of Dōgen’s above passage deals with the correct positioning of the body, which is crucial in order to proceed suitably with zazen. Correct posture is essential in order to avoid over-stimulation on one extreme, and sleepiness on the other. The former creates more opportunity for a ceaseless train of thought, while the latter relegates zazen to the level of general rest which is not a form of mindfulness. The environment in which zazen takes place should ideally be temperate, inactive and relatively quiet. Absolute silence is not imperative. Some noise from the outside world can even be helpful in reinforcing attention during sitting; for example, if present-moment awareness is optimal, a sharp or sudden noise will be less likely to shock or startle. It would be more likely to do so if the meditator has become lost in thought.

There is an experiential aspect to zazen which it shares with other forms of meditation which I refer to as still dynamics. The posture that Dōgen describes is one in which there is a fine balance struck between a body that is active and passive; it does not allow one to slump, neither does it make the sitter overstimulated. When the sitter relaxes into zazen and begins to quiet her internal monologue and active, judgemental mind, stillness takes over. Yet this is not the stillness we experience in the stage before sleep, nor is it a kind of relaxed laziness that accompanies daydreaming. It is a keen and heightened awareness of the fact that one's body and environment is quite active and dynamic, even when one specifically seeks to quieten them.

Environment is an aspect of zazen that we should be able to control fairly easily. Not a lot of room is needed and if one can restrict ambient noise to sensible levels then that should provide an appropriate setting. Yet when one begins to experience the stillness of zazen, even an environment which one considered quiet will reveal a potentially vast soundscape. That slight traffic noise that we usually tune out may now become audible. The movements of those in the next room that we usually successfully ignore become noticeable. The hum of electricity, heating systems, water pipes, wind and rain which are usually drowned out by the activity of our internal monologue are now set in sharp relief. We will also begin to hear our own bodies in ways which we may never have done before. We become fully conscious of the constant activity of the breath and the heartbeat. We may become more aware of the creaking sounds of our joints and bones. Aches and bodily stresses which we usually overlook may become more pronounced, in particular if we are new to zazen. What I mean to illustrate by pointing out these still dynamics is that even in a position of rest and stillness, we can observe that there is *a lot* going on in both our internal and external environments. If that is the case in the restfulness of zazen, then how much more hectic are our environments when we are fully immersed in everyday physical and intellectual activity?

For the beginner, the first sittings in zazen can contain many surprising and even unpleasant experiences. Once initial stillness has been achieved one may be taken aback by just how difficult it is to let the thinking mind quiet down, how complex the process of breathing is, how unfamiliar one can be with one's own body. The final lines of Dōgen's passage echo this idea but also point to persistence in practice as a way to overcome these difficulties. In fact, 'overcome' is the wrong term to use because it implies a problem that has been imposed upon the subject from the outside world. In actuality, zazen reveals the years of habits (good and bad) and conditioning that we put ourselves through,⁷⁶ often entirely needlessly. When one is faced with only one's body from which to learn, the lessons can be profoundly intense.

Sitting in the correct posture of zazen is one of the most basic and restful activities one can engage in; it may be worth thinking of counter-examples to this, though I believe they are hard to come up with.⁷⁷ Sleep is certainly a restful state, but lacks the engagement of zazen. Sleep can be deep and refreshing, but it might just as easily be fitful and uncomfortable (this can often be said of zazen too, but more often at the level of a novice; it is harder to 'practise' sleep than meditation!) In sleep we obviously have far less control over our experience;⁷⁸ in meditation we have the opportunity to silently acknowledge conscious thought while gently

⁷⁶ This is not the case when we are infants; there is no way to control our inner or outer environment at that stage. The problem is that we persist with these habits even when we reach a stage at which we have awareness and control of them.

⁷⁷ One significant exception here might be isolation or floatation tanks. In these tanks the high salt content means the subject floats freely and has no contact with walls or ground. While there are plentiful first-hand accounts of mind-body insights from those who use floatation tanks similar to those reported in zazen, there are two key differences. Firstly, the floatation tank is a precise and complicated piece of technology. It is expensive, specialised and beyond the reach of the majority of most people for reasons of money and space. Secondly, floatation tanks provide a more introverted experience than zazen. The subject is in complete darkness and is not in touch with any solid objects and is therefore not engaged with their environment in the way which zazen encourages.

⁷⁸ Those with experience of lucid dreaming report a heightened ability to control one's awareness and experience in dream states. Whether this then counts as 'conscious' or not is a debate I will not engage in here, but it at least demonstrates that sleep does not entail total and utter lack of awareness/experience.

letting it subside. Even though distraction may occur repeatedly in zazen we are always in a position - literally - to rein it in and return to an experience of pure stillness and present moment awareness.

Other activities that are generally considered restful can be seen upon even the simplest inspection to be anything but. Physical activities that are used to ‘unwind’ often involve more bodily stress than the activities that we are trying to unwind from. Jogging, swimming, football, tennis, hillwalking to name but a few; almost all of these activities involve, at one point or another, physical exertion and increased pulse and respiratory rates. This is not to deny the physical and emotional benefits of such activities but to offer a reminder that there are subtle differences between varieties of embodied practice insofar as they can be integrated into everyday life. Activities which we might be convinced are completely passive - and which we might welcome far sooner than the leg-ache and mental rambling that accompanies early sittings in zazen - can be far more of an exertion than we might think.⁷⁹ For example, watching a film may be perceived to be one of the most relaxing activities that we can partake in, but the pressure and strain it puts on our eyes and the cognitive activity it stimulates can be very draining. Once again, zazen has a surface-level relationship with such an activity. We *could* crudely describe it as ‘sitting and looking’, but in zazen the concept of ‘looking’ is far more subtle. The sitter is not looking at anything in particular (eye-line is usually around three feet on the floor from the sitter) but not trying to *avoid* looking. The sitter’s visual experience during zazen is that of *just seeing*, without that seeing being directed at an intentional object or mediated by the active mind.

This is only one level of the relevance and importance of zazen, i.e. a heightening of awareness of our body and mental activity, as well as a relaxing and reorienting of the two.

⁷⁹ <http://jap.physiology.org/content/106/3/857>

There is much more intellectual and philosophical relevance to be gleaned from the experience of zazen.

(ii) Original Enlightenment: Why Practise?

What is it about zazen that makes its application relevant to analytic philosophy, and philosophy of mind in particular? If we can intellectualise about the principles that arise from zazen, then why is the practice necessary at all?⁸⁰ The answer to this lies in understanding the place of first-person experience. In section three I will examine James Austin's research into the neurophysiological and psychological effects of regular, prolonged meditative practice. The work of Austin and similar researchers and writers is relevant in that it allows those who are not predisposed to interest in the often over-mystified activity of meditation to forego any metaphysical speculation and look at observable outcomes: what is it that a regular course of meditation does to the brain and body of a meditator, as learned, for instance, from the application of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)?⁸¹ These observations should come with a reminder that it is still the first-person based practice of sitting itself which lies

⁸⁰ In Zen Buddhism this is the problem of Original Enlightenment which I discuss below.

⁸¹ The following are examples of just such an application: In discussing revelatory experience in relation to long-term meditation, Austin states "The advent of fast magnetic resonance imaging (functional MRI) permits neuroscientists to study... brief segments of mental activity, even those lasting only ten seconds or so... The brief time frame within which fast MRI operates could easily help define which particular regions of the brain are functioning most actively during these special moments." (Austin 1999, 524)

"Brefczynski-Lewis and colleagues monitored expert meditators and controls with fMRI *while they were actually practicing* a one-pointed form of concentrative meditation. Their 14 experts (average age 47) were recruited from two schools in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition... The experts who had longer durations of practice experience showed *lesser* degrees of fMRI signals in the amygdala, medial frontal gyrus, and nucleus accumbens when exposed to distracting sounds." (Austin 2009, 41)

Austin also specifies one area of Zen which could make use of fMRI: "At this writing, we still await a comprehensive functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study that monitors a large group of advanced Zen meditators while they engage in very carefully defined, 30- to 40-minute intervals characteristic of the spontaneous flexibility that occurs in their daily meditation, with no other tasks being required." (Austin 2009, 5)

at the source of any philosophically or scientifically significant insights. In this way we may begin to see how the conscious yet simple act of sitting and breathing can lead to insights which may necessitate a restructuring of our most basic ideas about the relationship between mind and body.

Throughout his writings Dōgen demonstrates discipline in his thought and practice as well as confidence in his ability to guide and teach. But as is often evident in Zen Buddhist writings, Dōgen was not impervious to the puzzling and often paradoxical nature of the interrelation of practice and scholarship. Of particular note is the issue of original enlightenment (*hongaku*) as opposed to acquired enlightenment (*shikaku*), expressed by Dōgen in the *Fukanzazengi* text: 'If the Way is originally perfect and ubiquitous, why do we distinguish between practice and enlightenment?... The Way is not separate from here and now; so what is the use of getting a foothold in practice?' (Kim 2000, 39) This is a Zen Buddhist formulation of the question posed above; if we can understand intellectually that all things are enlightened, why must we engage in a practice which leads to enlightenment? I think it is crucial to address this issue if we are to understand the philosophical and sociological implications of practice.

One direct method of addressing this issue is to invoke and apply the conventional/ultimate relationship. One of the great philosophical contributions of Buddhism is the reminder that we are all born into circumstances. This is a fact which western philosophy often seems to forget, or perhaps forgo; in many western philosophical traditions there are attempts to understand a phenomenon or ideas as somehow context-free in a way that never occurs in actuality.⁸² The Buddha reminds us that we are born into a world of causes and conditions, and that this applies to every individual or group that has ever existed.

⁸² In ancient philosophy see Plato's allegory of the cave; in analytic philosophy see the methodological demands of objectivity and neutrality; in political philosophy see Rawls's 'Veil of Ignorance.'

Our perception that there is essence or substance is incorrect; we merely perceive the persistence of objects (and ideas) over time and construe them as permanent on that basis. Here lies one of the many roots of delusion. In actuality, objects and ideas exist as conventions. Looi refers to this idea in terms of reference systems: “Our conception of the universe is relative: everything is known and defined in reference to something else. When I used to work as a scientist, I realized that science was all one big reference system. You go from one reference point to another. How do you get back beyond that? What is the root, the absolute basis of the whole thing?” (Looi 2008, 36)

If we accept that these reference systems are conventional and represent form, then it is possible to understand enlightenment as the ultimate; the emptiness in which these systems manifest. But this distinction itself is a convention. The ineffable nature of enlightenment experience is such that no verbalisation or intellectual scheme can do anything but represent it *as a verbalisation or intellectual scheme*. The same could be said for Buddhist conceptions of original enlightenment. This conception is a conventional truth, even as it points to an ultimate truth. To understand the nature of convention, one should practice zazen. This oversimplifies the problem of Original Enlightenment but it at least serves as a pragmatic way around getting stuck in a loop of metaphysical speculation which can prevent one from just sitting.

With regard to such metaphysical speculation the problem of Original Enlightenment also highlights a significant difference between the perspectives of analytic philosophy and Zen Buddhism. Analytic philosophy is generally a domain of universities; professional philosophy happens in a university setting. Typically, one’s first exposure to analytic philosophy of mind will occur in a very particular academic setting wherein canonical theories are presented and discussed. If we are to critique specific theories or ideas, we must do so using the terminology and methodology with which those ideas are presented. Insofar

as insight into the mind-body problem is gained,⁸³ it is done so in specific reference to received ideas; this cannot help but prejudice one's outlook. Does this conflict or contrast with insights into the mind-body problem gained via zazen? While it would be naive to suggest that one's experience in zazen constitutes a kind of culturally and philosophically neutral practice, it is the case that zazen, as far as it exerts an influence on our intellect, does so in a much less forceful manner than analytic philosophy does. While traditional Zen schools functioned in a monastery system where students had the guidance of teachers and the authority figures of head monks, this did not undermine the primary importance of practice. Rather than receiving information exclusively via the gate of authority figures, students were encouraged to gain insight by disciplined engagement in the nonthinking state of zazen.

If we take zazen out of the monastery setting we lose only convention and formality (assuming we are disciplined enough to practice to an extent where a teacher is not a necessity) but we keep the source of insight, i.e. the practice. We can assess the philosophical implications of insights gained during zazen, but this does not permit the dismissal of the first-person experience at the source of these insights. On the contrary, it necessitates its consideration.

It has never been lost. What need is there to search? This line is based on what Sakyamuni Buddha said after his own enlightenment: "Isn't it wonderful! All sentient beings have the Buddha nature." That is, they are already enlightened. You may say, so why should we even bother? To understand intellectually what the Buddha said does not do anything. It is just another idea. When you believe it you have just

⁸³ Here I should clarify that by 'insights into the mind-body problem' I include insights which apply to any one theory of mind, but also to the nature of the mind-body problem in general as it is usually conceptualised.

another belief system. But when you realize it in your own life, the realization is transformative. You can never live your life in the old way. *It has never been lost: What need is there to search?* (Loori 2008, 13)

Having described the practice of zazen I will now examine some practical issues around practice and describe the elements of experience in zazen which relate most directly to my overall argument.

(b) Zazen: Practice and Realisation

(i) Ease and Difficulty

The first hurdle to overcome in pursuing regular sitting in zazen is the most obvious, but arguably most difficult: beginning. The matter of discipline is important in the beginning of sitting-only as it can, over time, become self-regulating. Each new sitting will be settled in to slightly more fluidly than the last and the body may adapt to and prolong the appropriate posture with less effort each time. It is important for the beginner to recognise this in order to avoid becoming discouraged. And once this recognition is made, the following observation by the seventh-century monk Wonhyo is of particular note:

... life as a human with the opportunity to practice the Dharma is not to be squandered on the pursuit of ephemeral pleasures of the world. But those pleasures are enticing and life passes quickly; if one remains involved in the affairs of the world, there will be no time for religious practice. Thus, one finds across the Buddhist traditions eloquent descriptions of the impermanence of life, of how quickly life passes by. It is said that death is definite and the time of death is indefinite; as

Nagarjuna wrote, “Life is more impermanent than a water bubble battered by the wind of many harmful things. Thus, that one inhales and exhales healthy from sleep is fantastic.”

... Suddenly a hundred years will be past; how then can we not practice? How much longer will life last? Yet still we do not practice, but remain heedless. (Lopez 2004, 19-21)

Another difficulty with zazen is the initial bodily stress one encounters in the posture of zazen. Though the seated position as outlined by Dōgen is ultimately one of pure ease and is in fact the most conducive to a restful posture without the sitter becoming either sleepy or restless, there can be an initial period of physical discomfort, particularly in the legs, back and neck. This is perhaps best accounted for by the fact that it is an unusual position to assume, especially for those involved in activities like working in an office or attending school which involve being seated in a chair behind a desk for long stretches of the day. This should be a fairly straightforward difficulty to overcome in that one can ease the body into getting used to the seated position of zazen, even when not meditating, by stretching and sitting cross-legged whenever possible. It is important to recognise this and, in order to encourage and reassure beginners, to make clear that the often intense pain or numbness that can be experienced in zazen is temporary and can be eased or entirely phased out with regular sitting and stretching.

One of the principles of Zen Buddhism is non-duality. One duality which has been in the background throughout this section is the distinction between actually sitting on the mat doing zazen and going about one’s daily business. Zazen is not escapist; it is intended as a practice which integrates into all forms of life. The question is how this integration takes place? One way in which we can situate the experience of zazen in everyday experience is by

examining the effect it can have on our reactive attitudes. When a thought arises in zazen we acknowledge it and return to a state of nonthinking. But we must acknowledge that the thought arises before we move on from it; to try to suppress it would be counter-productive. With this acknowledgement we are easing our judgemental, reactive attitudes in favour of pure experience. This is a capacity we can then carry out into the world, though we may find it much more difficult to enact in the busy rush of everyday life than in the stillness of the mat. The mindfulness of zazen does not occur just on the mat, or just in daily life, but at all points. The moments of finishing a sitting session are the beginning of moving from a state of *sitting as practice* to a state of *acting as practice*.

The issue of the need for a teacher in zazen is interestingly problematic from both a metaphysical and practical perspective.⁸⁴ My own particular inclination is to appeal to the basic simplicity at the core of Zen scholarship and practice. On this view a teacher may not be entirely necessary if one practises appropriately and conscientiously. Like few other activities one can engage in, zazen is a level playing field. It requires little or no specialist prior knowledge or beliefs, no specialised tools (unless one counts an appropriately fashioned cushion) and virtually zero financial investment. I think that over-reliance on ceremony can lead one to develop a certain absolutist or purist mindset about an activity that in large part leads to the dissolution of just such a mindset, while simultaneously creating a kind of hierarchical mode of thought which places a greater importance on the more practised over the less practised.

⁸⁴ For further discussion on this matter see the opening of 'Shikantaza' by Hakuun Yasutani in *The Art of Just Sitting*.

(ii) Impermanence at the Root of Practice

Despite the detail and rigour in Dōgen's writing, he does sometimes exhibit some inconsistency in his opinions on certain issues. There is an element of sheer humanity in this inconsistency; he is a person who struggled with faith-based as well as practical questions around Zen. But at the same time this inconsistency reflects one of the very principles that his guide to practice is based on: impermanence. If the nature of reality is the impermanence evident in the interdependent arising and perishing of all things, then should Dōgen's stance on, for instance, the correct way to wear a robe, not be subject to the same principle? While monastic rules for behaviour, ceremony and so forth are important in the sense of creating an appropriate environment for practice as well as providing instances for the practical application of mindfulness in daily life (e.g. cooking for others, going to the bathroom, sleeping) - and mindfulness of impermanence itself - they are ultimately as conventional as the intellectual dualities which zazen dissolves.

There is a significant biographical note from Dōgen's life which may illuminate this particular issue. Dōgen had very early experiences with the suffering that was one of the bedrocks of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, with his father passing away when he was just two years of age, and his mother passing away when he was seven: "We are told that in the midst of profound grief, Dōgen experienced the impermanence of all things as he watched the ascending incense at his mother's funeral service. This experience left an indelible impression upon Dōgen, which no doubt determined the direction of his subsequent spiritual journey." (Kim 1987, 19)

While even at this early age Dōgen was already inclined toward a monastic life, this experience may have crystallised his preoccupation with impermanence, in particular as it relates to suffering. This experience occurred in a ceremonial setting. On top of the general practical necessity of rule-bound behaviour in a monastic setting, Dōgen was already being

raised in a culture that placed an emphasis on respect for ceremonial processes. As with any cultural norm this must have had a long-term impact on Dōgen the man, but I think this also provides evidence for the potential over-emphasis⁸⁵ on ceremony in and around monastic life. For in his observance of the ascending incense Dōgen was witnessing not just a symbolic representation but an actual instance of the ephemerality of all things. Even though this occurred during a ceremony for the dead, was it the structure, format and rules of the ceremony that gave Dōgen this invaluable spiritual insight? No; what was of foremost importance in this instance was Dōgen's recognition of the principle of impermanence. As far as his spiritual development went his *experience* was primary, the convention of ceremony was secondary. Here we could refer back to the idea of *shikantaza*: the primary mode of insight wisdom is found in sitting. Overly strict adherence to monastic rules which are in a sense incidental to the sitting itself is to be as guarded against as overly strict adherence to our sense of self with all its attendant judgements, wishes, beliefs and so forth. In this sense zazen is a kind of revolutionary act, transcending and rejecting any one ideology in favour of pure, unmediated experience. Culture, self, politics and all other forms of institution and systemisation have no place on the mat (though their influence may come rushing back as soon as one gets up off the mat). Dōgen did sometimes express a kind of convention-only attitude toward ceremony. Kim notes that the *fukanzazengi* text was

[an attempt] to correct what he felt were errors made by Ch'ang-lu Tsung-che in his *Ch'an-yüan ch'ing-kuei* (*Zen Monastic Rules*) and thereby restore the spirit of the monastic ideal envisioned by Po-chang Huai-hai (720-814). The central theme of the

⁸⁵ By using the term 'over-emphasis' here I do not intend to denigrate the place of ritual and ceremony, which I do regard as important, but rather to point out the potential for ceremony (in the context of Zen Buddhism) which is there to facilitate and frame practice to become so strict as to overtake the practice itself. This is an issue I will return to in chapter four.

Fukan zazengi was zazen-only... The physical aspects of Dōgen's zazen was almost identical with Tsung-che's. However, in Dōgen's thought, such a physical form was identified with the "whole truth of Buddhism" or with the "right gate of Buddhism"... Zazen for Dōgen was not one among many spiritual practices, but the very best of all practices; accordingly, incense burning, worship, *nembutsu*, confession, and recitation of the sūtras were unnecessary. (Kim 1987, 58-59)

Zazen-only was ideal form of practice for Dōgen, but it this attitude did not entirely transcend the "monastic ideal." Ultimately Dōgen's work in spreading right practice was arguably more important than this monastic ideal; non-monastic Zen became more common over time and zazen became integrated into the lives of those who could not take part in monastic life. If Dōgen's restoration of the monastic ideal was even in part responsible for the transmission of the practice and scholarship of Zen, then his strict adherence to monkhood may have done more good than harm.

(iii) Experience and Realisation in Zazen

It remains for me to outline what the main features of the subjective experience of zazen are as they relate to my overall argument, and whether these features have any relevance outside of mere first-person reporting.

The experiences that I will relate here usually occur after long-term regular meditation, but they can occur - though perhaps with a lesser intensity - with beginners also. The rich experience of zazen provides many insights and experiences but for my purposes I will restrict the discussion here to two main types of experience in zazen: a general heightened awareness about one's inner and outer experience and an experience of boundary dissolution.

Heightened Awareness

The experience of heightened sensory awareness in zazen is perhaps best understood in contrast to non-specialist (i.e. not-meditative) experience. Our default experience of daily life is usually not mindful, and is almost always full of enough thought and activity to distract us from any naturally occurring mindfulness. As soon as one engages in meditative practice this fact may be sharply felt. It can be astonishing to sit alone or in a group and realise that one has very rarely experienced a moment of unified physical and psychological stillness. As outlined above, this can be felt on a practical, non-mystical level: the breath, the body and one's surroundings may all be experienced with an increased vividness once the active mind is quietened and the body stilled.

Boundary Dissolution

In terms of the implications for analytic philosophy of mind, I consider boundary dissolution to be the single most important aspect of the experience of zazen. The most significant instance of boundary dissolution in zazen is that between subject and world, i.e. the feeling that we, as individuals, are somehow separate from the rest of the world. This is an important case to point out because it demonstrates the through-line between the embodied experience of zazen and the radical philosophical re-structuring of our understanding of the relationship between mind and body.

Perhaps the most obvious physical boundary we feel between our 'selves' and the rest of the world is found at the limits of our skin or clothes, though this boundary will often be felt to expand out even further than this up to a point that we define as our personal space,⁸⁶

⁸⁶ "When you are describing or explaining or even just inwardly feeling your "self," what you are actually doing, whether you know it or not, is drawing a mental line or boundary across the whole field of your experience, and everything on the *inside* of that boundary you are feeling or calling your "self," while everything *outside* that boundary you feel to be "not-self." Your self-identity, in other words, depends entirely upon where you draw that boundary line." (Wilber 2001, 8)

which of course varies from person to person. There are other physical aspects to zazen which will make us remember that we are 'in' a body. We may itch, ache, salivate or cough, or we may just have difficulty finding the appropriate balance on the cushion. But aside from these experiences the only physical activity one is continually aware of is one's gentle inhalation and exhalation. With regular and repeated practice, the bodily aspect of sitting becomes increasingly subtle. In the posture of zazen the body is elevated and self-supporting enough that one does not feel contact with the 'outside' world as much as one is used to, and this has the effect of that boundary between 'outside' and 'inside' feeling less and less concrete.

At this stage it may be worth reiterating the different type of restfulness that one experiences in zazen compared to other typically restful acts like sleeping. In sleep, our bodies are usually in contact with a wide and relatively soft surface. In lying down to sleep one does not experience the elevation and - obviously, given the aim - alertness that occurs in zazen. The reason it is important to point this out is that zazen and similar meditative practices are often treated as ineffectual spiritual activities, comparable to rest or sleep states insofar as they do not 'tell' us anything particularly important about the world. As it is my aim to prove just the opposite of such an attitude it is necessary to highlight and clarify the aforementioned differences.

The experience of zazen can also have an effect on what we might consider our intellectual boundaries. This is represented in Dōgen's process of 'thinking', 'not thinking' and 'nonthinking.'

...Dōgen spoke of the thought of resolute sitting in meditation (*gotsugotchi*), through which "thinking of not-thinking" was said to be realised. The function of nonthinking was not just to transcend both thinking and not-thinking, but to realise

both, in the absolutely simple and singular act of resolute sitting itself. Ultimately there was nothing but the act of resolute sitting in meditation, which itself was the thought of resolute sitting in meditation. In other words, nonthinking was beyond thinking and not-thinking; nonetheless it was the form - a very special form of thinking beyond thinking and not-thinking, that is, thinking of not-thinking. Thus in Dōgen's conception of zazen-only, nonthinking was used not transcendently so much as realizationally; it was objectless, subjectless, formless, goalless, and purposeless. But it was not void of intellectual content as in a vacuum. What zazen-only did was not to eliminate reason and intellect, but to realise them. (Kim 2000, 63)

This passage represents the seemingly paradoxical yet simultaneously pragmatic nature of Dōgen's teaching, and Zen teaching in general. From the analytic perspective the state of nonthinking would be a very unique and unusual one to inhabit. There is perception going on, but it is not mediated by the conscious, active mind; it is merely occurring, free from judgement and interpretation. Whatever conclusions we draw from such an experience are *post facto* by necessity. The experience of this state can be a difficult one for the beginner in the sense that it is such a novel state to be in that it can disarm us and force us back into our introspective inner monologue. The state of 'no thought' creeps up on the sitter in the early stages of zazen as the body settles in and the mind calms down. There can be a moment where one catches oneself in the state of nonthinking, and it is so unlike our usual everyday experience that we may instantly make a judgement or internal remark on it. And of course any act of judgment or intellectualisation jars the sitter out of the calm they were experiencing and back toward an ongoing inner monologue. This is why Dōgen and other teachers advise "If a wish arises, take note of it and then dismiss it!"⁸⁷ It would be just as

⁸⁷ Taken from Dumoulin (2005)

counter-productive to try to suppress a naturally occurring thought. The most appropriate way to deal with such an occurrence is to let it happen, then let it go in order to return to the state of nonthinking. Over time this process will be like a rough tide calming down; thoughts will come thick and fast and the sitter has to acknowledge and dismiss them as they come. With each acknowledgement and dismissal it becomes easier to calm the constant stream of thoughts until one works back to the original nonthinking state.

If Dōgen's treatment of nonthinking seems complicated, that is partly down to the fact that it is an attempt to describe experience itself as vividly as possible. The ideal way to understand such a state is to experience it. Zazen-only is not writing about zazen-only, although such writing can help to give a general idea of the thrust of practice to beginners or non-practitioners, as well as reminding meditators who are experiencing such a state that they are on the right track.

Perhaps the demands of neutrality that are such a part of analytic methodology will not or cannot accept any argument which has a purely experiential basis. But the boundary dissolution experience of zazen has profound implications for the mind-body problem. Thomas Nagel gestures toward this idea in *The View from Nowhere*: "If we try to understand experience from an objective viewpoint that is distinct from that of subject of the experience, then even if we continue to credit its perspectival nature, we will not be able to grasp its most specific qualities unless we can imagine them subjectively." (Nagel 1986, 25)

It is important to note that the philosophical reorientation of subjective experience should not merely be a reversal or denial of the objective mode; the subjective and objective are in themselves conventional designations, albeit with very convincing factors which lead us to treat them as exclusive (e.g. privacy of subjective experience being cut off from public, observable events). In this sense they are, as with all phenomena, interdependent and lessons

can pass between one mode and the other. If the analytic, objective mode can learn from Zen practice, what can the latter learn from the former?

This is where I believe the work of researchers like James Austin has valuable input. Austin has a long and involved experience of both Zen practice and neuroscientific research. While the practice does not require validation from the neuroscientific community in order to function as it has done for hundreds of years, I believe that a knowledge of the physiological effects of practice can provide data which may effect genuine positive behavioural change in practitioners, whether beginner or advanced. Much like an athlete may be naturally fit and healthy but still benefit from learning more about how their body works, Zen practitioners may be conscientious and disciplined but gain even more fine-grained insights from practice by being aware of the details behind the physiology and neurophysiology of meditation.

For instance, Austin identifies the cingulum region of the brain as a major area of interest in terms of understanding the physiological and psychological effects of meditation, in this case changes in relation to fear and addiction. The cingulate gyrus intersects with many key areas of the brain and stimulation of part of the cingulate cortex is reported as easing tension and anxiety (Austin 1999, 172). More pronounced effects can be achieved through surgery: an operation on the cingulum region had major success rates in relieving drug-craving, with most patients suffering no withdrawal symptoms (Austin 1999, 173). These are examples of medical intervention which can cause a subject to devalue attachment in beneficial ways and demonstrates that both psychological and physiological craving can be eased. Throughout his research Austin reports similar, albeit less extreme, benefits through mindfulness practices in terms of relieving anxiety, fear, stress and attachment (and mindfulness practice from an early age may prevent such afflictions from developing to a point where quality of life is affected in the first place). Interestingly, the cingulate cortex is

also involved in the process of grasping objects and letting them go.⁸⁸ So the concept of ‘grasping’ which Zen critiques is not merely symbolic; neuroscientific research actually points to a common area of the brain which is responsible for both physically and psychologically grasping. I believe this is a case where Zen scholars and practitioners can benefit from scientific research; despite Zen’s practicality, the scholarship that emerges from meditation can often seem removed from the practice itself. Research such as Austin’s gives a very salient and practical illustration of the body’s reaction to regular, long-term practice which potentially offers a more direct through-line to the metaphysical aspects of Zen scholarship than one might traditionally encounter.

Another such example is the breakdown of the physiological process of breathing and how meditative breathing differs from non-meditative breathing (discussed in detail in section three). If one were to instruct a beginner in zazen with absolutely no knowledge of the body outside of visible parts and processes, one could transmit the practice successfully, but it may be easier to do so when both teacher and student can visualise processes like lung movements, muscle stretching and so forth. The visualisation or imagination of lung movements which are not visually accessible to the practitioner need not be a crucial part of the meditative process, but it may offer a more vivid conception of the breathing aspect of meditative practice, which in turn may make it easier for the practitioner to focus on and regulate their breathing both efficiently and mindfully. To know what the lungs, stomach muscles and so forth are doing while breathing occurs makes one more aware and appreciative of the complexity of the act of breathing. And this can encourage mindfulness in the sense that breathing is so automatic that we usually do not pay attention to it, let alone appreciate its complexity: zazen and mindfulness in general asks us to slow down, to pay

⁸⁸ “It is an interesting sidelight to observe that one region of cingulate cortex is involved in the initiation of grasping. And it is also involved in the release of the handgrip once grasping has occurred.” (Austin 1999, 174)

attention to such processes and to be in tune with them in ways which we tend to avoid or deny on a regular basis. In this way, scientific research which, historically and traditionally, has no crossover with the scholarship and practice of zazen, can have beneficial input which can potentially enrich our understanding of practice, and practice itself.

In this way one can observe that the subjective mode benefits from the objective scientific mode by incorporating information about the physiological changes encountered during meditation back into the practice itself. The following section discusses the relevance of Austin's work in greater depth.

III. The Neuroscience of Meditation

This section examines the work of James H. Austin in studying the effects of long-term Zen meditation on the neurophysiology and psychology of meditators. I will draw from his three major works: *Zen and the Brain*, *Zen-Brain Reflections* and *Selfless Insight*. I have two main aims in presenting a reading of Austin's work. Firstly, it offers a bridge between the subjective nature of zazen and the objective nature of the analytic method by offering a scientific examination of some of the objectively observable effects of regular zazen.⁸⁹ In this way even those ill-disposed toward accepting the relevance of Zen to philosophy or science will find evidence of tangible effects of a primarily subjective experience. Secondly, Austin's work presents a great opportunity to show that beyond the merely data-oriented results of his work and the work of others like him, the experience of Zen states have direct and profound consequences and applications for philosophy, science, and everyday life. I will give an outline of Austin's research and findings before linking this information back to the main argument by highlighting its significance for philosophy of mind.

(a) Neurophysiological Evidence

The general concern of giving meditative practice its appropriate role within science and philosophy is expressed by Farb as follows:

Despite this unique confluence of public and scientific interest in techniques such as

⁸⁹ Though I am focusing on zazen, there is a compelling and varied scientific literature behind other traditional meditative and embodied practices. Some examples include: Benson, Lehmann, Malhorta, Goldman, Hopkins and Epstein "Body temperature changes during the practice of g Tum-mo yoga" in *Nature*, Vol. 295, 21 January 1982;

mindfulness or loving-kindness meditation, MT [Meditation Training]'s future in Western culture is at a crossroads. Public interest is fleeting and shifts from trend to trend; without a more substantive scientific account of *why* MT works, its popularity may wane as the sense of novelty fades. Skeptics of meditation may balk at the mysticism associated with contemplative training, spurning the cultural mystique that first made such practices a source of curiosity in the West. To be fully integrated into Western culture, MT requires description within a Western mode of discourse such as a scientific theory. Subjective reports of training benefits can and will continue to popularize the practice without scientific backing, but deep-rooted institutional change generally requires endorsement from the institution responsible for knowledge discovery, i.e., scientific authority... (Schmidt and Walach 2013, 244)

The state of *zazen* as unmediated, judgement-free engagement with the present moment is one in which we rarely find ourselves. The insights gained from this experience are of major significance to both non-specialist everyday life and academic disciplines such as philosophy. But the transmission of information about these insights is a sensitive issue. As Zen Buddhist teaching makes clear, no written account of experience can substitute for experience itself. And although an unforced attitude is preferable when one first approaches practice one may often be obliged to make the relevance of practice clear by purely intellectual means, be it through papers, books or lectures. With this in mind I will now examine some of the third-person neurophysiological evidence for the benefits of regular meditative practice.

It is difficult to imagine how a figure such as Dōgen would react to the idea that the brain is changed with regular prolonged meditative practice. Given the often common-sensical nature of Zen however, I imagine it would not come as a revelation to him. I also

imagine that he would not regard a technological development like fMRI as a miraculous innovation which legitimises zazen, but merely another conventional reference system with which to analyse the experience of pure awareness.

Although the evidence presented in neurophysiological research satisfies criteria of analytic methodology at least insofar that it presents objective, analysable data, this does not deny the fact that it is the practice itself which lies at the root of all such data. But this may be a necessity for those who are unmoved by purely first-person accounts of experiential insight. If meditative practices such as zazen are to have a bearing on analytic philosophy then the best route to encouraging practice may be first easing any suspicions around the insights of practice by pointing to hard experimental evidence which demonstrates that meditation is far more effectual than may be generally supposed.

While I am focused on the philosophical implications of meditation, a consideration of the physiological evidence for health benefits as a result of mindfulness meditation is essential in establishing that meditative practices create observable change within the meditator. If it is established that embodied meditative practice has notable physical and psychological effects, it can be established that it could have more subtle effects on the type of distinction-making intellectual activity characteristic of analytic philosophy of mind. And if this is established it will go some way toward showing that the dualistic nature of analytic theories of mind are not necessary, but relative or provisional.

(i) Immune Response in High Stress Circumstances

Austin examines the immune response of cancer patients engaged in an eight-week mindfulness programme designed by John Kabat-Zinn. The course "... includes training in a calming meditation that focuses on the breath, together with a scan of meditative awareness directed to sensations arising through the body." (Austin 2006, 56) It is not uncommon that in

situations where a subject is most concerned with their bodily health (e.g. in a hospital ward) it is often easy to be distracted from being mindful about the body, in particular when one holds doctors and other medical specialists as the authority figures in diagnosing, prescribing, treating and so forth. While the average patient cannot engage in the work of a doctor, they can control their psychological and, on Austin's evidence, their physiological responses to events.

Patients diagnosed with cancer undergo major stress responses. Various "psychological" interventions have been tried. Their effects on measures of humoral and cellular immunity often vary. The result is "a confusing overall picture."

However, after [the] 8-week mindfulness meditation program, forty-two breast or prostate cancer patients were considered to have shown significant improvement in their overall quality of life, in their stress symptoms, and in the quality of their sleep. Their T cell production of interleukin-4 increased more than threefold. Interferon gamma decreased, as did their natural killer cell production of interleukin-10. This latter immune profile was thought to resemble the pattern shown by persons who shift up *from* symptoms of depression toward a more normal (and potentially anti-inflammatory) profile. It is relevant to note that during depression, patients often tend to show elevated levels of ACTH and cortisol.

In summary, meditation appears to help reduce stress responses, though the precise mechanisms responsible for its benefits are still being studied. (Austin 2006, 57)

(ii) Effects on Sleep

Even in the short-term, the experience of meditation can make one much more acutely aware of one's bodily rhythms. This awareness extends to one's need for rest and sleep. It is often easy to ignore the natural signals of the body when one wants to pursue goals (e.g. finishing a project) which require avoiding the activities that those signals are recommending, in this case sleep. Meditative practice can not only make one more aware of the need to pay attention to our sleep patterns, but can actually alter those patterns themselves.

Meditation changes the rhythms of our two natural, cyclic trends toward desynchronization. Waking is only one of these major states. The other state is desynchronized sleep (D-sleep, also known as REM sleep). Repeated meditation shifts the usual entry times of these two activated states. It also changes their momentum. And while our major physiological trend is to wake up once a day, we also have a lesser tendency to become more awake every 90 minutes or so. Rigorous meditative retreats will change a person's sleep-waking habits, destabilize each of these biorhythms, and open up consciousness to new options. (Austin 1999, 463)

The positive alteration of our default sleep patterns has relevance to every lifestyle. Standard behaviour is to wake, go about one's daily business, and grow wearier as the day goes on until eventually one chooses to go to sleep. If this behaviour can be modified to match our natural biorhythms then our daily routines could be improved substantially in their efficiency and in the effect they have on energy levels.

(iii) Breathing

Just as with sleep, it can be incredibly easy to remain unaware of the process of inhalation and exhalation which occurs in our bodies for as long as we live. Breathing is passive; why do we need to pay attention to it? This is a crucial question as the breath remains the one activity on which attention is focused in deep meditation. Austin states that “[breathing can] help uncover our capacity for direct experience.” (Austin 1999, 93) The following are extracts from Austin’s explanation of the effects of meditation on breathing:

The brain stem is the stalk at the base of medulla, pons, and midbrain... The medulla is its lowest segment. Here we keep track of those chemical signals in the bloodstream - low oxygen and high carbon dioxide - that drives us to breathe more. From the medulla, impulses flow down the spinal cord and out through the peripheral nerves to contract the muscles of the rib cage and diaphragm. The chest expands, the diaphragm descends. All this translates to breathing *in*.

Then, as the lungs expand, their stretch receptors become increasingly taut. This sends signals up the vagus nerves to inform the brain stem. There they generate a flurry of inhibition, which turns inhalation off. Finally, as we start to breathe out, much of our exhalation proceeds passively, driven by the elastic recoil from the chest and abdomen.

One other factor dampens inspiration: the proprioceptive messages that return from our lower abdominal muscles. We are not consciously aware of most of these impulses, yet they too ascend to inhibit the medulla and to turn off inspiration. Note what happens in *zazen*. The meditator trains bare conscious attention to focus on these faint up-and-down breathing movements in the lower abdomen, the *tanden*. (Austin 1999, 93)

Having described the physiological process of breathing, Austin gives an account of how regular zazen affects this process in the long-term:

Well-trained meditators dampen their breathing in several ways. Some will slow their respiration to as low as four or six per minute. They also reduce the overall volume of air they breathe, lengthen their exhalations, and increase the extent of their abdominal breathing. Akishige found this when he studied six Rinzai Zen monks who had meditated an average of eleven years. During ordinary quiet sitting they averaged only six breaths a minute. At rest, most of us breathe two to three times faster. During zazen, his monks did breathe slightly faster: eight per minute. Four Soto Zen monks, who averaged twenty-one years of practice, started with an average respiratory rate of nineteen. Their rate fell to sixteen during zazen.

Normally, we spend less time breathing in (43 percent) than breathing out. When the monks merely sat quietly, they spent less time than this in their inspiratory phase. But during zazen, their time in inspiration fell even further. Now it consumed a mere one-quarter of the whole breathing cycle.

So, the major change during formal zazen was that monks now spent much more time breathing *out* - about three-quarters of their respiratory cycle. Indeed, the distinctive finding was that these monks were always prolonging their expiratory phase, both during the simple act of sitting quietly and during their formal periods of sitting in meditation.

Why did the two groups of monks breathe at different *rates*? It was speculated that they had used different techniques to train their breathing. These particular Rinzai monks had been trained to breathe softly - so softly that they did not ruffle a single

hair in a tuft of rabbit fur attached to their nose (!). Monks of the Soto sect had it easier. They had allowed respiration to take its own course. However, neither group of monks appeared to have prolonged their expiratory phase solely on the basis of conscious training efforts. Rather, their introspective reports suggested that these longer expirations had evolved naturally during zazen. (Austin 1999, 95)

When both brain and body quiet down, less oxygen is needed. When monks slow their breathing rates to only four breaths a minute, each of these breaths contains an increased tidal volume of air, for a total of 3.2 to 4.4 litres per minute. Even so, this total volume is still substantially less than the volume of air that normal controls breath at rest: around 6 litres a minute. (Austin 1999, 95)

The first thing this account makes one appreciate is the incredible biological complexity of breathing itself. Any perception of mindfulness practices as ‘just breathing’ are quite shallow when one considers how complex the act of breathing really is. There is nothing in and of zazen itself that improves our breathing; one could be sitting zazen, but in the wrong posture or mindset and breathing would not necessarily improve. But correct posture in practice, coupled with mindful attention on the breath is what leads to deeper, more regular breathing. Since zazen is an integrative practice, this makes one more mindful of shallow, irregular breath during the course of the day which one can then consciously improve on every time one becomes aware of it. While Austin’s data comes from the study of Zen monks, that does not preclude the non-monk from reaping these benefits. This is of course a question of degree; Zen monks are chosen for such studies because of their years of experience and the attendant likelihood that they will demonstrate dramatic results. Even so

this evidence goes to show that breathing changes organically and for the better for any person who engages in zazen regularly.

What the above examples demonstrate is that, at the very least, the deliberate undertaking of regular meditative practice will exert tangible and mostly beneficial changes on the practitioner's physiological states. This should put to rest any question that zazen is an ineffectual mystical practice. But these examples are arguably more trivial than the philosophical insights which arise from Austin's treatment of the importance of first-person experience.

(b) First-Person Experience: Kenshō/Makyō

(i) Kenshō

Kensho is a flash of mental illumination. Comprehension is its keynote. A unique form of comprehension. For only when consciousness is shorn of its entire baggage of self can this special kind of existential comprehension occur. Kensho has a very long prelude of calm, persistent introspection, and of bare attentiveness to the events of daily life. (Austin 1999, 591)

The sense of comprehension which Austin references here is at odds with the comprehension that we are used to in everyday intellectual activity. If, for instance, one is analysing a theory of mind and gains a new piece of knowledge as a result, we would not describe it in terms of mental illumination shorn of the baggage of self. It is just information that we internalise and move on from. This "existential comprehension" would appear similar to the phenomenological methods of introspection were it not for the fact that kenshō occurs through the process of nonthinking; it is not a state one can experience at will. Kenshō is also

notable in that meditators report its occurrence in non-meditative, everyday situations. This suggests that while we may mindfully try to integrate zazen into our daily lives, kenshō occurs effortlessly and unexpectedly outside of guided experience. Once one reaches the level of experience at which kenshō is experienced, kenshō integrates itself independent of the intentions of the meditator.

During my discussion of mysticism in chapter three I quoted the following from Stambaugh: “A mystical experience is an experience that transcends the subject-object structure of seeing and that therefore cannot be adequately expressed in ordinary language belonging to that structure.” (Parkes 1991, 21)

Austin offers a direct explanation of why ordinary language falls so far short of expressing insight-wisdom.

Insight-wisdom yields instant, syncretic comprehensibilities. These idea-messages and impressions convey *understanding*, but this arrives with no words attached. The brain has many networks for wordless comprehension. They link all four of its lobes with related regions in the subcortex farther below. Here, circuits operate with the most ancient of codes, and some will cross the deep midline bridge more readily than others. The kinds of “word language” found in our dictionaries cannot decipher these codes. (Austin 1999, 623)

The insight-wisdom of kenshō may be the strongest evidence that third-person accounts of conscious experience cannot ever be adequate to explain conscious experience, and that first-person experience is an essential addition to any proposed theory of mind.⁹⁰ Third person accounts can only use words, whether read, typed or spoken; they cannot convey

⁹⁰ Even though any theory which follows will suffer from the same inadequacy in the face of real world experience!

experience. And if that experience yields philosophical as well as personal insight, then third-person accounts are, however rigorous and objective, missing something essential. I do not believe that most analytic philosophers are inherently dismissive of the relevance of meditation. But it does seem that in the literature of analytic philosophy of mind meditation is indulged as somewhat of a curiosity and the ‘default mode’ (arguing about the metaphysical status of substances, distinction-making and so forth) is returned to quickly. Yet on Austin’s account this default mode of understanding consciousness is secondary in importance to experiencing consciousness itself by the unmediated, non-judgemental engagement in zazen or other mindfulness practices.

Dennett’s influential *Consciousness Explained* makes the strong claim that a positive theory of consciousness is possible. While he does assess the relevance of general first-person experience, the book contains no reference to meditation, zazen or any mindfulness practices. He may even inadvertently hit on the problem of philosophical introspection as constantly mediated (rather than unmediated as it is in zazen):

... what we are fooling ourselves about is the idea that the activity of “introspection” is *ever* a matter of just “looking and seeing.” I suspect that when we claim to be just using our powers of inner *observation*, we are always actually engaging in a sort of impromptu *theorizing* - and we are remarkably gullible theorists, precisely because there is so little to “observe” and so much to pontificate about without fear of contradiction. When we introspect, communally, we are really very much in the position of the legendary blind men examining the different parts of the elephant. (Dennett 1991, 68)

If Dennett gave a rigorous account of mindfulness practices, he may have facilitated a more insightful reading of inner experience and its relevance to understanding consciousness could be made. At the very least it seems that Dennett's claim that we are mistaken about our understanding of conscious experience would find an interesting test-base in the meditators who experience and report the insight-wisdom experience of kenshō.

(ii) Makyō

One other experience of zazen I would like to present is that the phenomenon of makyō. This is an interesting occurrence because it makes two things clear. Firstly, that the effects of meditation on the practitioner may not always play out as silently and uneventfully as one might imagine. Secondly, that responsible Zen Buddhists do not co-opt unusual experiential aspects of meditation to account for enlightenment; on the contrary, elements of meditative experience may be understood as blocking the way to true practice and enlightenment.

Loori describes makyō as follows:

It's simply a hallucination, no different from any other kind of hallucination. When you go without eating for a long period of time, you begin to produce histamines in the body, which can cause you to hallucinate. Or, if you go without sleep for a long period of time, you will begin to hallucinate. Unfortunately, some people have formed whole teachings on the basis of makyo. They stop eating for two weeks and have all kinds of visions and sensations, and the next thing you know, there are a hundred followers trying to get the same visions and sensations. (Loori 2008, 152)

It is notable that the reports of makyō differ from reports of kenshō with regard to intentional content. In makyō there is awareness of visual phenomena that can be cognised

and reported. In kenshō there is an absence of intentional content, and reports are difficult to make specifically because they rely on conceptualising an experience that is beyond conception. While those who recognise makyō as hallucination move past it to continue practice, the phenomenon itself is not without relevance to understanding the nature of meditative practice more generally. Austin ties up the Buddhist and neurophysiological relevance of makyō by relating the reason that modern Zen excludes certain epiphenomena from true Zen:

What purpose did these exclusions serve? They gave early notice to East and West: *Traditional Japanese Zen would concentrate on the high ground of insight-wisdom*. It would emphasise the hallucinatory and sensate phenomena of the “vision quest.” The conservative core of the Christian mystical tradition adopts a similar tradition.

“If Zen downgrades all these side effects as epiphenomena, then why waste time discussing them? Because they are excellent examples of how meditation influences brain functions. They illustrate, in particular, what can happen when the brain opens up some barriers which would otherwise separate its states of waking, sleeping and dreaming. (Austin 1999, 373)

For my purposes here it is unnecessary to look in depth at Austin’s research of makyō, but it is worth recognising that even this hallucinatory phenomenon can offer insights into the effects of meditation from a neurophysiological perspective which may further open up the discussion of the relevance of zazen to the mind-body problem in general.

Having examined the practice of Zen and some of its significant neurophysiological aspects, I will state and discuss what I see as the experiential aspects of zazen which are most relevant to my overall argument.

Chapter Four

Zazen as a Philosophical Tool

I. Application of Principles Realised in Zazen to Analytic Philosophy of Mind

The claim here is that Buddhist meditation works. However, in order to understand the laboratory findings, such a claim requires that one first identify what is *Buddhist* about this meditation, describe what the term *meditation* encompasses in this case, and explain what *works* means, especially in the context of the exalted goals that have traditionally been ascribed to Buddhist practice. Although these goals are numerous and variously articulated across the tradition, it can be said that their ultimate aim is not self-help but a radical reorientation toward the world - and in many articulations, a liberation from it - either for oneself or for all beings. (Lopez, 2008, 207)

(a) Statement of Principles

The practice of zazen leads to embodied - as opposed to merely intellectual - realisations which can be described using the very conceptual language which Zen distrusts, as long as one remains mindful that such descriptions point toward experience, and do not replace it. In this section I describe what I hold to be the three most significant principles realised in zazen. I use the term principle not in the sense of moral prescription but rather in

the sense of an underlying aspect of activity, in this case embodied experience, which is adaptable and expressible in multiple ways. I use ‘principle’ to differentiate from terms like ‘rule,’ ‘fact,’ or ‘foundation’ which are common terms in setting forth a theory about a specific subject. There are philosophical as well as purely practical reasons for doing so. Descartes’s project, like many others, was a foundational one, but the problem with such a project is that if the foundations ultimately prove unstable, then everything that follows from them is at best suspect, at worst completely wrong.⁹¹ Similarly, a term like ‘rule’ or ‘fact’ suggests the law-like existence of a truth which, if we could only access it, would allow us final say on whatever matter it applies to. The term rule is out of place in the context of the experiential insights of zazen. The term ‘principle’ allows for an adaptable understanding of certain features of actuality, without the obligation to commit to a rigid foundation or structure which would, in any case, be undermined in the face of ultimate truth.

There are many experiences, realisations and phenomenological aspects to zazen which could be listed and discussed and in this regard my choice of principles to examine is selective. But I believe that these particular principles are of major philosophical and sociological importance; they are the broadest and most significant states of realisation which show that practice, when integrated into daily life, can play an important functional role in philosophical and sociological discourse. I will now describe and examine three such principles as I see them occurring in zazen. I will give a brief description of each term and explain how the realisation of such a principle can occur in zazen.

⁹¹ This objection to foundational thinking does present an interesting conflict of ideas. Is it misguided to proceed on a foundational basis just because the foundations might turn out to be flawed? Is it just as incoherent to *not* be foundationalist for fear of the possibility of being wrong?

(i) Impermanence

Description

Impermanence is the continual flux and change of all things. It can be understood as an endless and beginning-less unfolding of boundless, unified actuality.

How is this realised in practice?

Buddhist doctrine is reliant on a basic understanding of impermanence as the arising and perishing of all things. Such a mode is easy to understand because arising and perishing of phenomena is visible in many common occurrences: birth and death, the changing of the seasons, economic growth and decline and so forth. Having an intellectual understanding of the nature of impermanence is not difficult. However grasping it intellectually is only one level of understanding; having the embodied and fully realised experience of it is another. The common understanding of impermanence also relies, perhaps too heavily, on a kind of destruction-creation interplay. In actuality, impermanence is working through all things at all times and need not be understood on so drastic a level.⁹² A grain of sand blowing across a beach is as much an instance of impermanence as any of the afore-mentioned examples. This is why practice is important for a fully embodied understanding of impermanence; at any given moment in zazen we feel our breath rise and fall, feel our heart beat, hear the subtle and large workings of our environment; these are all instances and reminders of impermanence. And even though being fully present ‘in’ the moment is a crucial aspect of zazen, it should not lead us to believe that each moment exists in a substantial sense (i.e. with one moment discretely cut off from the next). There is no substantial time in this sense, only an interdependent unfolding of being. This is where the Mahayana idea of momentary impermanence can be applied, as distinguished from general impermanence. These

⁹² See the example of the Empire State building in chapter two.

understandings of impermanence are often presented as ‘gross’ and ‘subtle’ forms of the principle of impermanence: “To say that phenomena are impermanent in the first sense is to say that everything changes over time, at least in minor ways, and over larger periods of time, often in substantial ways; over great stretches of time, in dramatic ways. To say that phenomena are impermanent in the second sense is to say that at every moment, everything is changing, if only in imperceptible, minute ways.” (Garfield 2015, 40-41)

In the short-term impermanence is realised through present moment awareness in sitting. In the long-term, as practice becomes integrated in daily life, impermanence is realised as a continual process of unfolding. As one organically integrates practice into behaviour, the mat ceases to be the exclusive location for the possibility of realisation. The subtle changes of the world which are impermanence in action are witnessed and felt more vividly.

(ii) Emptiness

Description

Emptiness, like impermanence, applies to all things and means that phenomena lack an essential or absolute nature.

How is this realised in practice?

This conception of emptiness (which is a more basic formulation of the Buddhist concept of *sūnyatā*) implies that any object or idea which exists does so only provisionally. Since all things are impermanent, anything which seems to constitute an essential nature is necessarily prone to change. That which apparently contains this essential nature will also change, highlighting the strictly conventional reality of any such perceived essence. In zazen, this realisation can occur as a natural extension of the realisation of impermanence. Any

phenomena, whether it occurs on what we perceive as the higher (e.g. objects, ideas) or lower (e.g. fundamental particles) levels of existence will change along with it, although our relationship to space may commit us to perceiving these levels as somehow distinct.

One's heartbeat is perceived as a regular occurrence, while one's old age is perceived as a more abstract, long-term state. Yet the former has a direct bearing on the latter (i.e. as long as the former keeps occurring the state that we refer to more or less arbitrarily as old age will arrive) and each is an instance of the continual flux of all things. Neither state has anything other than a provisional and, by extension, empty existence. One's heartbeat will arise and perish, one's old age will arise and perish. Emptiness, then, is not a nihilistic understanding of the world as lacking any meaning, but a recognition that any meaning we ascribe to any object or idea in the world is conventional and provisional.

Our conceptions are small or large scale reference systems where that which is being referenced is constantly changing, and is therefore empty of all but ephemeral existence. This is a realisation that takes much practice to come to and integrate, chiefly because we experience a lifetime's worth of 'self' (which itself is impermanent). This self seems to persist and exhibit characteristics which convince us that it has an essential nature.

We are completely locked into the conditioning of our life. What we are actually dealing with when we sit and really look at ourselves is twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years of continuous conditioning that have created the illusion of a self, of a separate entity. Until we really look at that and understand how it is functioning, we cannot get through it and on to the stages beyond. (Loori 2008, 12)

The concept of Form and Void as a means of understanding shares a conceptual symmetry with the conventional and ultimate relation as a means of understanding the

principle of emptiness.⁹³ Conventional reality can be understood as Form; objects and ideas which are conceived and perceived as substantial and persistent. Void can be understood as the ultimate reality behind such ideas and concepts. It *is* unity. It is the source of ceaseless change, empty of any essential nature. The realisation of emptiness, starting with the realisation of the emptiness of the self, is not a rejection of life - it is a radical reaffirmation of life as boundless, as non-dual. This interplay of conventional and ultimate reality - and reorientation of phenomena such as the self - as it emerges from practice is expressed in the following passage of the *Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra*:

Everyone has form (body) and knowing; having attained the Void does not mean one has to endeavour to abandon the body. Void means simply the absence of grasping. True existence is Emptiness not of this world. The complete, perfect meaning of true existence is Void not of this world; containing neither partial existence nor partial Void, it is the Middle Way, also known as the Ultimate Reality. In short, a mind that does not discriminate by means of craving and clinging is the mind that understands the meaning of 'not of this world'; though non-existent, it is the True Existence.

(Master Loki To 1995, 26)

The key role of practice then in realising emptiness is the radical reorientation of the understanding of impermanence as it contributes to thought and behaviour. This demonstrates the necessity of embodied experience in deconditioning from mind states which reinforce conceptions of objects and ideas as having essential nature. This process is continual, and this is also the reason why, while one can engage in practice for days or months or years, there is never an end goal. There is nothing to be finally aware of, no static truth to be reached.

⁹³ See also the concept of Being and Nonbeing as introduced in chapter two.

(iii) Boundlessness

Description

Boundlessness, means that there are no real, substantial distinctions to be drawn between any object, idea or phenomenon and as such all things are ultimately unified. There is no such thing as division or distinction in anything other than a conventional sense. I use this term interchangeably with ‘unity’ and the more familiar to Zen literature, ‘non-duality’. I believe these terms express the same principle but I think ‘boundlessness’ is a little more descriptive; it is less vague than ‘unity’ and it does not include the possibility of duality which the term ‘non-duality’ does (this is a minor point but it has similarities to the concern around the terminology of neutral monism discussed in chapter one, section one, i.e. if one asserts ‘non-duality’, does that mean one is taking sides in a dualism/non-dualism argument which is itself a duality?). Boundlessness expresses that any boundary we can conceive of is not really there in a substantial sense. These are fine distinctions however, and I do believe that one can safely use the terms ‘boundlessness’, ‘unity’, and ‘non-duality’ interchangeably without losing clarity.

How is this realised in practice?

The realisation of unity is a common theme in mystical traditions and I believe zazen is an appropriate practice for both realising and de-mystifying unity. If we consider practice as both short-term (i.e. a given period of sitting) and long-term (i.e. integrating zazen by regular sustained practice over long periods of time) then realisation of unity can be considered on two levels. In the short-term, meditators have an embodied sense of boundary dissolution; the hard lines we usually draw between subject and object, mind and matter, start to fade. In the long-term this becomes a fully integrated idea. This does not mean that we eventually do not

perceive boundaries, but rather that we begin to see them only as conventional, provisional, or simply convenient. The realisation of unity has in some traditions an ecstatic element; a feeling of having come in contact with a higher intelligence. Zen Buddhist accounts of individual enlightenment share this joyful, ecstatic element but usually in quite grounded terms,⁹⁴ a state which allows the practical implications of unity to be assessed in terms less dependent on a specific religious or cultural - and hence, more universal - context.

If boundary creation is the source of unnecessary philosophical conflict (as well as lying at the root of problems in many other disciplines)⁹⁵, then boundary dissolution is the remedy. Again, this is not a goal-oriented exercise in which an eliminativist attempt is made to remove any conception or invocation of boundaries, but rather an understanding that intellectual boundaries, as conventional constructs, only have as much power as we (collectively or individually) give them.

Unity consciousness is the simple awareness of the real territory of no-boundary. We need no gimmicks to explain it, no mumbo-jumbo, no mystical jargon, no miasma of occultism. If reality is actually a condition of no-boundary—and to deny that we will have to turn our backs on Relativity Theory, ecological sciences, the philosophy of organism, and the wisdom of the East—if reality is a condition of no-boundary, then unity consciousness is the natural state of awareness which acknowledges this reality. Unity consciousness, in short, is no-boundary awareness. (Wilber 2001, 51)

⁹⁴ Accounts include subjects experiencing enlightenment while sweeping the floor, or seeing rain dropping onto a leaf.

⁹⁵ See chapter five for further discussion.

The role of practice is crucial here not just for realisation, but for pulling us away from an over-reliance on language to describe an embodied, first-person based experience.⁹⁶ In continuing from his above quote, Wilber takes up this point:

As simple as that sounds, it is nevertheless extremely difficult to adequately discuss no-boundary awareness or non-dual consciousness. This is because our language - the medium in which all verbal discussion must float - is a language of boundaries... words and symbols and thoughts themselves are actually nothing but boundaries, for whenever you think or use a word or name, you are already creating boundaries. Even to say "reality is no-boundary awareness" is still to create a distinction between boundaries and no-boundary! So we have to keep in mind the great difficulty involved with dualistic language. (Wilber 2001, 51)

Even though the mismatch between language and experience may make it impossible to explain the realisations of zazen adequately, this does not preclude us from examining the philosophical applications of such principles, assuming we accept their veracity. Having stated and described these three principles, as well as discussing the role of zazen in realising them, I will now demonstrate an instance of their practical application to analytic philosophy of mind.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Take up this point in the next section: analytic philosophy is impoverished by not having an embodied practice to integrate and draw from when discussing issues as critical as mind.

⁹⁷ See Nishitani 1983, xxii.

(b) Application of Principles to Analytic Philosophy of Mind

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that the general methodological drawbacks of analytic philosophy of mind are made evident by mindfulness practices such as zazen. In particular I have focused on the aspect of what I claim to be unnecessary conceptual complexity in analytic theories of mind. I will now turn to examine how this is demonstrated in analytic accounts of mental causation, mainly by reference to Jaegwon Kim's lecture "The Many Problems of Mental Causation".

Before doing so I will briefly return to an issue I raised in the previous chapter; that of the link between mysticism and logic. The principles I have outlined above can be viewed as mutually compatible versions of each other; different ways of pointing to an overall oneness, Absolute, or ineffable that is a common experience in mystic traditions as mentioned in chapter three. The difference in this case is that our standard interpretation of 'mystic,' as in 'esoteric', does not apply. Here is a more direct formulation of the concern in question: if analytic philosophy is essentially a methodology grounded in rationality, can mysticism make any meaningful contribution to it? If so, how? And if not, why not?

The principle of boundlessness is a realisation and expression of oneness. The boundaries present within this oneness are conventional, established as they are by such factors as our psychological need for categorisation and our limited existence and persistence through time. In this way, we can switch out the term 'mystic' for 'reality', 'actuality' or 'normalcy' and lose nothing. If mysticism is, as Gödel stated, a teaching about the ultimate unity of all things, then mysticism is as grounded in reality as any theoretical framework. And if that unity holds, and is experienced and realised through practices such as zazen, then mysticism is even *more* grounded than theoretical frameworks which discount or marginalise the input of first-person experiences, meditation included. In replacing the term *mysticism* with that of *actuality* it is possible to gain all the philosophically constructive principles of

mystic tradition while paring away the esoteric or supernatural connotations it carries. In this sense the marginalisation of the term mysticism is positive at least insofar as it makes the important parts of mystic teaching come forth from obscurity into a comprehensible position within different perspectives, analytic philosophy included. I maintain that this is exactly what zazen provides us with. Zazen is not the only practice which could achieve this but its simplicity and repeatability make it ideally placed to do so.

Mental Causation

If the principle of boundlessness holds, then the distinctions on which analytic philosophy of mind so depend are fundamentally misguided. One core issue in the history of analytic philosophy of mind, the formulation of which comes into question on this view, is that of mental causation. In considering the issue of mental causation I will use Kim's basic formulation thereof: "...explaining how it is possible for the mental to exercise causal influences in the physical world." (Kim 1998, 170) This formulation, shared by many other philosophers who have an interest in the subject, contains familiar traces of the general analytic conceptions of the mind-body problem which I outlined in chapter one. Firstly, there is the basic assumption that there are two types of thing, i.e. the mental and the physical. Secondly there is the assumption that there is a problem with these two types of thing, i.e. the mystery of how they interact. Lastly there is an overt and stark act of distinction in Kim's use of the term 'physical world' which evokes Descartes's notion of real distinction. Whatever Kim - or any other philosopher's - theory of mental causation is, it still hinges on this assumption that we should treat the mental and the physical as two different types of thing.⁹⁸

Mental causation is one particular instance of the unnecessary conceptual complexity of analytic theories of mind which I presented at the outset of chapter one; a self-imposed

⁹⁸ At the very least, the language used is such that this dichotomy is assumed.

problem which finds its source in certain unconsidered assumptions about the nature of the phenomena at hand. This obviously runs counter to the analytic method itself which discourages the reliance on untested assumptions. Yet I do not think it is going too far to state that analytic theories of mind are littered with just the kind of assumed distinctions present in Kim's lecture.

I should take a moment to consider the counter-position to this. In terms of understanding the relationship between what we conceive as the mental and what we conceive as the physical, what is it about proceeding on the basis of unity that makes any more methodological sense than proceeding on the basis of duality? As I have already argued in chapter three and section one of this chapter, the realisation of unity/boundlessness is an experiential act beyond all judgement and intellectualisation; it is ineffable in the sense that putting forward any positive, structured theory about it necessarily misses the point. In this sense, proceeding on the basis of unity gets one nothing, if what one wants is a positive theory of mind.⁹⁹ However recognition of this serves to highlight the drawbacks of proceeding on the basis of duality. Dualities are conventional and therefore arbitrary, even when one has good reason to believe that they hold. Throughout my argument I have referenced the various reasons for why we might claim that *some kind* of dualistic thinking is appropriate; we experience it in the self-other relation, we experience it in the apparent disconnect between what we think of as our private and public experience; and in terms of analytic philosophy of mind we experience it in the form of centuries of writing, theorising and argument about the distinction between the mental and the physical. If we acknowledge that many of the debates around the mind-body relation are brought about as the result of

⁹⁹ In Kim's case it would seem that this *is* what he wants. In discussing Davidson's account of anomalous monism he states: "As far as anomalous monism goes then, there need be no systematic relationships between mental properties and physical properties... I believe we want our mind-body theories to tell us more, a *positive* story about how mental properties and physical properties *are* related, and hopefully also explain why they are so related." (Kim 2000, 5)

creating positive theories of mind which inevitably fall short when held up against real-world experience,¹⁰⁰ then we can see the shortcomings of dualistic thinking.

Kim points to this concern in his lecture but seems to stop short of claims similar to my own regarding the purely provisional nature of theories of mind:

Philosophical problems do not arise in a vacuum. Typically they emerge when we come to see a conflict among the assumptions and presumptions that we explicitly or tacitly accept, or commitments that command our presumptive respect. The seriousness of a philosophical problem therefore depends on two related questions: First, how deep is our attachment to the assumptions and commitments that give rise to the apparent conflict? Second, how easy or difficult is it to bring the conflicting assumptions into an acceptable reconciliation? The process of reconciliation may require serious modification to our original commitments. Short of abandoning the entire framework of the existing commitments, compromises must be negotiated.

There are no free lunches in philosophy any more than in real life.¹⁰¹ (Kim 1998, 170)

Note that Kim mentions “abandoning the framework of existing commitments” as though it were something we would naturally want to avoid. But if the arguments of Kim and other philosophers of mind are built on a dichotomy, and that dichotomy is a fiction, then there is no choice but to abandon the existing framework if it is constituted by such dichotomy.

¹⁰⁰ This was self-evident, for example, in behaviourism’s inability to analyse qualia.

¹⁰¹ I find it telling that Kim makes a distinction between philosophy and ‘real life.’ This may be a partial insight into the often detached nature of analytic philosophy. If the lessons learned from that discipline are somehow divorced from the life of the non-specialist then they are merely self-serving and not much good to anyone other than philosophers themselves. This would count as another marked difference with the practical aspect of zazen where real life is not just important, but the very source of the integration of practice.

Kim admits to the generally physicalist bias surrounding mental causation:

[The supervenience problem] ... is our principal problem of mental causation. In referring to this as “our” problem of mental causation, what I mean to suggest is that it is a problem which arises for anyone with the kind of broadly physicalist outlook that many philosophers, including myself, find compelling or, at least, plausible and attractive. (Kim, 1998, 170)

The consequences of such a bias represent an instance of assumptive feedback as I have outlined it. If we begin our argument with - or, more correctly, *after* - the assumption that the physical and the mental are two different things, which nevertheless seem to interact in some fashion, then we are committed to explaining one in terms of the other.¹⁰² Now with this commitment comes a host of other assumptions; we draw on unconscious categorisations of ‘mental’ and ‘physical.’ And in putting those categories to use we perpetuate the idea that they are distinct, which moves us further and further away from unity, as well as increasing the conceptual confusion about how things which are supposedly distinct are meant to interact. And at the end of the argument we are left with more questions which we assume arise as a natural consequence of studying the phenomena in question when really they are self-imposed and self-perpetuating. This is the most basic form of assumptive feedback as I see it; an unquestioned assumption at the beginning of an argument self-generates increased complexity at each further stage of the argument.

Let me give a more specific example of this idea in action. The possibility of mental causation finds expression in Davidson’s mental anomalism which argues that there are no strict laws about mental states in the way in which there are strict laws about physical states.

¹⁰² By ‘explaining one in terms of the other’ I do not mean a reductionist move, rather a general tendency to continually proceed on the basis of the standard dichotomy.

(Again, the physical and the mental are assumed to be in some way distinct on this view.)

Davidson then has to create anomalous monism to defend from the criticism that mental causation requires mental events to instantiate the very laws that he claims do not exist. Kim outlines a further objection to Davidson's defence of mental anomalism:

... this ingenious solution has failed to satisfy very many philosophers. On the contrary, there has been an impressive unanimity among Davidson's commentators on just why anomalous monism falls short as an account of mental causation. Take any mental event *m* that stands in a causal relation, say as a cause of event *e*. According to Davidson, this causal relation obtains just in case *m* and *e* instantiate a physical law. Thus *m* falls under a certain physical (perhaps, neural) kind *N*, *e* falls under a physical kind, *P*, and an appropriate causal law connects events of kind *N* with events of kind *P*. But this apparently threatens the causal relevance of mentality: the fact that *m* is a mental event – that it is the kind of mental event it is – appears to have no role in determining what causal relations it enters into. Event *m*'s causal relations are fixed, wholly and exclusively, by the totality of its physical properties, and there is in this picture no causal work that *m*'s mental properties can, or need to, contribute. If mental properties were arbitrarily redistributed over the events of this world, or even if mentality were wholly removed from this world – possibilities apparently left open by Davidson's mental anomalism – that would not affect a single causal relation between events of this world, leaving the causal structure of the world entirely untouched. This seems to consign mental properties to the status of epiphenomena. Thus the problem of mental causation arising out of mental anomalism is to answer this question: *How can anomalous properties be causal properties?* A solution to this problem would have to show either that contrary to Davidson, mental properties are not in reality

anomalous, or that being anomalous in Davidson's sense is no barrier to their having causal relevance or being causally efficacious. (Kim 1998, 172)

The one feature that unites Davidson's theory and its critics is the set of assumptions about the physical, the mental, and the nature of causation. Yet if the assumption about the mental being distinct from the physical in anything other than a purely conventional sense is misguided, then every defence and counter-argument to Davidson's theory is essentially baseless. It is not just that Davidson had a working theory and that further scrutiny showed it up as falling short as an account of mental causation; it is that it was a fundamentally unnecessary theory to begin with. Both the theory and the counter-arguments to the theory invoke all sorts of assumptions, distinctions, terminology and chains of reasoning which flow through the argument but which find no source outside of the intellects (and in particular the category-creating parts of the intellect) of those involved in the argument.

If this is the case, then there is a substantially long list of writings, arguments, lectures, correspondence and so on which have proceeded on basically misguided assumptions. Even Kim's language hints at the potential blind spots of the analytic method, wherein it is guilty of the very traits it overtly seeks to avoid. He states that there is "an impressive unanimity" amongst philosophers with regard to objections to Davidson's theory. What this suggests is that there is collective work being done which weeds out bad theories and preserves good ones, and that this is how a positive, or at least coherent theory of mind is reached. Yet if my argument is correct then the objections to Davidson's are built on a foundation as unstable as that which the commentators claim to be criticising, especially with regard to assumptions about the status of the mental and the physical. On this view, what analytic philosophers of mind are doing is not making statements which hold for the world in

general, but making very particular kinds of statements about enclosed, self-referential systems of thought which have little to do with actuality.

Given that causality is already an incredibly complex issue, how much more intractable does it become when we add the conceptual assumption of the distinction of the mental and the physical, the causal interaction of which also needs to be accounted for? Of course just because an issue is complex does not mean it is to be avoided, but if the problem is a self-imposed one then this complexity is entirely unnecessary, or at the very least entirely self-referential. The quote by Ryomin that opens chapter one is echoed with specific regard to philosophy by Berkeley: “Upon the whole, I am inclined to think that the far greater part, if not all, of those difficulties which have hitherto amused philosophers, and blocked up the way to knowledge, are entirely owing to ourselves. That we have first raised a dust, and then complain, we cannot see.” (Winkler (ed.) 1982).

I would like return to Kim’s stated preference for “a broadly physicalist outlook” which seems representative of many philosophers, and examine why such a preference may not only be unwarranted but ultimately unfavourable. I will do so by describing and examining two relevant arguments. The first is by Kim Davies from his article “Emergence from What? A Transcendental Understanding of the Place of Consciousness,” and the second is from the second century Buddhist teacher Nagarjuna.

Emergence from What?

The concern about the epistemic conditions for assuming a distinction between the mental and the physical is addressed by Kim Davies in his paper “Emergence from What? A Transcendental Understanding of the Place of Consciousness.” The basic premise of Davies’s argument is that philosophers who seek to understand the relationship between the mental and the physical make undue assumptions about the ontological status of the latter, even as

they try to understand how the former emerges from it: "... approaches in the literature can give us an understanding of the notion of the physical only if such an understanding is already presupposed, and thus they fail to explicate this understanding at all." (Davies 2014, 13)

A theme of Davies argument is that any relevant definition of the physical that we might apply to a physicalist theory (or any theory which relies on some conception of the physical) cannot but presuppose knowledge of the physical. Davies notes this problem as it arises in Dowell's "... attempt to define the physical in terms of the hallmarks of physics or physical theories." (Davies 2014, 14) Such an attempt is confounded by an apparent inability to avoid invoking a prior understanding of the physical (as well as necessarily excluding phenomenal experience):

[Dowell's proposal] defines "the complete and ideal physical theory" as the complete and ideal scientific theory of the world's most fundamental elements' and argues that 'to count as basic and physical, a property must be well-integrated into the most complete and unified explanation possible for the relatively most basic occupants of space-time'. However, although Dowell admits to not saying anything much about what makes an element 'fundamental', in the context it seems clear that she has already excluded, for example, the most fundamental elements of my phenomenal consciousness, or the most basic qualia that constitute my current experience from the category of the world's most fundamental elements. The notions of fundamentality and basicness are here already linked to the notion of physical things, and so cannot serve to explicate the concept of the physical. (Davies 2014, 14)

The presence of this circularity seems to go unacknowledged in the many problems that Kim lists regarding mental causation. I reiterate that this concern is not about any one particular theory of, for example, mental causation, but rather about the inherently dichotomous framing of such arguments. After the above point Davies immediately proceeds to highlight how this problem of circularity and presumption demonstrates the tension between philosophical and non-specialist understandings of the physical.

On what basis are, say, rocks or tables or electrons selected as paradigmatic physical objects and others, e.g. hallucinations, people, colour, sensations, not? The acceptance of paradigmatic physical objects is not merely a decision to agree with a certain selection: other objects can be ruled out as paradigms only on the basis of a shared pre-understanding of the physical of which the paradigmatic objects are clear examples. In ordinary life it is a relatively straightforward matter to explicate this pre-understanding: physical objects are those things such as apples and rocks that we can see, touch, and manipulate, and which can impact on us to good or ill effect - apples sustain us, rocks injure us. We can then move on from the paradigmatic examples to discuss how to account for non-paradigmatic objects, e.g. emails, or rainbows. But this ordinary understanding is normally ignored in the literature, or dismissed as crude, pre-scientific ‘folk wisdom’ which, even if a necessary prerequisite to science, needs to make way for the theoretical clarity provided by physical science. We are still no clearer to a non-circular understanding of the physical. (Davies 2014, 14-15)

Davies is not only providing a good argument against the mental-physical dichotomy characteristic of analytic theories of mind; he is also implying that analytic theorists are dealing in an equivalent form of folk wisdom which they would usually dismiss. If the

paradigmatic examples of physicalism are all chosen because of a presupposition about their status as physical objects, this is ultimately the same as claiming, folk psychologically: “It *seems* physical, so it must be an example of something physical.” This circularity is symptomatic of the adherence to individual or collective categories which exists purely conventionally. This can be understood from the Buddhist perspective by reading Nagarjuna’s argument (as formulated by Kasulis) regarding the use words as descriptions of reality:

(1) Words cannot be assumed to be referents to nonlinguistic bits of reality.

(2) No philosophical assertion based on conceptual distinctions can avoid an implicit acceptance of both of the opposing elements of the distinction. That is, any assertion of one side of a distinction over the other is, at its foundation, self-contradictory.

(3) Any assertion or distinction only highlights one aspect of a situation and, in so doing, casts into shadows an equally important, though incompatible aspect. (Kasulis 1985, 21)

This argument is one which might have had a profound effect on the history of the mind-body problem if it had been rigorously applied to theories of mind developed since Descartes. Nagarjuna’s reasoning is not just another argument for the conventional/ultimate dynamic of reality, but a rigorous epistemic tool which can be deployed in any discipline to highlight the drawbacks of relying on conceptual distinction:

[Nagarjuna’s] overall concept is simply that our conceptual analysis of a situation is not a straightforward reflection of the way the situation is directly experienced.

Concepts are *samvrti*; they literally ‘cover’ or ‘obstruct’ the way things are actually experienced. Thus, Nagarjuna hopes to undercut the analytic and speculative philosophies of the abhidharma schools by showing that conceptual frameworks are not to be totally trusted. (Kasulis 1985, 23)

As it is, many traditions with their roots in the Cartesian worldview have been slow to catch up with such ideas. It is in the best interests of analytic theories of mind that arguments such as Nagarjuna’s are deployed prior to any assumption-making moves in order that the justification and consequences of such assumption can be appropriately examined. In this way we might avoid kicking up the dust and complaining that we cannot see.

The Religion of Science

The Dalai Lama claimed that Buddhism would become ‘the religion of science.’ There seems to be, at the very least, a compatibility between Buddhism and modern physics in their respective approaches to the reconsideration of previously well-defined categories such as ‘physical.’ The following extract from Zukav’s *The Dancing Wu Li Master* describes the relationship between modern physics and enlightenment:

What does physics have in common with enlightenment? Physics and enlightenment apparently belong to two realms which are forever separate. One of them (physics) belongs to the external world of physical phenomena and the other of them (enlightenment) belongs to the internal world of perceptions. A closer examination, however, reveals that physics and enlightenment are not so incongruous as we might think. First, there is the fact that only through our perceptions can we observe physical phenomena. In addition to this obvious bridge, however, there are more intrinsic similarities.

Enlightenment entails casting off the bonds of concept (“veils of ignorance”) in order to perceive directly the inexpressible nature of undifferentiated reality.

“Undifferentiated reality” is the same reality that we are a part of now, and always have been a part of, and always will be a part of. The difference is that we do not look at it in the same way as an enlightened being. As everyone knows (?), words only *represent* (*re-present*) something else. They are not real things. They are only *symbols*. According to the philosophy of enlightenment, *everything* (*everything*) is a symbol. The reality of symbols is an illusory reality. Nonetheless, it is the one in which we live.

Although undifferentiated reality is inexpressible, we can talk about it (using more symbols). The physical world, as it appears to the unenlightened, consists of separate parts. These separate parts, however, are not really separate. According to mystics from around the world, each moment of enlightenment (grace/insight/samadhi/satori) reveals that everything - all the separate parts of the universe - are manifestations of the same whole. There is only *one* reality, and it is whole and unified. It is one. (Zukav 1991, 270-271)

Once again this demonstrates that practices which may previously have been considered the exclusive domain of the religious or mystical have an important explanatory and restorative role in epistemology, ontology and any disciplines which have a strong reliance on categorisation and distinction-making.

(c) Does Buddhist Meditation Work?

In order to address some core concerns about the application of zazen to analytic philosophy of mind, I would like to address the questions which Lopez raises in the quote which opens this chapter.

With regard to the claim that “Buddhist meditation works”:

- What is *Buddhist* about this meditation?
- What does the term *meditation* encompass in this case?
- What does *works* mean, especially in the context of the exalted goals that have traditionally been ascribed to Buddhist practice?

I will interpret these questions with specific regard to zazen.

‘*Buddhist*’

It is my contention that Buddhism is merely a suitable context for the realisation and understanding of the principles I have outlined above. I do not believe that one need necessarily subscribe to Buddhism at all in order to fully realise these principles. This is good news for analytic philosophers and those of any other relevant disciplines who are ill-disposed to learning from that which is perceived as a religious, esoteric or purely subjective discipline. However it is also advisable to be mindful of the historical and cultural conditions from which the practice in question arose. In this way one can correctly identify that which is universally important to the act itself and that which is merely an attendant cultural relic of specific traditions of practice. In this sense one could say that zazen is Buddhist insofar as it developed as a refined and conceptually simplified version of the practice that lay at the root of the Buddha’s experience of enlightenment. Aside from this it is acceptable - if one is so

inclined - to strip away the metaphysical trappings of Buddhist scholarship and focus squarely on the practice. Zen is already quite a secular activity and Dōgen himself was somewhat revolutionary in his attitude of placing supreme importance on practice alone. While one is engaged in practice all conceptualisation is dismissed as it arises, and I do not think that the notion of abiding by strictly Buddhist rules is exempt from this.

Meditation

In terms of my overall argument, ‘meditation’ is simply the act of pure experience and undiluted present moment awareness. Zazen is a particularly good example of this as it avoids the introversion characteristic of other meditative practices in favour of engagement with the world. On a purely logistical level, I believe zazen holds up as the most efficient form of meditation on the basis of the following: simplicity, repeatability and type of engagement.

Many forms of meditation and somatic practice require highly specialised and technical guidance but this is generally not the case with zazen. As discussed in chapter three, section two, the requirement of a teacher for guidance can be tricky, but any sufficiently advanced meditator should be able to offer relatively simple guidance to supplement existing manuals of Zen meditation. The practical role of a teacher is often to ensure that the correct posture is assumed and maintained throughout sitting; once this is repeated enough the sitter should be able to self-correct their own posture. In a monastic sitting the teacher also serves as a guide in presenting the student with kōans, though this should not be a concern in the *shikantaza* mode.

Zazen is also a simple activity with regard to cost. Given the relative simplicity of guidance in zazen the presence of even one teacher in a community would be of great benefit to groups or individuals who want initial guidance, but not so complicated that it would

require financial input. If money does change hands it would more likely be toward things like renting of a shared space, should that be necessary, or perhaps token amounts for teachers who go out of their way to guide a group or individuals. I do not think any Zen endeavour (short of building a monastery) does or should require any significant financial infrastructure. I think this is important to point out as the world of spiritual practice in which Zen is often classed is one which is open to manipulation. Any individual who comes forward seeking guidance leaves themselves open to being taken advantage of if they do not have a prior reference point for appropriate practice. This is another reason to emphasise the sitting-only mode of zazen; without diluting the practice it drastically limits the need for ceremony and its offshoots which would immediately increase the requirement for material, time, space and so forth.

The simplicity of zazen in terms of technical requirements allows it a level of repeatability which is limited only by time and discipline. Any sufficiently large and calm space will suffice. For an individual even a small bedroom should allow space for sitting. Outside of mats, cushions and a bell, which are easy to buy or fashion, the body is the only material that is required. Additionally, there is little or no prior knowledge required in order to become immediately involved in practice. The rich literature of Zen can serve an important educational role in practice whether it be for bringing to light the delusions that we find ourselves in which can be the root motivation for practice, or whether it is the nuts and bolts advice on specific aspects of sitting. This literature stretches from figures such as Dōgen all the way up to modern Zen practitioners and commentators such as Loori and Beck. However once introductory texts which orient the beginner in a physically and philosophically create an appropriate environment for practice, the focus on literature and intellectualisation of practice need not go much further. The more philosophically inclined are likely to involve themselves heavily with the literature, but those who wish to engage in practice simply to be

more grounded in the present moment may not have this need. Zazen is not a process which terminates in reaching a particular state. As long as the sitter is continually aware of the constant state of becoming (which they are more than likely to be if sitting regularly!) then I believe there is no intrinsic problem in engaging in the practice without engaging with the scholarship.

Working

It is difficult to quantify what ‘working’ would mean in the context of zazen. This question really depends on the individual’s intentions and approach to meditation. As we have seen the traditional tendency in zazen is to steer the mind away from thoughts of attainment or goal-orientation. This is even truer in the *shikantaza* mode which further dissuades from intellectual interpretation of the experience of zazen. Nevertheless we may make some provision for third-person accounts here in order to express - even if it is in terms which pale in comparison to the actual experience - the workings of zazen to non-practitioners.

In terms of observable evidence, Austin demonstrates that the regular practice of zazen does indeed have an effect on the neurophysiology of the meditator. Such observations, though dependent on fairly complex technology, are easy to present in a form which makes it obvious what the broad correlations between practice and brain states are. If the question of ‘working’ is to ask if zazen makes any observable difference to those who engage with it, then work such as Austin’s answers in the affirmative. This observable data is interesting yet rather trivial when presented independent of first-person experience.

I believe the deeper meaning of the term ‘working’ here applies to the first-person experience of meditators themselves. In this sense the work of Austin and others is of little use to the meditator; the brain cannot observe itself, so the internal physical states which

change as practice increases will not necessarily tell the meditator anything which will change their fundamental experience of meditation (unless of course they are sufficiently impressed by the objective evidence for change in brain states that alters their approach in terms of commitment, duration times, discipline and so forth). Though there may be some as-yet-unidentified deep correlation between subjective experience in zazen and brain states it would appear that, centuries after the practice was developed, practice alone - independent of scientific revelation or technological supplementation - is sufficient to reach the stage of insight wisdom reported by innumerable meditators across various times and places. Ultimately, if zazen is a way to return to the unity that lies behind all conceptual divisions then one can say with confidence that 'it works.'

Now that I have assessed the merits of applying principles learned in zazen to analytic philosophy of mind and philosophy in general, I would like to reiterate the point by examining it from another angle. Throughout this dissertation I have mainly criticised conceptual/assumption-based mistakes as they apply to analytic philosophy while suggesting that a potential source of a solution to such mistakes is present in Zen practice. It is not my intention to suggest that analytic philosophy is an irretrievably flawed endeavour to which Zen scholarship and practice is to be preferred. My aim is rather to show that when certain assumptions are continually accepted and transmitted they force us to consider problems in a way which excludes certain other possibilities and makes us blind to the effect which our self-imposed rules and methodologies have on our thought processes. In order to show the extent to which this is the case, the next section will deal with some examples from the history of Zen which show that even those from the Zen school - the school which I have typified here as open-minded, grounded and unified - are subject to the same problems I have highlighted in analytic philosophy of mind, in particular assumption and dogmatism. I will supplement this idea with one further sub-section in which I turn my overall argument on

itself by examining some instances in which I have violated the principles of impermanence, emptiness and unity that I have outlined in this chapter. I will also address whether this is a problem which can be overcome. In doing so I hope to show the universality of the principles I have outlined, as well as assessing the possibility for actual practical application of these principles to analytic philosophy and to thought in general.

II. Dogmatism in Zen

This section is intended to demonstrate via two brief examples that even though the principles I have drawn on throughout have their source in schools of Zen Buddhism, groups and individuals involved in those schools of thought are not immune to the same kind of problems one comes up against in analytic philosophy. On the one hand this is a negative assessment of undesirable human behaviour. On the other, it demonstrates a point which I argue for, which is that the principles we learn from Zen and the realisations of zazen in particular may be universal, i.e. not just a characteristic of Buddhist practice and thought but universal principles which apply to all modes of thought and action no matter what one's cultural/historical/philosophical background.

(a) Complications of Institutionalised Zen

Philosophically-minded students of Dōgen... often make the mistake of seeing significance divorced from history, which results in mere subjectivity rather than an objective understanding of Dōgen's thought. (Kim 1987, 11)

The passion with which Dōgen committed to practice in the monastic setting provides a context for commitment to principles of behaviour that veer dangerously close to dogmatism. Dumoulin notes that for Dōgen monasticism was "living in constant contact with the Absolute." There is a logistical element to this claim which cuts through any metaphysical or spiritual considerations: in living in a monastery, the opportunity for practice increases because that very setting is intended to sustain a basic standard of living which maximises the time available for meditation. But does this setting offer any purer experience of the Absolute

than anywhere else? The regular domestic chores of the monastery such as cooking and cleaning offered opportunities for integrating the practice that occurred in between these chores. But the integration of zazen surely does not have a cut-off point. Is there any less contact with the Absolute an inch or a mile outside the monastery?

The reliance in the monastic system is made explicit by Dōgen: “There has never been a patriarch who has directly transmitted the true Law who has not entered the monkhood and received the precepts.” (Dumoulin 2005, 93)¹⁰³ If the principles I have outlined above hold, then I think they violate this strict idea. If by ‘true Law’ Dōgen means the access to the ultimate reality behind conventional reality then there is no reason why monkhood would be the exclusive path to realisation. It would certainly help in the sense that it accommodates a lifestyle geared toward practice. But the monastery itself is just a construct which facilitates practice, it is not the repository of the principles realised through practice. One may rightly question if Dōgen’s strong stance on monkhood was not only tinged with elitism, but if it actually discourages those who wish to practise. And if there was an elitist flavour to Dōgen’s stance on monkhood it may have been as a well-intended symptom of the institutionalisation of Zen practice. If zazen is to be integrated into daily life, surely integration into a monastic setting where cooking and cleaning rank amongst the most stressful activities is easier than a life taken up by a full time job, commuting, family commitments and so forth. It is arguable that the non-monastic everyday setting actually affords greater opportunities for the integration of, for instance, non-judgement.

To take a present day example, the modern city is a potentially endless source of occasions for reacting judgementally (in this context I mean judgement as an emotional or

¹⁰³ Relevant to this idea is Lutz, Dunne, and Davidson’s observation regarding Vipassana meditation: “Although it draws on older traditions the Vipassana movement is “modern” in that it makes a somewhat simplified and regularised set of meditation instructions available to a wide population that is not limited to celibate monastics.” (Lutz, Dunne, and Davidson 2007, 157).

quality-assessing activity). For instance, the act of travel by whatever method puts us in contact with people who may be nice to us, or may be rude; people who may let us pass or people who may cut us off; people who may intrude on our personal space or people who may leave us alone. Even without factoring in other stressful elements of city life there are ample situations in which our reactive attitudes are tested. For many, this circumstance is just not a matter of choice. So the Zen practitioner in the midst of the monastic setting must recognise that for others such a lifestyle is not feasible. Once this is recognised the next question which must be faced is whether the non-monastic setting can serve as a place for practice to the level where it starts to make a real difference in the lives of the practitioners, in similar ways to those committed to monkhood.

In the history of Dōgen's monastery at Eihei-ji there is an episode germane to this very issue. This story highlights the conflict between learning about compassion through institutionalised Zen, and enacting compassion in everyday life, in a non-monastic setting. "The record states that Ejo used the days off that all monks were given at Eihei-ji to visit his mother. Almost as soon as he returned to the monastery he received word that his mother was dying. Ejo made the difficult decision to stay at the monastery in order to stay true to his vows and obligation to serve, rather than see his mother one more time before she died." (Dumoulin 2005, 116) This is a very moving example of the kind of extreme dedication that those who took monastic vows displayed, yet perhaps we should look at the larger picture in order to put Ejo's dilemma and decision in a broader context. What this story demonstrates is that in the great spiritual advancement, which takes place in a formal setting, it becomes more difficult to break out of that formality when the chaos of everyday life intrudes. Such examples serve as the bases of both legitimate criticisms and misconceptions of Zen and other Buddhist traditions.

This might be a reason why Zen scholarship and practice have become more secularised in the West; there is something universally appealing about the Zen attitude, but there is something off-putting about its logistical religious demands. A more secular Zen embraces the practical, grounded aspect of the tradition while minimising the need for an overtly religious lifestyle around that practice (asceticism, ceremony, celibacy and so forth). This does, however, place all the more responsibility on individuals or groups to practise conscientiously, and with discipline. In this sense, perhaps the differences with regard to integration between the monastic and non-monastic settings even out. The latter is a calmer more close-knit environment but with all the potential for complacency and dogmatism that that brings, while the former is a chaotic environment where it is difficult to break out of one's default mode, but which presents many and varied opportunities to integrate practice.

In Appendix I I present an instance of an advanced meditator reflecting on a reaction of anger he had as a result of failing to acknowledge impermanence. This serves as a small scale example of the larger point; that even those who have regularly practised for years can slip back into the default mode of attachment and belief in the persistence of objects and ideas. Integrated practice, then, is not an end state. Even for those who have been meditating for years have to continually re-integrate it. This is important because if the practicality of zazen was a formal theory then one could simply disprove it on the basis that its intended outcome (e.g. decreasing attachment) fails regularly (i.e. people stay in, or return to, states of attachment). Perhaps this is the reason why institutionalised Zen often encounters problems such as those I have outlined above. In becoming a system based around an infrastructure and a prescribed code of behaviour it is inevitable that the sitting-only mode will suffer if sitting is heavily constrained by convention.

(b) Soldier-Zen

One troublesome development in the history of Zen Buddhism was the involvement of some of its members in military activity. The developing literature around the topic of soldier-Zen reflects the complexity of this issue and requires a balanced and detailed knowledge of the related historical, philosophical and religious issues. An in-depth exploration of soldier-Zen is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However a broad sketch of this historical development demonstrates that even those who carry on the embodied practice of zazen may ignore or misappropriate the principles realised therein for reasons which negate those very principles. Unfortunately the history of Zen demonstrates that, much like any ideology which involves a commitment to forms of dogmatic thinking, manipulation to serve the ends of religious and state-sanctioned conflict and violence is not just a possibility, but a probability.

An account of soldier-Zen is presented by Brian Daizen Victoria in his article “A Buddhological Critique of “Soldier-Zen” in Wartime Japan.” Victoria evaluates a question which he proposes at the outset: “... because those Buddhist believers [in Japanese militarism] were convinced that their actions were in full accord with the *Buddhadharma*, what right do scholars have to question their claim?”

Shallow readings of Buddhism often criticise either or both of the following: (i) a perceived passivity within the Buddhist community, (ii) a perceived hypocrisy within the Buddhist community in instances where this religion - which relies on the verity of the insubstantiality of all things (including ideology, nationality, political systems and so forth) and Taoist strains of non-interference - is seen to act and react along political and national lines.

It is important that any response to such criticisms is balanced, but it is just as important to acknowledge the fallibility of Buddhist practitioners caught up in complex political

conflicts. The first of the above criticisms is relatively simple to discount; there is ample evidence in the stories of master-disciple relations of masters beating and abusing disciples for the purposes of instruction.¹⁰⁴ If the masters were passive they could offer a lazy interpretation of Original Enlightenment and tell the student that they need no instruction.

The second of the claims is confronted by the importance that Buddhism, and Zen in particular, places on appropriate action. Non-duality includes the recognition of the self and no-self as non-dual. We may lack substantial selves but that does not mean that our actions as conventional selves cannot cause suffering to those other conventional sleeves around us. In this way the interdependence of all things makes us conscious of how we should treat our environments (including the individuals within it) with care. So while the practice of compassion can breed an attitude wherein the instigation of conflict is seen as something to avoid if at all possible, that does not mean that we do not react appropriately - though mindfully - when conflict does arise.

Victoria represents Soldier-Zen through the figure of Sugimoto Gorō (1900-1937) a Zen practitioner who fought for the Japanese Empire. He wrote extensively on the role of Zen in politics and war:

Sugimoto devoted an entire chapter... to the question of "life and death." In the best Zen fashion, he noted, "Life and death are identical." As to how one comes to this realisation, he stated, "It is achieved by abandoning both body and mind, by extinguishing the self." While the preceding appears to be orthodox Zen teaching, Sugimoto added: "Warriors who sacrifice their lives for the emperor will not die, but live forever. Truly, they should be called gods and Buddhas for whom there is no life

¹⁰⁴ For example: "He went back again, knocked on the door, and when the teacher opened it, he shoved his foot into the doorway. The teacher slammed the door anyway. "Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" screamed the student in extreme pain, and with that realised enlightenment." (Loori 2008, 118)

or death... Where there is absolute loyalty there is no life or death... Simply live in pure loyalty! (Prebish and Heine 2003, 110-11)

Those Zen practitioners who took part in fighting were doing so out of loyalty to the emperor of Japan. The concept of the Empire is an intellectual construct, albeit one forceful enough to find substantial physical manifestation in the form of buildings, infrastructures, armies, uniforms and so forth.

The Zen Buddhist view is that intellectualizations, concepts, even language itself are inadequate for expressing our experience *as it is experienced*. We go through life thinking that our words and ideas mirror what we experience, but repeatedly we discover that the distinctions to be true are merely mental constructs. In verbalising something, we may have a lingering sense of having compromised part of our experience, but we continue to devise new categories, new names for things, more distinctions when a moment before there were no distinctions. (Kasulis 1985, 55)

If Zen is method of realising non-duality, it seems Zen soldiers were really only adopting one very specific instances of non-duality. One of these was the non-duality between their body and their sword. They adopted Zen practice to focus on how best to use the weapon to fell the enemies of the construct that was the Empire. It seems a little too convenient that this version of non-duality did not extend to the bodies of the perceived enemies, or the perceived rift between the Empire and the rest of the world.

One assertion at the outset of Victoria's article that I do not entirely agree with is that a critique of soldier-Zen must be made from a Buddhological perspective. While Buddhist teaching is the appropriate context for assessing the uses and abuses of Zen, this very reasoning plays a part in forming the problem at hand to begin with. Appealing to the

authority of Buddhist texts in order to justify wartime killing is, at base, the same kind of mistake as appealing to the authority of Buddhist texts in order to admonish wartime killing.

I maintain that what is preferable is to understand the source of the insight behind the Buddha's teaching and then place any claims about the rightness or wrongness of wartime acts (or any other ethically charged issue) within that context. If the Buddha's experience is what Dōgen believed to be 'contact with the Absolute' then it is possible that what he is referring to is the same kind of experience of undifferentiated reality reported by many mystical traditions. This being so, the teaching which comes from the Buddha's enlightenment is 'Buddhist' only insofar as it satisfies certain cultural, historical, religious and philosophical traits, all bound together by the language terms which give the impression of philosophical cohesion. We may apply Hofstadter and Sander's version of categorisation here as it relates to uncritical reflection of the naming of an ideology: for example, if one is presented with an idea which is 'Buddhist' then one assumes this idea must correspond with the set of principles and features contained within one's own mental category of 'Buddhism.'

III. Beyond Zen

I see the formalisation, conventionalisation and secularisation of practice as instances of the categorisation and malleability of thought discussed in chapter two. The ability to categorise and create analogies not only helps us in personal, practical ways; it helps whole generations understand world views in terms of each other. But this adaptability may also point to something deeper; if any one way of viewing any particular phenomenon is merely a convention actualised in the context of ultimate unity, then zazen may be a point of contact with ultimate reality while simultaneously just another reference system unfolding from that reality. In this way Buddhism itself is nothing sacred, but the practice which springs from it could be of incalculable importance in realising unity, and understanding the provisional nature of theories which rely on drawing boundaries where really there are none.

I return to Austin's foundational question in *Zen and the Brain*: "Could it be that at their source, human brains everywhere gravitate toward the same type of natural messages?" If the Buddha's 'inexpressible enlightenment' is contact with, or realisation of, unity, then of course any attempt to communicate this, whether by language or neuroscience or art, is just another reference system. Zen itself would be no exception (and neither would dissertations such as this one!).

I hope that my arguments throughout have demonstrated that the principles realised in zazen are a result of just the practice and that they are not the exclusive domain of Zen or Buddhism in general. I reiterate that Zen Buddhism provides the appropriate context for engaging in the practice in which these principles are realised, as well as priming the intellect of those who wish to engage with the philosophical implications of such realisation. In doing so I hope that I have shown that in order to realise impermanence, zazen is the ideal, though not the exclusive, setting in which to do so.

Having closed this chapter I will proceed to discuss the broader sociological application of my overall thesis, as well as summarising what I see as the potential long-term philosophical implications of the argument I have laid out herein.

Chapter Five

Categorisation and Mindfulness in Philosophy and Society

I. Categorisation in Education and Other Disciplines

From the beginning of this dissertation I have argued that categorisation and distinction-making lie at the root of problems in analytic philosophy of mind. Yet categorisation is a human tendency and philosophy as a discipline is just one area which it affects. In my discussion of zazen I suggested how mindfulness practices may have an important role to play in making us aware of the provisional nature of the distinctions we make about the world. Categorisation has a logistical role to play in everyday life but often it can manifest in negative and unacknowledged ways. David Bohm uses the term ‘fragmentation’ to refer to the negative aspects of non-reflective thought and action:

If this fragmentation is to come to an end, it is clearly necessary to inquire deeply into the actual function of our thought, not only as it is commonly being done in scientific research, with the aid of electrical instruments and mathematical models, but, much more, through serious and sustained attention to one’s own thoughts as they actually take place. For example, a scientist may experiment with instruments on the brain, but if his own thought and language share the general fragmentation, he will be incapable of proper attention, and so he must inevitably come to confused, illusory, and deceptive results.

Each man has thus, from the very outset, to be aware of the generally inattentive mode of functioning of his own thought, which allows him automatically and

habitually to go on “copying” a fragmentary structure that has been built up over the ages and passed down to us. Each of us can in this way see the fragmentary structure of thought *as such* as a real process with a real function in each individual and in society as a whole. We have then to inquire into the function, and to experiment with changes in it, which may lead to a different “mental DNA,” free of the prevailing tendency toward fragmentation between the content of thought and its function, and thus more viable than the kind we have now. (Bohm 2007, 86)

Throughout this dissertation I tried to put an emphasis on the practical application of the main principles I outlined. In zazen, the place of practice is not just on the mat, but in all situations off it also. While the path of least resistance and most ease is the simple act of sitting and breathing, our daily lives - particularly in developed societies where technology provides us with an endless number of easily accessed distractions - lead us to return to a default position which tends to be alienated from present-moment awareness. This default position has no baseline; it differs for each individual but its basic aspects should be obvious enough; through culture, language, economic circumstance and so forth, we are compelled to perform tasks that take us far away from the possibility of dedicating most of our day to practice. I might note, anecdotally, that this very dissertation serves as an example of this; I have to dedicate time to a lot of often frenzied intellectual activity and travelling between home, office and library in order to write about a practice which involves the minimum amount of intellectual activity and bodily movement possible. This is not so much of an issue if we can harness the lessons of practice when we *do* get the chance to engage in it and carry them forward through daily life.

To that end, this section will briefly deal with the role of categorisation and mindfulness in various disciplines. I will focus in particular on education. Currently I can

only pose questions about categorisation as a problem in education systems. I intend to make potential answers to these questions the basis of future research.

In recent times western culture has developed a more open approach to mindfulness.¹⁰⁵ At the root of this attitude is the growth of comparative philosophy between eastern and western traditions. Mindfulness practices have also benefited from clinical studies which report on the psychological and physiological benefits of meditation. This development has also had the added effect of making people view mindfulness as similar to medicine; the practical benefits become more obvious, and the esoteric associations start to fall away. To confine the study of zazen to purely religious or philosophical circles would be a disservice to the practice itself. In this section I will briefly assess the role of categorisation in education and suggest the potential place of mindfulness in educational institutes. For practical purposes I will speak from the experience I know best which is the Irish education system, though I am sure that the issues I raise are common to education systems worldwide.

Zen meditation taps practical, everyday roots. Many early benefits of a meditative approach need no elaborate religious or philosophical belief system. Some benefits evolve over a period as short as two months when subjects fully commit themselves to an ongoing practice of daily meditation. (Austin 2009, 8)

The meditator who persists in regular training programs for much longer than eight weeks discovers that mindfulness gradually expands its basic functions of increasing mental clarity into moments that tap into other worthwhile functions. (Austin 2009, 10)

¹⁰⁵ At the time of writing the following are recent mainstream discussions of mindfulness which attempt to highlight the practical nature of meditative practice for a wide audience: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b044gp6f>;

At primary and secondary school level, the division of the school day into different subjects is an overt example of categorisation. The rationale for this is pedagogical as well as practical. Certain subjects, e.g. languages, may be best acquired by being kept separate in order for the most appropriate teaching methods to be implemented for each particular subject. But categorisation of this kind can follow a student throughout their educational career and result in groups or individuals drawing systematic dividing lines between concerns which they have been taught are mutually exclusive. The experimental laboratory work of neuroscience has little surface level similarity with mindfulness practices such as zazen, but the work of Austin and others shows that they are mutually illuminating activities. In this way categorisation of subjects is something which is to be considered on philosophical grounds. There could be long-term negative outcomes to encouraging a hierarchical view of subjects as disconnected from each other because of perceived relevance or importance. As my explanation of malleability of thought suggested, there is often far more overlap between disciplines than one might assume, and if students are reared with such a mindset their future careers may be more rewarding, innovative and successful. The case of subject hierarchy demonstrates that psychological categorisation can feed back into action and have systemic and potentially negative effects.

This issue of categorisation in education extends to the role of creativity in a broad sense. Creative insights are crucial for succeeding in seemingly non-creative fields (e.g. mathematics/languages. See chapter two, section two). Yet creative arts in schools are often given the status of a mere pastime. In Irish secondary schools classes like art and music are often voluntary, and sometimes so sparsely attended that it is difficult for a school to justify

bringing in a specialist teacher and resources to support the activity. This also brings up a Zen-like concern which is that learning takes place through embodied practice as well as through purely intellectual activity. If categorisation in schools results in the marginalisation of the creative arts then other non-standard but important modes of learning are denied.

As subjects are perceived hierarchically and holistic concerns are often overlooked in favour of pragmatism toward career attainment and so forth, greater emphasis is placed on achieving certain results and grades. On my view, modes of assessment which in large part decide the future careers and livelihoods of students proceed along the lines of the type of categorisation discussed throughout; boundaries are drawn as practical guidelines, but over time become perceived as substantial divisions which reflect actual difference in quality between one student and another. Examination grades in Irish educational institutes follow a similar pattern throughout the country.¹⁰⁶ The boundaries drawn between grades is informative though potentially arbitrary within narrow ranges. A 69% grade will earn a lower honour than a 71% grade, but that 2% difference will count as the same grade when it falls between 67% and 69%. For logistical reasons examiners must follow such guidelines. But assessment in this fashion is stripped of the contexts of the student's mindset, learning methods, differences between oral and written presentation and so forth. In this way the context-free reliance on arbitrarily drawn boundaries has a knock-on effect of deciding which qualification a student may apply for or which institute of further education they may attend.

The benefits of mindfulness would be that such categorisations would be acknowledged (by students and by teachers and course co-ordinators) as provisional and context-dependent. In even more basic terms, mindfulness would be a beneficial practice for students at all levels for improving attention, memory, reactive attitudes, time management and a host of other relevant skills and capacities.

¹⁰⁶ For standard grading see: <http://www.studyineurope.eu/study-in-ireland/grades>

Before assessing the potential for a broad implementation of practice in educational institutes and communities, I will briefly examine the role of categorisation in other disciplines and areas of concern. I am not qualified to comment in any detail on the specific disciplines and concerns I list here but these examples all highlight the negative role which over-reliance on categorisation can play in various disciplines. As with the examples from the field of education it is worth stating that many, if not all, of the disciplines discussed below will already in part acknowledge the conventional nature of the role of boundaries/categorisations present therein. However this acknowledgement does not rectify situations where the reliance on boundaries/categories is exaggerated or cases where the original intent of a boundary/category as a mere guideline is overlooked in favour of staying rigidly within a certain boundary/category. I leave open-ended the question of whether these instances of categorisation and boundary creation are too deeply entrenched in their respective worlds for them ever to be eased by greater awareness or open acknowledgement of the provisionality of such categorisation.

Taxonomy is a straightforward example of boundaries being drawn for practical, and not merely symbolic, reasons. Taxonomists assign specific kingdoms to specific living things. These divisions have a use; they identify important commonalities and relationships between living things (there is a side debate here which I will not pursue about distinction between living and inanimate, sentient and insentient, that runs through Zen Buddhist literature). But like any other systematised endeavour, it falls prey to being treated as the terrain and not the map. The system of sorting living things is used to the extent that it seems there is something wrong in the world if any observable living thing does not seem to fit into any one of the prescribed kingdoms.

The realisation of boundlessness would allow taxonomists, and any scientists who carve up the world in this fashion, to treat such distinctions as entirely context-dependent

processes to be referenced when appropriate, rather than a strict series of delineations which must be adhered to in all cases.

A more mainstream societal issue underlined by categorisation is that of the pro-choice versus pro-life debate. This issue is sensitive and controversial, and hinges almost entirely on the argument over where to draw the line with regard to the 'start' of a human life. This is a social issue which exemplifies the problem of creating intellectual distinction in the face of the actuality of impermanence. There are of course provisions we can make for what would constitute the stage at which a foetus is to be considered as having right to life, a right which others must protect on its behalf. But even moderate approaches to this issue result in heated debate which seems unresolvable given the nature of the disagreement. In reality it is most likely too sensitive a topic for those who are most passionate and vocal about it to draw anything other than philosophical ammunition from the consideration of principles such as impermanence and boundlessness. In any case, this issue is one where an observation of the effects of psychological categorisation can only define the nature of the problem, rather than offer any satisfactory conclusion.

Similarly, arguments over territorial rights provide evidence for problems being created by the drawing of a boundary which starts off as an intellectual concept (e.g. the nation state), manifests into actual, practical boundaries (e.g. border patrols) and then descends into often violent disagreement over what justifies that boundary. Zen Buddhist literature is often focused on environmental concerns insofar as they illuminate the concept of interdependence; if one is not separate from one's environment then it is impossible to pollute one's environment without somehow polluting oneself. Territory is bound up in this issue; in attaching to traditions and conventions (however old and well-established they may be) of nationality, culture and moral superiority, governments and peoples stay locked in an 'us versus them' attitude which is a refusal or ignorance of interdependence. National and

cultural identity is intimately bound up with association to land. Just as the more or less arbitrary delineations that the law requires in order to establish the rights of an unborn child, border-creation is, on the whole, a more or less arbitrary act, though no less complex because of it. And just as with the distinction-based arguments of pro-choice/pro-life debates, the issue of territorial rights is probably too sensitive for the recognition of the principles of impermanence to have a practical impact in the short-term. As I discussed in chapter three through the example of soldier-Zen, even those committed to a practice which dissolves boundaries can find a way to justify claims to, and defence of, large scale boundaries such as empire.

One final issue I would like to briefly illustrate as an example of boundary-creation feeding back into policy in a way which can affect groups and individuals directly and severely is that of the diagnosis of psychological disorders. A publication from American Psychiatric Publishing which describes changes between the fourth and fifth editions of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* includes the following two notes regarding Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and schizophrenia respectively:

3) the onset criterion has been changed from “symptoms that caused impairment were present before age 7 years” to “several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms were present prior to age 12”; 4) subtypes have been replaced with presentation specifiers that map directly to the prior subtypes; 5) a comorbid diagnosis with autism spectrum disorder is now allowed; and 6) a symptom threshold change has been made for adults, to reflect their substantial evidence of clinically significant ADHD impairment, with the cutoff for ADHD of five symptoms, instead of six required for younger persons, both for inattention and for hyperactivity and impulsivity. Finally, ADHD was placed in the neurodevelopmental disorders chapter to reflect brain

developmental correlates with ADHD and the DSM-5 decision to eliminate the DSM-IV chapter that includes all diagnoses usually first made in infancy, childhood, or adolescence.

Two changes were made to DSM-IV Criterion A for schizophrenia. The first change is the elimination of the special attribution of bizarre delusions and Schneiderian first-rank auditory hallucinations (e.g., two or more voices conversing). In DSM-IV, only one such symptom was needed to meet the diagnostic requirement for Criterion A, instead of two of the other listed symptoms. This special attribution was removed due to the nonspecificity of Schneiderian symptoms and the poor reliability in distinguishing bizarre from nonbizarre delusions. Therefore, in DSM-5, two Criterion A symptoms are required for any diagnosis of schizophrenia. The second change is the addition of a requirement in Criterion A that the individual must have at least one of these three symptoms: delusions, hallucinations, and disorganized speech. At least one of these core “positive symptoms” is necessary for a reliable diagnosis of schizophrenia.¹⁰⁷

In the case of the former, mindfulness meditation has a positive role to play in less severe cases of hyperactivity by calming the mind of the meditator and focusing on present moment awareness. The above extracts demonstrate that the criterion for diagnosing disorders which require specialist treatment have changed significantly. This reflects the truism that medical and psychological sciences are changing and adapting all the time and that a static set of rules for diagnosis is not a realistic proposition for successful practice.

¹⁰⁷ Website: <http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/changes%20from%20dsm-iv-tr%20to%20dsm-5.pdf>

However ADHD and schizophrenia are matters of degree. While practitioners are trained to make appropriate diagnoses it is clear from the ongoing development of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* that such diagnoses relating to these disorders is to a lesser or greater degree provisional with regard to that specific period of time. The criterion for diagnosing a patient with a disorder - which may have major ramifications on the rest of their lives with regard to employment, education and so forth - may change not long after that diagnosis has been made. This is of particular concern in instances of mild disorder. Severe behavioural disorders should be treated appropriately, but there are degrees of, for example, ADHD which amount to little more than poor attention span which *may* be something that a child or young adult will naturally grow out of, or which could be ameliorated by gradual integration of mindfulness practices.

Despite the fact that ADHD and schizophrenia are considered spectrums, the terms themselves are monolithic and have significant social stigmas attached. This question of criteria for diagnosis then becomes a crucial factor in deciding the confidence and self-respect of those diagnosed with these disorders even if their condition is not seen as severe. As I also suggested with regard to the fine distinctions that educational grading can miss out on, the diagnosis of a psychological disorder may have a huge bearing on a person's future which does not accurately reflect their situation. This should be considered on the basis of the personal feedback of the diagnosed. ADHD and schizophrenia are well-known if not well-understood disorders with varying sets of assumptions attached about the characteristics to be expected of those who are diagnosed with them. Such assumptions may not be invisible to those who are diagnosed, and this may play into their self-image and behaviour. If they have been labelled with a specific disorder that carries these sets of assumptions then they may act on their belief that they really exhibit all such symptoms of the disorders, even when their case may be entirely mild. This is one other complicated case of boundary creation (in this

case the delineation between a diagnosis and a non-diagnosis of psychological disorder) having a negative feedback effect on society.

The ‘fragmentary’ and ‘generally inattentive’ modes of thought which Bohm refers to in the passage which opens this chapter seem like the very states of mind which the beginner will experience in zazen. Bohm does not specifically refer to Zen or mindfulness but such practices seem like good solutions to the issues he identifies.¹⁰⁸ This also raises a question which relates back to the unacknowledged starting errors I address in my account of assumptive feedback: if our thought can tend to be fragmentary (i.e. bound by distinction and pre-conception) is it possible to go through one’s entire life without recognising this? If so, then what is zazen or any other mindfulness practice doing? Is it merely easing such fragmentary thought, or, more than this, is it playing an important role in *making us aware* of such fragmentary thought in ourselves and, by extension, society in general? Whatever the specific answer to this question it seems that mindfulness practices such as zazen are ideally placed to strike at the root of the kind of illusory thought to which Bohm refers.

Many people will carry significant psychological baggage into zazen, whether it be their cultural upbringing, philosophical stance or spiritual beliefs. This can make the process of beginning very difficult as our assumptions, beliefs and desires are tested and gradually deconstructed. For this reason, it would seem that mindfulness is an activity which is best adopted as early as possible; the person has gone through less conditioning and will therefore need to go through less deconditioning in order to arrive at a consistent state of present moment awareness in each session. I will now assess the issues with implementing practice, in particular in educational institutes. I will weigh up some of the practical and philosophical concerns of potential implementation of regular zazen in schools, universities and

¹⁰⁸ In this chapter I will treat zazen as a form of mindfulness and I will use these two terms as broadly interchangeable.

communities. I will do so in order to assess the potential implications of wide-ranging mindfulness practices in society in general.

Recommending Zazen

There is a need for great care when considering the widespread implementation of mindfulness practices such as zazen. On the one hand, there is ample evidence for the psychological and physiological benefits of regular practice. When coupling these reported benefits with the simplicity and repeatability of zazen, it is difficult to see a downside to the adoption of this practice. On the other hand, the issue of motivation is crucial. Most meditators will find out or be made aware of zazen, feel that it is a practice they would like to engage in (or at least attempt) and will then begin of their own volition. Their prime motivation may be a basic need for a spiritual practice, a disciplined routine, a physically beneficial activity or a combination of these. Whatever the motivation, the meditator begins to practice voluntarily. This makes the adoption of practice non-problematic for the individual, but what if we wish to see mindfulness being adopted in large groups containing many personality types?

Any prescription for practice carries with it the danger of influencing the first-person experience of that practice by manipulating it to suit the motivation - or lack thereof - of the practitioner. If, for instance, zazen was introduced as a compulsory activity in schools it is likely to be greeted - as is often the case with many subjects imposed on students - with varying levels of enthusiasm and commitment. It may benefit individuals but it would be counter-productive to group practice if only a certain percentage of the intended group is actually committed to it. There is also a concern that in a strictly educational setting zazen might be taken in the same light as other merit-based systems of learning, a factor which may incline beginners to the achievement or goal-oriented approach which is to be avoided.

What would the motivation of a skeptical analytic philosopher bring to practice? Would it have a bearing on her mindset before beginning? If the arguments I have made throughout are valid, and find their source in the embodied practice of zazen, then the analytic philosopher who disagrees with these arguments could be charged with the empirical task of *trying* zazen and experiencing it for themselves. But it is not a good idea to begin a mindfulness practice with the motivation that your philosophical outlook has been challenged and you wish to attempt to prove that you are right. Even if a philosopher was convinced by arguments such as my own and changed her opinions on that basis, this would still be less productive in the sense that the acceptance of an intellectual conception of the above-mentioned principles is not equivalent to the realisation of these principles in embodied practice. If there is widespread acceptance of conclusions based on reported experience, without actual engagement in that experience itself, then zazen becomes just another ideology dependent on rhetoric rather than practice to express itself. Would the curious philosopher dedicate enough time (i.e. years) to practice in order get to the point where they could personally weigh up these ideas? Would the committed empiricist be *that* committed?

Zen teachers speak of a ‘honeymoon period’ for beginners after which the novelty of zazen wears off and the real work of meditation can begin. (A similar problem with integrating practice early on occurs with regard to reactive attitudes such as judgement. Beginners may experience an increase in judgements chiefly because they are conscious of having begun a practice in which one is meant to suspend such activity. In other words, the beginner judges their own inability to stop judging.)

Through all of this it is worth remembering that zazen as a mindfulness practice would be ideal for increasing discipline and removing pre-conceptions. But this is, I believe, all the more reason to allow people to arrive at practice at their own pace and therefore with the appropriate attitude.

This leaves us with the question of how best to balance a hands-off attitude with the necessity for initial guidance in zazen. Perhaps the most appropriate method is simply spreading awareness. In the case of works by Austin, Thompson and Varela and others it is clear that a basically positive (though not uncritical) attitude to mindfulness is finding its way into scientific and academic discourse. The growth of comparative philosophical literature such as the work of Siderits (2007), Flanagan (2011) and Garfield (2015) demonstrates an increase in constructive dialogue between Buddhism and analytic philosophy. It may just be a matter of time before such work filters into discourse to the extent that the place of practice becomes less niche and of more direct methodological relevance to disciplines such as philosophy of mind as well as subjects in other areas and levels of education.

In terms of society in general, awareness of mindfulness practice could be spread through schools, although, as for the above reasons, it should not be imposed as compulsory. As a contemporary example, the John Scottus school in Dublin has incorporated mindfulness into its overall educational structure.¹⁰⁹

Within Buddhist literature the spreading of mindfulness is often treated as a form of compassion insofar as it leads to the conditions of enlightenment. From the *Heart Sutra*:

Charity eliminates greed, discipline cures laziness, patience overcomes hatred, determination overcomes laxity, meditation cools the mind making it receptive to wisdom and wisdom dispels ignorance. The Mahayana doctrine of action and principle differs from the Theravada as to the intent. In addition to one's actions that should follow the paramitas one is expected, according to the Mahayana understanding of the bodhisattva path, to endeavour to liberate all sentient beings by leading them toward an upward path while seeking his/her own enlightenment

¹⁰⁹ Website: <http://www.johnscottus.ie/ethos-2>

upward. If one has not cut off grasping completely, one's wisdom becomes colonized by consciousness, turning into an obstacle rather than being a virtue. (Master Loki To 1995, 59)

From this passage we can see the interdependence of the various motivations for, and outcomes of, practice. Intellectual obstacles are overcome by deconditioning oneself from judgement and attachment, and this in turn leads to good discipline and behaviour which aids in liberating all sentient beings. In less technical terms, this could be rendered as follows: mindfulness both reduces the possibility of ignorance and, through action, increases the possibility for liberation of others from ignorance. This is an organic rather than strictly methodical process, both indicative of, and resultant in, compassionate behaviour. My concluding section will assess what such compassion could mean to philosophy of mind and philosophy in general.

II. Long-Term Implications for the Philosophy of Mind

(a) ‘Top-down’ Effects on New Philosophers

Graham Priest claims that “... many contemporary [philosopher’s] conception[s] of philosophy [are] myopically Eurocentric.” (Priest 2014, xviii) In chapter two I argued that Descartes’s contemporaries and successors were locked into the conceptual framework which he created. I also presented evidence that Cartesian dualism had significant spillover into other related disciplines. It is often the case that Descartes’s work serves as a student’s first introduction to philosophy of the west, though it is often used as an introduction to philosophy in general. Subsequently, new students who have western frameworks imposed upon them may find it harder to accept the relevance of Buddhist philosophy if and when they are eventually introduced to it. This is another instance where prescribed knowledge which is viewed as an appropriate introduction to a philosophical tradition may actually have a negative ‘top down’ effect on a student’s expectations of that subject going forward.

If Zen Buddhism represents a radical alternative to the traditional introductory texts of philosophy courses, then exposure to Zen scholarship is crucial in establishing a wider conception of philosophy for new students. This is particularly important given that traditional education systems work on the basis of an individual’s increased specialisation in a given discipline. If one goes a long time only vaguely aware of Zen Buddhism, and unaware of its major philosophical significance, it may become much harder even for the open-minded philosopher to embrace these ideas wholeheartedly.

This last concern relates directly to the issue of practice. Philosophy - phenomenology included - is not an embodied practice in the sense that zazen is. In logistical terms, the body is mostly a vehicle which transports the philosopher between home, office, library, and

allows for the completion of tasks like writing up papers. But if the content of such papers were to be altered in philosophically significant ways, then this state of body-as-vehicle is quite impoverished.

[Conceptual structures] are, of course, neural structures in our brains. This makes them embodied in the trivial sense that any mental construct is neurally realized. But there is a deeper and more important sense in which our concepts are embodied. What makes concepts concepts is their inferential capacity, their ability to be bound together in ways that yield inferences. An embodied concept is a neural structure that is actually part of, or makes use of the sensorimotor systems of our brains. Much of conceptual inference is, therefore, sensorimotor inference.

... If concepts are, as we believe, embodied in the strong sense, the philosophical consequences are enormous. The locus of reason (conceptual inference) would be the same as the locus of perception and motor control, which are bodily functions. If this seems like a radical claim, it is radical only from the perspective of faculty psychology, a philosophy that posits a radical separation between rational abilities and the sensorimotor system. (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 13)

Lakoff and Johnson point to the importance of embodied experience on neurophysiological terms. Their claim is relevant to my concerns when combined with Austin's account of kenshō as it occurs through meditative practice. Kenshō is the result of embodied practice but it lacks the feature of conceptual inference. All inferences from kenshō are reported as after-the-fact kinds of thought. To relate this back to my present concern, what Lakoff and Johnson and Austin make clear is the importance of embodied experience. After the experience of unique states such as kenshō important philosophical and existential

insights are gained. So for philosophers to overlook embodied practice is to miss out on insights as relevant to their work as any book, article or lecture. I have stated that one of the advantages of zazen as a practice is its simplicity and repeatability. This should make the philosophical relevance of the practice all the more necessary to evaluate.

Outside of any purely philosophical considerations is the fact that zazen is suited to help the student or teacher more calmly get through the often high-stress situations that life in an educational institute creates. The recorded benefits of meditation on memory, attention and stress management could have a bearing on many aspects of educational life: exam stress, information retention, increased attention and awareness in class, and time management skills to name but a few.

To close this section I will assess the broader potential applications of the insights of meditative practice to philosophy and, by extension, education in general. I will do so by examining the role of compassion in philosophy. Compassion here is not intended to mean that of the loving-kindness variety, but of a state of interdependent understanding.

(b) The Role of Compassion in Philosophy

Throughout this dissertation I have offered a critique of the suppression of first-person experience in favour of a purely objective stance in the analytic method. In most cases this has been in the form of a discussion about the nature of the distinction between objective/subjective and the great importance of first-person experience, in particular in relation to the practice of zazen. I have done this in an effort to emphasise, and hopefully add to, the growing body of relevant literature which re-examines entrenched philosophical, psychological and scientific paradigms which hinge on the types of dualities and distinctions that I have assessed in the course of this dissertation. In this section I would like to examine another, slightly more abstract, phenomenon which comes into sharp focus in Zen Buddhist

practice and scholarship, namely compassion. I will discuss what relation, if any, compassion has to philosophical methodologies and practices.

Compassion is a broadly applicable and far-reaching term in ordinary language, associated variously with empathy, sympathy, pity and so forth. Here I will focus less on that general understanding and more on an understanding which leans toward the kind of ideas expressed in Zen Buddhist literature. “Compassion requires subjectivity, for it requires subjects to feel and receive compassion. “The Buddha has described the attainment of total love, compassion, empathetic joy or equanimity as ‘liberation of the mind.’” (Gombrich, 2009, p.83)

One very simple role that compassion plays (although one which is limited in analytic discourse) is that of encouraging understanding between individuals/groups. It may not necessarily encourage *agreement* and it may change little about our own particular opinions or ideas, but it leads us to engage with different or even contradictory opinions from a standpoint of understanding that is not purely intellectual.

Compassion also necessitates a consideration of the worldly consequences of the promotion and application of an individual/group’s opinions and ideas. Academic positions often exist in a comfortable state of remove from everyday or non-specialist walks of life. A consequence of this is that one might argue, develop, publish and promote ideas about important issues, but with a level of abstraction from the world that these ideas might best apply to. For example, B.D Robbins (2013) outlines a prevailing attitude amongst psychologists toward subjective experience by quoting the following from Joseph LeDoux: “The conscious feelings that we know and love (or hate) and our emotions by are red herrings, detours, in the scientific study of emotions... Emotion researchers need to figure out how to escape from the shackles of subjectivity, if emotion research is to thrive.” (Gordon 2013, 5)

We should not wish to deny the neurophysiological bases for emotions and the study thereof, any more than one should deny the validity of Austin's neurophysiological research of *zazen*, but to claim that we must study emotions without reference to subjective experience seems doomed to the same kind of regress that reductionists face when attempting to explain away mentalistic terms without reference to mentalistic language. Subjective and first-person are not exactly interchangeable terms, but reducing the role of the latter in contributing to any discipline is to broadly encourage rejection of the latter. If first-person experience is as important to intellectual insight as I have suggested, then rejection thereof is a grave misstep.

This all points to the further importance of meditation practices such as *zazen*. The processes of boundary dissolution and deconditioning that occur with regular practice may be considered in a conventionally hierarchical sense, i.e. the boundaries that are most difficult to dissolve are the ones that are more regularly reinforced. The most obvious are the boundaries between self and others. Below that we could say that similar difficulties would occur with ideas which are connected to the sense of self, e.g. particular perspectives, beliefs and opinions. These features of an individual's character will play a major part in guiding their formation of theories, even if the discipline in question requires objectivity. These theories then meet criticism from other theorists who themselves are guided and biased by their own beliefs and opinions. If theories conflict heavily, then it may be hard to arrive at mutual understanding and illumination. If a practice like *zazen* can indeed go some way in dissolving or easing the sense of self with its attendant beliefs, judgements and theories, then it can also dissolve the kinds of intellectual boundaries which keep competing theorists locked in extended over-and-back arguments which never resolve in any mutually satisfactory way.

Moderation in Zen

At this point I would like to voice a concern which has occurred to me regularly throughout the course of my research. In basic terms I am presenting zazen as a remedy to some of the ills of analytic philosophy of mind, and other closely related fields, as well as examining the potential benefits of this practice for society in general. In doing so, and in citing compatible works, there is a risk of being over-zealous and to lean toward the subject at hand (in this case, zazen) as a kind of cure-all for myriad social and philosophical issues. While I hope that I have succeeded in highlighting the substantial benefits of zazen, I also do not wish to ignore or downplay the many other fields which are crucial in getting such ideas across, from the acts of translation which allows one to read Dōgen and other Zen Masters in modern English, to the psychology and neurophysiology professionals who work in depth to offer an analytically satisfactory account of the actual differences that meditation makes to practitioners. Wilber suggests that the realisation of boundlessness is a question of degree and that recognising it as such allows us to orient related disciplines in an appropriate manner. He argues that the most relevant boundaries that we draw work from the ever-present, i.e. the ego or self, to the often unacknowledged, i.e. unity consciousness (boundlessness). We can relate different disciplines along the lines of our pre-conceived boundary intervals and in doing so assign to them their appropriate role in ‘treating’ our collective boundary-creating tendencies. In working terms Wilber describes, for example, the boundary-drawing of one’s persona as the domain of simple counselling or supportive therapy. Further ‘down’ the scale of boundary creation is ‘total organism’ and environment which Wilber cites as the domain of disciplines such as Gestalt Therapy and Humanistic Psychology. The ‘bottom’ of this scale is the universe and unity consciousness, the understanding of which, Wilber contends, comes from spiritual traditions such as Mahāyāna and Daoism. (Wilber 2001, 20).

These categorisations are conventional, but it would be wrong to call them entirely arbitrary. Even if different disciplines all have the same underlying motivation (i.e. dealing with the consequences of human boundary-creation) there is good reason to treat them differently insofar as one may be more appropriate to deal with a specific set of circumstances. For example, a psychological condition which arises as a consequence of a strong feeling of boundary between self and world may be helped by mindfulness practice, but in the short-term specific forms of therapy may play a more appropriate role. The same can be said of medicine; zazen has demonstrable health benefits but that does not make it the appropriate practice to turn to in the case of the onset of a sudden and serious illness.

This measured approach serves as a reminder of the danger of being overly-reliant on one system of thought; as I discussed in chapter four, even schools whose role is to engender mindfulness can be driven by dogma and intellectual rigidity to be anything but mindful.

Open-Ended Questions

Throughout this dissertation I have proposed that regular prolonged practice of zazen results in realisations which, when applied to analytic philosophy of mind, suggest that standard conceptions of the mind-body problem may be fundamentally flawed. If my argument is correct, then first-person experience could potentially play a defining role in changing these conceptions. Here are some open-ended questions to consider with regard to the implementation of mindfulness practices in philosophy:

- If schools and universities place an importance on rounded experience, is an important part of experience missing in the form of the low awareness of mindfulness practices?

- Could a provision be made for making mindfulness practices a regular possibility for staff/students in educational institutes?

- There are many high-pressure situations experienced by staff/students in educational institutes: fee-paying, travelling between classes, preparing for exams, writing up papers to name but a few. Outside of the overtly philosophical application of the three principles I outlined in chapter four, how beneficial would an integrated mindfulness practice such as zazen be to individuals and, by extension, whole institutes?

- Would the heightened and refined sense of compassion which can arise in meditative practice be of direct benefit in creating mutual understanding and co-operation between theorists who usually stand opposed to each other?

With the work of, for example, Austin, Thompson and Varela, Lutz, Dunne and Davidson it appears that a philosophical synthesis of first-person experience in meditation practices and analytic approaches to various concerns in consciousness studies may no longer be a niche concern. The immediate role of practice outside of illuminating fields such as neuroscience and neurophenomenology is the gradual dissolution of boundaries between ideas, objects and persons. Quoting Streng, Kasulis offers a passage which defines the importance of such a development:

In practical life it is necessary to recognize that a chair is not a table, that a gold coin is not the same as clay, and that a merchant who cheats is not identical with the one who does not. However, a person who does not slip into the error of regarding these practical distinctions as ultimate facts is able to see that there is indeed neither

one absolute substance nor many individual substances. Every object of perception or imagination requires mental fabrication, and therefore every distinction participates in this fabrication. If, on the other hand, this distinction is accompanied by the assumption of conviction of an absolute reality, then psychic engines are stimulated which bind the person to the fabrication. It is this being bound to fabrication which is *samsara* (illusion)...

“Nagarjuna accepted the practical distinction between the two kinds of truth, and because this was only a practical distinction he felt free to use mundane truth, that required logical and semantic conventions, to dispel the attachment to the products of this truth and thereby lead the religious student toward Ultimate Truth. (Kasulis 1985, 25)

Conclusion

In *Zen and the Brain* Austin relates the following anecdote which describes the struggles of a novice meditator in understanding and integrating zazen:

I learn much from my fellow students in the Zen group, or *sangha*. The widow had also been a student at a different, Soto Zen temple. I ask her what was the most important thing she had learned from her previous roshi. “Let go,” she says. “Let go of all your conditioned worries, the thoughts and the ideas you hold onto.” I find these two simple words very helpful.

On one other occasion I inquire naively: “What is the connection between going back to one’s original self and becoming enlightened?” She replies that she, too, had been puzzled about this. When she had asked her previous roshi to clarify it, he replied as follows: “It isn’t as some special earlier original self that you become

enlightened. Enlightenment isn't something you add. It exists throughout the universe *all* the time. All you have to do is simply allow it to express itself. Then, when you plug into it, you cease to be a separate self and simply blend in with the rest of the enlightened universe." I find this vaguely reassuring, but not yet comprehensible.
(Austin 1999, 67)

This last sentence in particular probably resonates with those unfamiliar with the Zen perspective as well as those not far along the path of practice. "Not yet comprehensible" might even stand as the analytic method's view of the relevance of Zen Buddhism. What Austin makes evident here is the importance of persistence in practice, and of not attaching to ideas, even those which seem to explicate the enlightenment he is trying to understand.

I hope that my arguments throughout have demonstrated the long-term relevance of zazen for analytic philosophy of mind, and philosophy in general. For those who would remain sceptical about the insights to be gained from an embodied meditative practice such as zazen, I conclude this section with a final offering from Austin:

Slowly, feelings of calmness and clarity begin subtly to extend themselves out of the zendo, entering into life's everyday affairs. It becomes easier to accept unpleasant things. Even when irritated, I have a growing sense of *who* is becoming upset. This leaves more time to develop an objective remedy to improve the situation. Life's central issues assume a higher priority. In earlier years, on vacations in the mountains, I could perceive that this one person is a part of the larger whole in an ongoing now. Now, in the busy streets of Kyoto, I start to enlarge upon this perspective. In parallel, the former sense of being a private isolated self tends to diminish. But all this comes and goes, still mostly at the intellectual level.

Observing these changes, an old paradox starts to resolve itself. Back when I first started to read about Zen, the literature placed emphasis on *abrupt* forms of awakening. It was difficult to conceive what a “gradual” awakening meant. But now I observe definite changes taking place in my mental topography. Attitudes seem to be undergoing a kind of deep, slow continental drift. “Policy” shifts seem to be evolving at depths which go on to affect the strategies and tactics of behaviour. If this is a kind of gradual awakening, then it appears to be taking place.

In years past, sudden insights sometimes flashed in to help solve problems in my laboratory research. I speculate: could *prajna*’s intuitions be of a similar kind? Could such brief insights, by analogy, resemble a quick “spiritual earthquake”? (Austin 1999, 68-69)

This is anecdotal evidence, but it is the same kind of anecdote that meditators worldwide have reported for centuries. And what it demonstrates is that even those engaged in the most intricate, complex and sensitive disciplines (in Austin’s case, neuroscience) gain beneficial insights and realisations from meditation which apply to their work as well as their everyday life.

If the “deep, slow continental drift” that Austin describes can take place at the level of an individual’s intellect, then surely it can take place on the level of philosophical paradigms. Perhaps with the emergence of literature engaged in assessing the relevance of meditation we see this drift already taking place. Even so I believe that practice itself, not just commentary thereon, could have a crucially important role to play in all branches of philosophy for the reasons I have outlined throughout.

Conclusion

At the outset of this dissertation I presented a sample of conceptions of the mind-body problem from various influential analytic philosophers. One of the common features of these conceptions which I highlighted was that, regardless of how they proceed in their argument, these philosophers deal with the mind-body problem in dualistic terms. I could have listed many other such conceptions from analytic philosophy of mind which share this feature. My claim is that mindfulness practices like zazen reveal that all such dualities (as well as categories and other metaphysical assumptions) are, in actuality, merely conventional systems which do not refer to anything which exists in any substantial sense. If this is the case then any theory which depends on such dualities, whether it be idealist, reductionist or other, is fundamentally flawed in that it expresses a feature of the world which does not exist (i.e. distinction/boundary). This is not an argument based on faith; the evidence is present in the first-person experience of zazen and other forms of mindfulness meditation which have been engaged in for centuries. In this way, an investigation of zazen is compatible with analytic philosophy insofar as the latter will allow for a third-person, empirical explanation of its significance.

I will now pose a direct and open-ended question which will stand as the culmination of my overall argument as it relates to analytic philosophy of mind: would an adoption of regular and prolonged Zen meditation by analytic philosophers of mind have a significant influence on these philosopher's conceptions, assumptions and theory formulations?

I hope that my research can go some way in confronting, and hopefully answering, this question in a manner which satisfies those at both ends of the philosophical divide that typically (or, I should say, conventionally) exists between analytic philosophy and Zen Buddhism. My contention is this: yes, analytic philosophers would, if engaged in regular zazen for extended periods of time, find that principles realised through this practice would

have a direct effect on, and application to, their theories of mind, in particular the notion of boundlessness and unity which is often non-existent in analytic philosophy of mind. This is not a subjective claim; Zen practitioners from Dōgen to Austin demonstrate a thread of common experience in the practice of zazen. Any philosopher who so wishes can, with time and discipline, engage in this experience with a mat, a cushion, and a bell. And if the moments of insight-wisdom reported in zazen have a direct effect on the practitioner's perception of boundaries, distinction and metaphysical assumption, then it is almost unthinkable that this would not have a more or less direct bearing on the practitioner's conception of mind given prolonged, regular practice.

I am not proposing this as an idealistic solution to the mind-body problem. Zazen does not strip the subject of all character and personality; opinions will still be formed and argued for, although the role of practice should bring into sharper relief the provisional nature of such opinions. If zazen was able to draw a line under issues as complex as mind then there would not be an endless line of Zen literature being produced. I maintain that an adoption of Zen practice and a consideration of the principles outlined herein which are realised through such practice could have a profound effect on the development of theories in analytic philosophy of mind. It would do so by challenging the idea of neutrality as it relates to omitting first-person experiential reports as evidence for a particular position. It would challenge the idea that any one way of understanding mind should be *the* way of understanding mind, as all such modes are merely self-referential. And, most importantly, it would challenge the very duality that analytic philosophy of mind is involved with by providing an embodied experience of the actuality of impermanence, emptiness, and boundlessness. The philosophical application of the principles outlined above may even dissolve the mind-body problem by encouraging philosophers to cease thinking about it as a problem, and start thinking about it as a continual unfolding of interdependent processes

(processes which cannot be isolated from each other without something being lost) within an ultimate unity.

As for the possibility of zazen becoming a wide-spread activity in society I think it is very difficult to predict whether mindfulness practices will become integrated in the same way as other cultural norms. I do not think it is too much of an overstatement to say that retiring to one's room to meditate is far down the list of most people's concerns, while retiring to one's room to use the computer probably hovers near the top. I think it is fruitless to make any confident prediction about mindfulness practices taking hold in a culturally-integrated sense, but it is just as fruitless to despair about such practices being overlooked. I would take the middle way on this issue: an appropriate and moderate raising of awareness about zazen will attract those who would be pre-disposed to committed, disciplined and - above all - integrated practice. The more such a process occurs with individuals the greater the possibility of an organic spreading of zazen and other mindfulness practices to communities and educational institutes.

Appendix I: Integrating Zen

The following transcription is an extract from a lecture entitled “Dependent Origination” by Tempel Smith. Smith relates an anecdote and then interprets it from a Buddhist perspective. This short analysis is instructive as it takes a seemingly innocuous event and utilises it as an opportunity to understand delusion and attachment on a general level. After this I give my own commentary on Smith’s analysis by outlining its merits and relating it back to the main argument of my dissertation. I have included this extract to further illustrate the differences between the intellectual idea of embodiment in the phenomenological method and the actual process of embodied practice. Smith demonstrates that even a regular practitioner can forget the lessons realised in practice, and in this regard regular embodied practice - not merely an intellectual understanding of embodiment - is crucially important.

Extract from ‘Dependent Origination’ by Tempel Smith (Zencast Episode 426)¹¹⁰

“Even though I already know things change, I have this deeper default setting that I don’t want things to change. And I’ve been at this for a while... really trying to guide myself into a relationship with the fact that things change either slowly, or quickly, but all things change. And yet I keep finding this deeper root... [I have] this deep default setting that I don’t want things to change.

When I was in Bodh Gaya, India, where the Buddha was enlightened, I met this stone-carver, and he had this beautiful picture of this woman bowing to the Buddha just before his awakening. She was giving him some rice porridge, and I just loved this little story. It was

¹¹⁰ <http://www.zencast.org/webpage/category/Tempel%20Smith>

made of stone and he had worked on it, and I really hadn't examined my *avidyā*¹¹¹ in this situation. Because it was made of stone I had this sense that it was permanent. Now *I know* it's not permanent, but still I wasn't working hard enough and so I took this thing and was like "Oh this is stone, this will last for a long time," so it's worth hauling around in my backpack until I get back to the States. And then I put it in my house, right in my kitchen and I was sort of loving it, and someone knocked it over and the statue broke. The little bowing hands of this woman snapped off. And I got angry, "Who did that? Oh my god!"

So, it's *Buddhist* art - the whole reason it's there is to remind me that things change and so I won't forget, and yet it broke and my first reaction was like "No! It was made of stone, it wasn't supposed to break!" And this is not my first rodeo around change, but I hadn't noticed myself *believe* that this should last because it's stone, or should wear away kind of romantically over time; but it shouldn't break, and if it broke there's something wrong.

But this teaching that things change is right up front and centre. It's woven all the way through the teachings, and yet to really uproot this default setting that I want to rely on the statue, I want to rely on that my car is where I left it; I want to rely on those things because I don't have to live with the insecurity that things change. So I snuggle up in that, and it feels good for as long as I get to live in that belief, and then reality challenges it, and then I blame reality: "Give me back my cosy 'things-don't-change.'" The problem was you didn't pay attention to my stone statue. *You* were thoughtless. Or it shouldn't be that way... I can make a lot of excuses. Or I can come to terms with the fact that things change. It is of their nature to change.

It worked for me once to say there are no nouns, just slow verbs that look like nouns. But everything is slowly changing, or quickly changing and if I can rest in that, that's fine. If you've ever gone out on a sail-boat or a canoe or something like that, being out on the water

¹¹¹ Ignorance, delusion.

versus being on land... everything's changing; there's always this wobble going on. After a while your inner ear gets used to it and you wobble with the wobble of the boat and you stop noticing that it's wobbling. And then you can sail. You can make use of the fact that the water isn't the earth so you can sail through it... So there's a way to come to terms with the fact that things change... "Is there a way out?" The way out is to unravel this root of *avidyā*, and then all the patterns that grow up around it. So being well-intended, I liked this Buddhist art; it seemed good to like it, it seemed good to cherish it and I wasn't clinging to it in any type of gross way, I was just making sure I wasn't treating it carelessly, but still it broke.

So my *sankara's*¹¹² were well-intended, but they were still based in "it wasn't going to change" and therefore I built these patterns around it. And then when it did change there was a moment of confusion and frustration until my own wisdom kicked in and I realised that Buddhist art *will* break, it *will* go through an ageing process, it *will* go through a changing, a dying process. And then there is superglue. And you can see the crack and I even celebrate the crack now because it's even *more* Buddhist because it broke."

Commentary

I

Smith opens this discussion with reference to a common issue in Zen practice which is the application of lessons learned from practice to lived experience. Learning about the nature of impermanence can be much easier than living with its consequences. This is the very basis of the development of Buddhism; the acknowledgement that all people, no matter what class, race or creed will experience old age, disease and dying, three stark and relentless instances of lack of permanence (of youth, of health and of life itself). It is easy to imagine where this

¹¹² Volitions.

tension arises from; when one reads about impermanence or when one practices, the impermanent nature of lived experience not only happens as soon as we close the book or get up off the cushion but is ongoing *while* we are involved in those activities. Hence the real work of applying these lessons comes in lived experience, rather than purely intellectual/spiritual experience. Yet these very activities themselves are not exclusive to lived experience, nor are they grander than any other type of experience. All moments provide opportunity for following the Buddha Way (or in more neutral terms, for recognising and dealing with the impermanence of the world). Smith observes about himself - but surely a view which is representative of many people - that we are so entrenched in believing in the persistence of the self that even when we do acknowledge impermanence it can be difficult to stay in this mode. Rather we tend to revert to seeing and feeling things as we have been nurtured and cultured to do, which leads us back to delusion and suffering.

II

As Smith lays out in his story of buying the stone carving, it is easy to become attached to something in the various senses that this suggests: thinking the object has some essence (in this case a nice representation of the Buddha's life);¹¹³ putting a value on it (buying it and carrying it around); seeing it as something that will persist (the carving is made of stone, a

¹¹³ Even this suggests the incredible malleability of mental experience. Few would believe that a stone carving of something *really is* that thing. We recognise that it is just a representation but it seems that this recognition actually takes second place to believing in the thing itself rather than the fact that it is a representation. And in this belief is rolled up all our further beliefs, attachments, values and so forth of which we feel protective. It is interesting to consider all the various ways we engage in this kind of delusion quite regularly. For example we can read a fictitious story about a certain character and, if that character dies, feel stricken almost as if we had lost a friend in real life. If we cared to take a moment in that case however we could quite easily remember that the source of the character was some other person sitting in a room somewhere inventing and typing up this character. Yet even *that* realisation may not be enough to relieve our distress at the death of our beloved character. This is perhaps a good mirror image for our interaction with lived experience and what Smith is trying to get across

particularly easy substance to mistakenly deploy in instances of belief in persistence or permanence); associating a value to the object (setting it up in a shrine-like fashion in a prominent place in the home). Smith then points out that the trick here may not be just *knowing* that things do not persist, but rather recognising how difficult it can be to work this knowledge into lived experience. Most people can and will have multiple experiences of this from losing a wallet to losing a loved one. The layers and layers of importance that we attach to something over time are like an investment, one which is harder to dispense with the larger it grows. And if we do not dispense with it, then our reaction when it is interfered with is to feel that we have been affronted, by others or by the world in general. And this manifests in instances such as the one Smith outlines; a prized personal belonging is broken leading to a reaction of hurt, anger and some degree of confusion.

III

Smith's concern about the 'default' setting is an excellent way to tie together the various strands of concern present here. Because, as he points out, it is actually to our advantage to have a default belief in persistence. But you have to take the bad with the good. If that *is* our default position then it is not as if we can easily throw out this attitude when it is convenient to do so. Belief in persistence seems almost like a mental muscle; the more you use it the stronger it gets, and we do - and in many cases have to - use it day in, day out. The belief in persistence can attach to any object or idea. In this way, daily life and philosophy do not differ that much; each contains the possibility of attaching to ideas and feeling aggrieved if those ideas are undermined.

with his story. Our ability to believe in the reality and persistence of things is the source of our intelligence, creativity and wonder, but also a major source of our suffering.

Appendix II: Funes the Memorious (Extract)

The following extract is a series of passages from Jorge Luis Borges' short story 'Funes the Memorious' about a person who, as a result of an accident has received the ability to remember everything he experiences, but as a side-effect is forced to experience every moment and all its perceptual content as entirely new. The selection below describes what that experience might be like, though not necessarily what the evolutionary consequences of such a state of experience would be.

This extract is presented as a launching point for thinking about the tension between two ideas I have presented throughout this dissertation, namely categorisation and *zazen*. Funes lacks the capacity for categorisation; every situation he encounters is entirely novel and must be attended to on its own terms. He experiences everything as new and as undifferentiated by pre-existing categories. This may seem like a kind of Zen utopia until one realises that such an experience would be incapacitating; the inability to form categories in which to place previous experience, objects, ideas and so forth would render one useless as an agent. Learning could not occur, and survival in one's environment may not last long. It may be that the Pirahã tribe described in chapter one are the middle way between these extremes; life lived in immediate experience coupled with a minimal reliance on categorisation.

Jorge Luis Borges, "Funes the Memorious" (Extract)

"For nineteen years he had lived as one in a dream: he looked without seeing, listened without hearing, forgetting everything, almost everything. When he fell, he became unconscious; when he came to, the present was almost intolerable in its richness and sharpness, as were his most distant and trivial memories. Somewhat later he learned that he

was paralyzed. The fact scarcely interested him. He reasoned (he felt) that his immobility was a minimum price to pay. Now his perception and his memory were infallible.

We, at one glance, can perceive three glasses on a table; Funes, all the leaves and tendrils and fruit that make up a grape vine. He knew by heart the forms of the southern clouds at dawn on 30 April 1882, and could compare them in his memory with the mottled streaks on a book in Spanish binding he had only seen once and with the outlines of the foam raised by an oar in the Río Negro the night before the Quebracho uprising. These memories were not simple ones; each visual image was linked to muscular sensations, thermal sensations, etc. He could reconstruct all his dreams, all his half-dreams.

“Locke, in the seventeenth century, postulated (and rejected) an impossible language in which each individual thing, each stone, each bird and each branch, would have its own name: Funes once projected an analogous language, but discarded it because it seemed too general to him, too ambiguous...”

“He was, let us not forget, almost incapable of ideas of a general, platonic sort. Not only was it difficult for him to comprehend that the generic symbol *dog* embraces so many unlike individuals of diverse size and form; it bothered him that the dog at three fourteen (seen from the side) should have the same name as the dog at three fifteen (seen from the front). His own face in the mirror, his own hands, surprised him every time he saw them. Swift relates that the emperor of Lilliput could discern the movement of the minute hand; Funes could continuously discern the tranquil advances of corruption, of decay, of fatigue. He could note the progress of death, of dampness. He was the solitary and lucid spectator of a multiform, instantaneous and almost intolerably precise world.”

“With no effort, he had learned English, French, Portuguese and Latin. I suspect, however, that he was not very capable of thought. To think is to forget differences, generalise, make abstractions. In the teeming world of Funes, there were only details, almost immediate in their presence.”

Appendix III: Problematic Terminology

One of the recurring themes of this dissertation is the Zen mistrust of intellectual concepts. Concepts can communicate ideas but as I have pointed out in several places throughout, concepts (e.g. Descartes's idea of substance, the general belief in a persistent self) can also be co-opted and used to a specific purpose in ways which may be quite removed from actuality. This tension can occur in instances where concepts that are being refuted - e.g. 'self' - are seemingly endorsed by the language that is refuting them - e.g. '*I believe that there is no self*'.

In an argument designed to largely refute ideas like boundary, distinction, essential selves and conventional thinking, there are multiple examples such a tension throughout, to the extent that a skimming of the text might leave the reader assuming that I endorse these things (e.g. the existence of an essential self). This relates to the idea of assumptive feedback in the sense that even though I set out to refute certain ideas, it is impossible to refute something without invoking it. From a text discussed elsewhere in my argument, Robbins has summed this up neatly; "... as soon as you explain something, you presuppose the existence of whatever it is you set out to explain." Robbins was writing with regard to the difficulty of explaining emotions on a neuroscientific basis, but the point is universally applicable. (This is also relevant to Kim Davies discussion of the presupposition of a firm knowledge of the physical in chapter four).

In the interests of demonstrating just how problematic this can be, I have compiled a short list of instances in this dissertation where I have asserted something that I elsewhere argued against. In most cases this is for precisely the reason that Robbins outlines. For example, one cannot talk about the mistake of distinguishing the mental and the physical without using the terms *mental* and *physical* to point to what you mean. But this runs the risk of tacitly endorsing just such a distinction. I include this section to highlight both the

difficulty in using language to refute concepts and to underscore the importance of the ultimate/conventional distinction which makes it possible to understand the appropriate contexts in which these distinctions are made.

Mind/Body Even though the main premise of my argument with regard to analytic theories of mind is that their assumptions about the mental and the physical are misguided, I make such a distinction in several places. I also make similar, though arguably finer distinctions, between psychological/physiological states and inner/outer experience.

Self Despite endorsing Buddhist conceptions of no-self the term ‘I’ recurs repeatedly throughout. Other terms like ‘we,’ ‘one,’ and ‘our’ indicate other forms of selves and collections of selves.

‘Concrete’ Language In my critique of Descartes in particular, I demonstrate the dangers of taking a foundationalist approach to any subject. Yet the language of foundation finds its way through in several places in my argument when I use words like ‘bad,’ ‘root,’ ‘ground,’ and ‘bedrock.’

Distinction I criticise the reliance on conventional distinctions yet in chapter two, when confronted with two opposing options on how to proceed, I state that “the answer must be one or the other.”

‘Essential’ I argue against the idea that phenomena have essential nature, yet in places I display, for descriptive purposes, the conventional usage of the term ‘essential’ which implies

the very conception of 'essence' I am trying to refute. In chapter two, section three for example I reference 'the essential features' of phenomena, which seems to endorse the idea that if a concept is to be understood in isolation we must identify what makes it unique. Such a line of thought seems to violate the principles of both emptiness and interdependence.

Glossary

This glossary explains my specific interpretations of key terms used throughout the dissertation as distinct from ordinary language interpretations. The interpretations of each term below will apply unless otherwise stated in the text.

Analogy As per Hofstadter: “the perception of common essence between two things” (even if they seem different on the surface). Includes isomorphism, except that this indicates a set of information about a phenomenon which is *exactly* expressed by a different phenomenon (e.g. holding up three fingers to indicate the number ‘three’ *exactly* transmits the *idea* of ‘three’.)

Assumptive Feedback Short Definition An unquestioned assumption at the beginning of an argument self-generates increased complexity at each further stage of the argument.

Assumptive Feedback Long Definition A process whereby certain (usually flawed) starting assumptions involved in a theory that then feed inextricably back into the development of that theory which in turn leads to conclusions which may be seen as questionable, but not questionable on the basis of those initial assumptions. (For example, we might argue about the evidence for or against free will as it applies to individuals, but-to my knowledge at least-there has never been a meeting of the analytic discussion of free will and the Buddhist conception of no-self. If we accept the idea of no-self, then there is no agent - other than in the purely conventional sense - to whom we can allow or deny free will.)

Attachment Includes/related to clinging, grasping and dogmatism, though the latter would apply mostly in cases of formal systems/institutions/theories. Closely related to

categorisation. Simply, any instance which displays evidence for a person or group of people becoming attached to idea(s) or object(s), in particular where this attachment inhibits a change of worldview because this change would invalidate previous strongly held beliefs.

Categorisation The intellectual activity of breaking the world into constituent parts/groups and consciously or unconsciously treating these divisions as necessary (beyond being merely helpful conventions). Especially applicable in cases where our initial unspoken treatment of a phenomenon/idea as being of a particular category feeds back into the way we view and treat the world. For example, the conviction that we have a unique ‘self’ creating the category ‘I’ and then that ‘I-ness’ becoming seen, and encouraged to be seen, as separate from the rest of the world in some fundamental way.

Distinction Any instance where a distinction is created between one phenomenon/idea and another, presented as though that distinction is true/basic/fundamental, especially in cases where there is no acknowledgment that the distinction may just be a convention.

Emptiness Applies to all object and ideas and means that all phenomena lack an essential or absolute nature.

Impermanence The continual flux and change of all things. It can be understood as an endless and beginning-less unfolding of the boundless unity of all things. Also refers to any instance of the same, e.g. in Dōgen’s writings on mountains he explains that though they appear to be still they are in fact in a constant state of dynamic movement.

Judgement Any conscious assertion of the quality or nature of an object or idea.

Ultimate Truth/ Conventional Truth My working definitions of conventional and ultimate reality constitute a more basic form of Nagarjuna's two truths doctrine. Ultimate reality is a boundless, undifferentiated unity. Conventional reality is the everyday version of reality which is based on distinction. These terms adapt to apply to the notion of truth. A truth is conventional if it relies on distinction or structured systems of thought. There is only one ultimate truth; the truth of the absolute emptiness of all things.

Unity As opposed to distinction/categorisation. Any experience, report, or instance of the destruction or ignorance of boundaries and distinctions between phenomena. Also refers to any practical experience of an instance of impermanence: embracing impermanence/change necessitates perceiving unity rather than distinction between things.

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