TIBETAN BUDDHISM AND PSYCHOTHERAPY: FURTHER CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DALAI LAMA *

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During the summer of 1982, while I was working on a translation of a Buddhist philosophical treatise at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, I had an opportunity to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We spoke about Buddhism and psychotherapy, and I asked him some questions which had concerned me since the time I had worked as a counseling psychologist. That conversation was later published in this journal (Komito, 1983). As is well known, a good answer to a question often generates several new questions, and our conversation affirmed that rule of thumb. In the summer of 1983 I returned to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives on a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to finish revising my translation and sorting out some of its more subtle technical details with the monk-scholars. I again made arrangements to meet with His Holiness, this time to ask him some of the questions which I had been pondering since our previous meeting, as well as a number of questions that readers of the previous interview had raised.

As before, we met in the audience hall of his residence, which is perched on the side of a mountain in the western Himalayas. A lovely room, it has a stillness which is saturated by his radiance...

*From interviews conducted on June 16 and 30, 1983 in Dharamsala, India, at the residence of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet. The Dalai Lama is the ecclesiastical leader of the living and historical tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. He is also the head of state of the nation of Tibet, in exile in India since 1959.

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and punctuated by the cries of the hawks which ride the air currents around his palace and monastery. As we were to deal with some rather technical points in this interview, we were joined by His Holiness’s brother, Tendzin Choegyal Rinpoche and Dr. Alexander Berzin, who both helped by translating some of the more difficult portions of the conversation.

David Komito: "Last summer we concluded our conversation with a brief discussion of the way in which certain specifically tantric types of practices could be incorporated into psychotherapy. I've had a chance to think about your comments and I have some further questions to ask you about them. I also have some questions which some readers of our dialogues have asked. So if I could, I'll read back to you the last question I had asked and your response to it and we can proceed from there. I had asked:

'Some people have looked into the literature on Tantra which says if one meditates on such-and-such a deity, such-and-such a state of mind may be transformed, and they are wondering if such practices could help their clients. On the other hand, I've also read that these practices require the taking of great vows and that you must be a very advanced practitioner to do this sort of thing successfully. So do you think that if psychologists look into the literature on Tantra and bring Tantra into their own practices, they would perhaps be making some very great errors? Could they harm people because of their own lack of qualification to do these things?'

"You answered by saying:

'I think, here also, you see, the mere visualization of the mandala of some deity and also the mere practice of yoga, certain yoga breath control, even I think some practices with chakras, kundalini, subtle body—I think it is all right. Now, you see if you take, or if you practice, or you hold the visualization or mandala as a complete form, then, you see, without proper initiation, without proper background, you cannot practice, and even if you try to practice, there will be no good result. It is wrong. It is the wrong thing to do. But if you don't take it as a complete form, as a Buddhist practice, but take a certain thing out of it and actually remain as a non-Buddhist, a non-religious minded practitioner. . .and in this fashion take certain actions, I think that is all right' (Komito, 1983).

"I think that this question and your answer focus on some important issues which are at the heart of the application of Buddhist practices to psychotherapy. . .And indeed they have stimulated some interesting questions. One of our readers, responding to this dialogue, asked how would a Western psychologist deal with the problem of having an adequate background?"
Dalai Lama: "They were asking how do they know whether they were qualified or not?"

D. K.: "Right. Suppose a psychologist was to look at a lot of the literature that has now been written on various kinds of tantric practices, on meditation or visualization of this deity or that deity, and suppose that this psychologist were to think, 'Here, I have a client who has a problem with anger, but does have a kind of religious orientation. What if I were to suggest that this client practice a meditation on Avalokiteshvara [the personification of compassion]? Or the psychologist who has prescribed this practice himself might think, 'Well, I should meditate on Avalokiteshvara, because I need more compassion with my clients.' On what basis can a psychologist make these kinds of judgments about the appropriate use of this kind of imagery? He has no real training in this very complex sort of practice, yet he says, 'This is the deity for compassion, or this is the deity for wisdom, and I need wisdom, so I'll do this practice on the wisdom deity.' "

Dalai Lama: "You experiment I think."

D. K.: "Yes. But how do they know the limits for experimenting and what tantric type of practices to prescribe to people?"

Dalai Lama: "You have to experiment, the best way to find out is to experiment. Now for example, you see, you choose. The psychologist gives some imagination of some deity like Manjushri [the personification of wisdom], or Avalokiteshvara (the personification of compassion), for some time; if there is some good effect, then continue; if there is not, then try another different kind of deity. It could be a male deity or a female deity, and so on. That person will not follow the complete practice of the deity yoga, you know, the different stages. So, you see, they do not have initiation, they simply follow one or two methods, just do some parts of the complete practice."

D. K.: "So because they just prescribe some parts, they needn't worry about feeling unqualified to prescribe these techniques?"

Dalai Lama: "Now the person who is giving the instruction, his knowledge may be limited, so his own case also is taken care of and implemented in that experiment."

D. K.: "So, it is all right to actually just check out these different techniques and, based on their own Western training, judge how these things work. If they seem successful, go ahead."
If they don't seem successful, stop, do something else, but don't feel strongly inhibited that they have not trained in the Buddhist tradition. Earlier you mentioned 'a complete form' and 'a complete practice' which would not be prescribed. What do you mean by a 'complete form'?

Dalai Lama: "Take, for example, the deity Avalokiteshvara; there are different ways to practice Avalokiteshvara. There are mainly four different kinds of Tantra or ways to practice Tantrayana, that is: Action Tantra (Kriyatantra), Performance Tantra (Charyatantra), Yoga Tantra (Yogatantra), and Highest Yoga Tantra (Anuuarayogatantra) (Tsong-ka-pa, 1977, 1981). Now you see, according to the different systems, there are different ways to practice, different methods. So to practice each system you need initiation according to that doctrinal system. So you see, in the beginning, you have to know about initiation, then afterwards, how many precepts or points to keep, and then on these bases, one practices the first divisions of visualization, then one progresses onwards with the help of the understanding of shunyata [emptiness] and the determination of the bodhichiua [altruistic mind of enlightenment]. Then, according to Kriyii Tantra, the next stage is a visualization of sound, a visualization of fire, the visualization of the end of sound which is complete shiinyatd. So once you know these things completely, and go accordingly, then that means something," he said laughingly.

D. K.: "That's the complete practice. What you're suggesting is that psychologists can take a little piece out of this to use for themselves and for their clients. But if they want to do the whole thing, then they really must take it up as a Buddhist practice for themselves."

Dalai Lama: "Now you see, the main reason is, without understanding shunyata, then the realization which comes from these practices cannot produce the Buddhist side [i.e., will not have a Buddhist character, and goals specific to Buddhism will not be attained]."

D. K.: "The images used in tantric visualizations have the transformation of the mind as their purpose and were developed out of a very long Buddhist tradition. Some of them may be unsuitable for psychologists to use with their patients. I'm thinking, for example, of deities with multiple arms, which would be a little strange for Westerners to imagine or visualize. If Your Holiness thinks that it is the case that some of these deity images may be inappropriate, then where will Westerners find the images to use? From the imagination of the psychologists, or perhaps the myths and stories of Western society? I mean, where would these transformative images come from?"
Dalai Lama: "If you could not imagine a deity with a hundred hands, then just imagine deities with one head and two hands. Use these deities."

D. K.: "So then Your Holiness thinks that the images of the deities that are currently used in Buddhist practices can easily be adapted for use by Westerners; they don't have to develop new images of their own?"

Dalai Lama: "Now, first, we have to think purposefully. If there is simply a scientist who is just seeking a kind of technique to help patients, that's all right."

D. K.: "They could develop their own images?"

Dalai Lama: "Oh, yes. No problem. But if a person's basic purpose, or real purpose, is to practice the tantric teaching, then, just to simply make up one's own new invention, that makes no sense. Now, you see, if someone practices these, this deity yoga, then it is better to follow the authentic textbooks."

D. K.: "Right. But if the images were being used in the practice of psychotherapy, the psychologist could pick the images that seem to work? Experiment with them?"

Dalai Lama: "Sure. That's all right."

D. K.: "O.K. Well, then let's assume that we have some psychologists who are using such images in their work with their clients. Then is working with one image sufficient, or is it necessary to go through a sequence of images, and if the latter, how would a psychologist judge the appropriate order of the sequence?"

Dalai Lama: "For what purpose?"

D. K.: "Suppose that the psychologist were to perceive that a major need of this client was to transform anger, and that this person also was very greedy and maybe also had some other very negative feelings. Now, the psychologist wanted this person to do some visualizations as part of the therapeutic process; how would the psychologist determine where to begin, which image to have that person work with first, and then which image to work with next?"

Dalai Lama: "[In regards to] visualization, I don't know, I have no particular idea for controlling these different bad thoughts. But you see, on the other hand, the general, the real practice, is to combat these various different mental defilements, these delusions. Now, we cannot deal with one
particular mental thought exclusively since, for example, anger is somehow related to attachment, and attachment is somehow related to anger. Again, now, you see, doubt, pride, ego, all these interact, they have one root. So usually it is something like this: you deal with attachment, and in the meantime take every precaution for dealing with anger. Like when you deal with medicine, you must bring together many different things; you have to consider many circumstances and be able to deal with those circumstances. So then, you see, that is the basic way to meet with these mental defilements, these mental delusions. Now using imagination and visualization, in this case I don't know, I have no particular idea [about the appropriate sequence for the visualizations]."

D. K.: "But basically, all these things have to be dealt with at the same time, because they are all interconnected."

Dalai Lama: "Yes."

D. K.: "Perhaps Your Holiness could elaborate on how psychologists could use visualization practices to transform negative mental states? For example, there are some traditional techniques which monks and nuns use for conquering lust, such 'as if one has desire for a woman or man, one could intentionally imagine that person as being like a cannibal demoness or demon in order to free oneself from that desire for that person. Or one can imagine that person as like a skeleton, in order to free oneself from the desire for that person. Are there techniques like that, that psychologists could use with their clients?"

Dalai Lama: "Probably. It seems like there are. Now you see, there is a Buddhist practice such as the one you mentioned--with the skeleton."

His Holiness then began to elaborate on a series of analytic meditations on traditional themes intended to free the practitioner from the control of excessive attachments. Although he described these practices from the perspective of a monk trying to conquer lust for a woman, they could also be utilized by women who were trying to conquer lust for men, so I have taken the liberty of substituting the term "person" in place of "man" or "woman" in the next two passages. Clearly, these practices are intended for persons of sound mental disposition, and could prove disturbing to others. As His Holiness pointed out a bit later in the interview, one must consider each person's situation individually, as the analytic meditations which follow could prove dangerous to disturbed individuals, in which case they should not engage in this type of practice.

Dalai Lama: There are several practices there, such as to
analyze into parts the [quality] of the beauty of the [person]. You take the color of the skin and go like this, analyze in detail. When you look on the surface, it's very beautiful, a very good color, good touch, something like that. Then in imagination you open that cover, and you see human flesh, you see the blood.... Then you can think about the cause of the body, the semen from the male, and the [ovum] from the female. You think about this [ovum] and this semen and what it produces here [i.e., the zygote], nobody would desire that or respect it. If there were something like that on your clothes, or on your lap, you'd just throw it away. Now the source of the body, no matter how beautiful that body is, the main substance is like that. [On the surface it all seems very] pleasant, but now again you divide: skin, flesh, bones, etc. [then it seems quite different]. You see, without investigation, simply due to our past bag feel that great love, desire, attachment. But if you investigate, by analyzing into parts and pieces, then this is no longer a beautiful thing, you see. Then, again, the actual result or the production of the body is just waste products. Now, the real production of the human body is that. So you can investigate the cause of the present substance and its result.

"Then again now, you can investigate this human physical structure. Usually we say it is composed of four or five elements. These elements in their very nature are hostile to each other; they contradict. You know, earth, fire, water, etc., these four or five elements which in their very nature are hostile to each other, contradict each other. Because of that nature, human health means to minimize the hostility of these things. That's what we call healthy, the healthiest."

D. K.: "Do you mean physically or mentally healthy?"

Dalai Lama: "Mainly I'm talking about the physical. Therefore, these kinds of analyses [according to quality, cause, result and substance] help minimize the attachments, that is one thing. [Now this is the kind of analysis which is done with the skeleton you mentioned.] It might be difficult to do the visualization of the demoness [or demon] because at that moment you may feel this is some projection or self-deception and that actually underneath this is a very beautiful woman [or man] and you are just imagining [that person] as a demoness [or demon]. Then there is another thing. Think, again, investigate, what is the real value of sexual actions and desire?"

D. K.: "Rationally investigate."

Dalai Lama: "0. K. Now, this is a sexual action, one time, or a second time, or ten times, or a hundred times, or a thousand times; would you really get satisfaction? If you just did that,
totally as the only thing, would you really be satisfied? What is the real substantial value of the desire? If there is someone who has no use for such desires, is he more relaxed, or is the person who has a very strong feeling of desire about sexual things? Which person gets more relaxation [or satisfaction]? That person who desires their lover, the basic motivation is getting pleasure. Now, because he or she wants happiness, and happiness comes from pleasure, so he or she desires and approaches their lover. So we analyze. These are the methods."

D. K.: "Now looking back for a moment at this kind of technique of visualization or imagining certain characteristics on the person, such as the skeleton on the woman or man, if one were to employ this type of technique, could one employ it with both disturbed people and normal people, or should one not employ this kind of technique with disturbed people? Could it make them more disturbed?"

Dalai Lama: "I think again, we have to make clear distinctions between disturbances, what kind of disturbance the person has. We have to go according to the individual person."

D. K.: "Right, so in some cases it could be very dangerous and in other cases no problem, even with disturbed people. O.K. Now in these tantric practices, the practitioner can visualize the deity in front of himself or herself or can visualize himself or herself as the deity and 'assume the pride' [i.e., the qualities] of the deity. Now, if psychologists used such a technique with their patients, what cautions should they employ to prevent them from grasping at these images in an ignorant way and becoming unbalanced or inflated or going crazy. Since their patients don't have the protection of the practice of bodhichitta or the understanding of shunyata, they could get attached to the images in some way or otherwise become disturbed. Whereas attaining bodhichitta and understanding shunyata, these act as protections to keep the practitioner from getting overly attached to the images. So what kind of cautions should psychologists employ when they are doing this kind of work with their clients, so their clients don't get captivated by these images?"

Dalai Lama: "It is better not to get involved in that type of practice beforehand if that is going to happen. If there is a danger, no. If there is a way, right from the beginning, that these things will upset a person, then they should avoid imagining these things. But then, somehow, if someone is already practicing and gets that problem, then I don't know. If I met such a person, then I would argue the facts with him. If he imagines himself as a deity, or, for example, is doing the moon crystal meditation [which is 'opposed to fire] and meantime
touches a fire, it will burn him. You see, that's the actual argument, reasoning out [the facts]. Now, for example, take a needle, and imagine it as shunya [empty] and here [this body], imagine it as shunya. Then do this [His Holiness mimes putting the needle in his finger], you will come to conclude the imagination is imagination and reality is reality."

D. K.: "Right, so the psychologist then rationally engages the client, saying, 'Well, if you're such and such a person, you can do this, and if you can't do this, then you're not such and such a person.'"

Dalai Lama: "Yes. That's what I would do."

D. K.: "Do you think that, when it comes to prescribing yogic or tantric type practices to their clients, psychologists would always be limited by virtue of their Western training? For example, a very influential psychologist by the name of Carl lung once claimed that Westerners couldn't successfully practice yoga because their cultural background was different from Asians. Do you think that maybe different cultures prepare people to be different and therefore different religious techniques are necessary for people in different cultures?"

Dalai Lama: "That is a matter of depth, I think. Up to certain levels there are differences, so according to that, you may need certain new aspects. . . ."


Dalai Lama: "Yes. Once you reach the deeper level, it is the same human mind."

D. K.: "Then there's no problem. So, maybe what Carl lung was talking about is that on the surface people are brought up differently in different cultures; and so on that surface level, a different type of practice might be necessary, or different deity images, but once you get through that level, everyone's the same and the same kind of practice can be followed."

Dalai Lama: "Now you may notice that there are some differences in the Indian mentality and the Tibetan mentality. I think there are some differences. So it seems to me certain books, like Shantideva's work, Bodhisattvacharyavatadra [an Indian text elaborating the Buddhist Path, cf. Thabkay & Tulku, 1978], are a way of teaching that is slightly different than the lam rim [a group of Tibetan texts elaborating the Buddhist Path, cf. Dhargyje, 1978]. So that is at the initial stage, because of the different mentality and different circumstances [of Indians and Tibetans]. In Tibet, everyone takes for granted
that all Tibetans are Buddhists, the whole community is a Buddhist community. India is not like that [nor was it in Shantideva's time, \textit{circa} 700 AD], so therefore the way of approach at the initial stage is different. Now then, at the second level, the level of tantric practice, then we Tibetans follow exactly the Indian system. So at that level I think there's not much difference.”

\textit{D. K.:} “It's not much different? Well, that makes sense, because the Dharma has gone everywhere in Asia and of course, for example, Chinese are different than Indians who are different than Thais who are different than Tibetans, and so on throughout Asia. But it is good to hear your response to this question because this has been an issue of concern among some Westerners, especially because of the writings of this particular psychologist.”

\textit{Dalai Lama:} "So, at certain stages there are certain differences, so accordingly we need some different aspects. Now I used to say, we may need Western Buddhism, European Buddhism or American Buddhism, so like that:"

\textit{D. K.:} "Well, maybe pursuing that line for a moment, I think that this makes a great deal of sense to me, that there is a need for a Western Buddhism, which is slowly seeming to evolve now. Will that evolve out of the hearts of the practitioners in conjunction with the \textit{lamas} [teachers] that come to the West? Where will the Western Buddhism come from? How long do you think it will take to grow?"

\textit{Dalai Lama:} "I think the effort of combination is necessary. From the Tibetan side, there is the teaching, sharing experiences. Then from the Western side, mixing together the teaching or the Tibetan experience and their own experience, and putting them together and again, now, it might need some of their own experimenting. Then, these things will not come as a revolution, but come as an evolution.”

\textit{D. K.:} "An evolution, slowly."

\textit{Dalai Lama:} "Yes, without sort of a pre-plan; nobody can make a plan, but these things.... Of course, we need sincere effort, sincere motivation. Then I think that some kind of shape will come."

\textit{D. K.:} "Well, thinking along this line of evolution or development of societies, do you believe that there is any progress in human relations or in human understanding for society as a whole? Not just for individuals, I mean is there social progress, or cultural progress for an entire group of people?"
Dalai Lama: "I think so. And in fact, I think it is necessary. So, in that way we can understand the value of each other. From that we can grow, develop more of a feeling of closeness."

D. K.: "So there is a kind of evolution of human consciousness that's going on you think?"

Dalai Lama: "Evolution? I don't know. I think mainly, there is education, through education, through using easier communication. Now for example, very recently, I met one Spanish friend, one Spanish Buddhist. He says that before my visit to Spain, if any Spanish person wore Tibetan monk's dress, people would see that as peculiar. And some may say it's a little crazy. After my visit, because of the television, now my dress has become quite familiar. Now when they see some Spanish Tibetan monk, they say 'Dalai Lama's monk.' So because of the communication, it brings people closer."

D. K.: "There is an idea in the West that society as a whole can be characterized as having a certain level of consciousness, and that over the years the level of consciousness of society may grow. If this is correct, do you think that human consciousness is different now than it was, say, five thousand years ago, and, if so, how has it changed?"

As I pursued the question of the evolution of consciousness, His Holiness began to laugh, saying, "I don't know. But then, again, now I believe that the basic human, main consciousness level, is, I think, the same."

D. K.: "It's the same now that it was in the past."

Dalai Lama: "Now I think, you see, we may make two categories. One consciousness comes through birth and at that level there may not be differences. There is another kind of consciousness which feeds on outside information. On that level.

D. K.: So the amount of information that people now have has increased."

Dalai Lama: "Oh yes."

D. K.: "... but their fundamental consciousness is perhaps the same."

Dalai Lama: "Now here, what would a biologist say? Taking very well educated parents, and children from their cells, do you see some differences in their children?"

D. K.: "Yes. you can find variation among individuals.
People that have particularly intelligent parents and get a good education seem more intelligent than other people. Although there are oddities where parents don't seem to be intelligent and a brilliant child is produced; that is very hard to explain. But, this particular question is not addressed towards individuals, because that's clearly understood and accepted, but towards society as a whole evolving."

*Dalai Lama:* "Now I believe that is a definite indication that human intelligence, or human consciousness, depends to a large extent on the human cell. Now the consciousness of five thousand years back, you see, and the consciousness of today, I don't know, I think it will require further investigation. Now not only human beings, but other animals have consciousness. In the basic level, there is similarity between them. As to human beings, there is still more similarity between the earlier human beings and today's human beings!"

As His Holiness was not too sanguine about group consciousness evolving, I turned to the development of individual consciousness.

*D. K.:* "There is an idea in the West that there are different kinds of psychological functions, such as perceptual, intellectual, intuitive, or feeling functions. People have wondered if you have to have all these major psychological functions integrated and balanced in order to achieve high levels of consciousness, or could you gain high levels through the development of a single function? For example, a person could have a very highly developed intellectual consciousness but be crippled emotionally; still he or she would have a high level of consciousness, as an intellectual. Or to have high consciousness, do you have to develop all these functions at the same time and be a balanced person?"

*Dalai Lama:* "From the Buddhist viewpoint there are many different levels. The intelligence, in the ordinary sense, I think that without developing the other factors [you can cultivate it]. But in the higher sense, without the other factors ... you see, without a good heart [bodhichitta], you may not have great determination. And, without the other understandings, like this shunyata, without these things, you cannot achieve an extraordinary intellectual level!"

*D. K.:* "If I understand it, you are suggesting, then, that a person can develop one function very well, but to truly be an extraordinary human being, with an extraordinary consciousness, one must blend them together to get this higher consciousness. Is that correct?"
Dalai Lama: "Yes, precisely."

Earlier in the interview we had talked about the "unconscious" as it is understood in psychoanalytic theory and also about the mental process of "projection" and I had had some trouble getting these concepts across to His Holiness, as there is not an exact equivalent of them in Buddhist psychology. In the context of my previous question about individual development I wanted to return to a discussion of projections, as many therapeutic systems emphasize the importance to the process of development of making the projections conscious and accepting the projected feelings as one's own. As I began to describe projection, His Holiness began to talk about projection as it seemed to be understood in Buddhist psychology.

Dalai Lama: "Yes, well, there are many different meanings that you could have for projection. If you are thinking in terms of the labeling by the mind, then if there is no proper corresponding basis for the labeling, then this is something which is called a fantasy, or which could be called interpolation. For instance, if there is something which is not a living being, or a sentient being, and you label it as a sentient being, this would be an example of that [fantasy], and that would be a distorted cognition.

"Or if you are looking at the continuity of the aggregates [the five skandhas or 'heaps' of functions which additively form a human being] and the sense bases and so on, and the mind is labeling something on them... actually the aggregates are impure, but at this moment, in this case, your mind has projected purity on them in order not to have any clinging or aversion for them, to not grasp at them, you deliberately project this... that is not a distorted cognition.

"And when you're speaking about things existing in terms. inasmuch as they can be mentally labeled, then this is referring to the fact that they don't exist from the power of their own side, but exist in terms of their being labeled by names. When you are speaking about the process of mental labeling, the process of mental labeling is in terms of labeling something, so that actually exists. It's not a matter of saying that it's just a projection of the mind, and the thing itself doesn't exist. It's merely saying that it doesn't exist from its own side, but that it exists merely in terms of being under the power of mental labeling.' So that when you have a mind which cognizes or takes that object, this is something which is valid, and it's just speaking about the manner in which the thing exists, which is namely that it exists merely in terms of what can be mentally labeled."
D. K.: "I think that of the different kinds of process that you talked about, the first kind is the closest to what psychologists mean by projection, which is a little bit like a type of fantasy in which, what is on the person's own side, but which they are not aware of, they see on the other side, on the other person. Perhaps an example might be helpful. Say, a man is working in an office with a woman co-worker and one day he calls the other woman, the co-worker, by his wife's name. A psychologist might interpret that as the man having similar feelings toward the co-worker as he has toward his wife or as wanting to have a similar kind of relation with his co-worker as he has with his own wife, but the man wouldn't be aware of it. So the key thing is that there are thoughts and feelings and desires that people are not aware of, but which are very functional in their own life, and these are seen as if they belong to the other, are on the other's side. The most important thing is that it's shesbzhin med pa [without full awareness]. When you say 'unconscious: that's usually the meaning of unconscious."

Dalai Lama: "So it seems you can divide this into two types. In both cases, there is no intention, but in one case, deep down, there is some feeling, some attachment. Due to that, you see, unintentionally that wife's name was spoken. The second case is without any feeling towards that person, but, instead he was just thinking about his own wife and somehow expressed his wife's name. In the second one, there is no feeling deep down, no feeling, that's simply a mistake. But then in the first case we have bag chags, an action taken on the basis of bag chags, [i.e.] instinct or propensity. Now, an Arhat is a person who has already eliminated the nyon mongs, the disturbing attitudes or delusions [of everyday consciousness]. That category is no more, those delusions have been eliminated; but, the bag chags, the propensities or instincts for them is still there.... Due to that bag chags, some verbal action or physical action arises unintentionally, still arises unintentionally."

D. K.: "Is there a difference between the propensities that come from the experiences of this life and the propensities that come from the experiences of many lives and is there a difference in the way that they would be projected onto other people?"

Dalai Lama: "I don't know, I have no idea. I wonder if there is actually a difference in the level of the potency of the potential that's laid down in this life and which is a fresh one, and one that's laid down in the previous life and would be an old one, I wonder if really there could be any difference in its potency from age."

Laughingly, His Holiness said, "At least for me, I don't know. I
have no knowledge, I really can't discuss. But, now, there are
different kinds of bag chags. For example, take a pot which
held something with a strong odor. Now because the actual
substance is already taken out, under no circumstances, . . .
such as you see, with onion, or something like that. . .under no
circumstances will the odor formed within that pot ever come
out. The smell remains there because of the previous material.
That is what we call the pure potency or potential, or bag chags.
Now on that level, you see, there is a difference between
yesterday's bag chags or a bag chags from 1,000 years back.
Whether there are differences in terms of strength, I don't
know. At that level, I don't know. Now there is another
meaning of bag chags. Today, this moment, there are four of us
here. Nobody seems to feel anger, but at the moment each of us
does have anger; the anger remains as a bag chags,"

D. K.: "Latent' I think we would say."

Dalai Lama: "In a little while, say, someone kicks you, then
immediately your anger comes out. So you see, now, that kind
of bag chags is not mere instinct, but the substance is there. It
does not appear, but is real. A potential thing which grows."

D. K.: "The anger is dormant, it is in 'seed' form, and some
situations bring it forward."

Dalai Lama: "Now at that level, time makes a difference:"

D. K.: "It makes a difference how you work with those two
kinds?"

Dalai Lama: "Whatever is closest will be the strongest.
Yesterday's bag chags is much stronger than last year's bag
chags,"

D. K.: "Right, so then would a different technique have to be
employed to transform the more recent bag chags versus the
older ones from previous lives, because the more recent is more
potent, or could the same technique be used?"

Dalai Lama: "Could you make that clearer? What do you
mean by 'transform'?"

D. K.: "Say, if one is feeling some anger at this moment and
one wants to change that anger into a positive feeling toward
the person one was feeling anger toward, a certain technique
perhaps could be used to change the anger into a positive
feeling. Would that be the same technique as would be used if
one was feeling anger as a result of past experiences, from these
past bag chags? Would a different technique have to be used to
transform the anger resulting from old experiences versus transforming the anger resulting from the current situation?"

_Dalai Lama:_ "I don't think so."

_D. K.: _"The same thing? Same technique?"

_Dalai Lama:_ "I think so. As far as a difference in terms of strength of what you're dealing with, the contemporary, the closer is stronger, more fresh."

_D. K.: _"But fundamentally, the same technique can be used for both."

_Dalai Lama:_ "Yes."

_D. K.: _"O.K. Sometimes it seems that when lamas give guidance to their disciples, they ignore the problems of this life and concentrate on problems of humans in general. Would it be advisable for psychologists to do the same thing, rather than dealing with the specific problems of the person in this life? Would it be better for them, in dealing with their different patients, to concentrate on the human condition or the problems of life in general and not focus on specific problems resulting from specific situations?"

_Dalai Lama:_ "You have to go into detail in each particular case. That is much more effective. Then in the meantime, if you also deal with what is general, then the person feels that his or her problem is not something unusual, for his or her case particularly."

_D. K.: _"O.K. Are there real differences between men and women which are significant enough to require different spiritual training or traditions? For example, some have said that men and women have different bodily energies which require that they have different yoga practices. Are there psychological differences which require different kinds of practice?"

_Dalai Lama:_ "From the Buddhist viewpoint, in terms of tantric practice, I don't think so, I don't think there are any differences. Now, as to actual physical differences, now for example, when you visualize the deities, then that has nothing to do with actual physicality. First you imagine the _shunyata_ and the understanding of the _shunyata_, then that wisdom [of _shunyata_] is transformed into the particular deity forms. So whether they are female or male, the wisdom [which is their source] is the same (cf, Tsong-ka-pa, 1977, p. 63)."
"Now, another example. Let's say while you visualize yourself as a female deity, that there is a particular reason or a special reason or special requirement to transform yourself into a male deity, then there are some techniques ...

D. K.: "But basically there's no reason to believe that men and women have to follow different kinds of spiritual techniques?"

Dalai Lama: "No."

D. K.: "There's much in the Tibetan tradition about the process of death and the things that lamas can do to help the dying and the dead. This is a relatively new area of concern for Western psychologists. What practical techniques do you think that they could teach the dying to help them to diminish or remove their fear of death?"

Dalai Lama: "I think here, if the person who is dying has a belief in the next life, then there are different ways to overcome fear in these things. Now, suppose the person does not believe in the next life, then . . . ."

His Holiness began to laugh, as did I, for as I said, 'Yes, that's the problem:'

Dalai Lama: "Then I think that the simplest thing is to think logically. Now with fear, there is nothing helpful in fear or worry or sadness or sorrow. The reality is [that one is] dying: one should not think about these other things. Simply rest, relax."

D. K.: "Relax? What could psychologists do, then, do you think, to help people relax?"

Dalai Lama: "That you see. . . I don't know. I think that is according to the individual person. Suppose someone is very much concerned about their children or some of their relatives, or his wife or her husband, something like that. Then of course, you may say something about these people. For example, if a man is dying and is very much concerned about his wife, then at that moment, they can say, 'Oh, don't worry about your wife, your wife is very fine,' or something like that. 'And your children, they are very bright and there is every reason to believe their future will be successful,' just like that."

D. K.: "Just to be reassuring. But do you think that.

Dalai Lama: "Another thing ... maybe one important thing
is whether that person believes in the next life or not. So it is better to avoid anger, hatred, and very strong attachment during the moment of death. So you see, this is not only helpful for the longer period [i.e, for future lives], but even at that moment he may get more relaxed."

D. K.: "Well, what kind of a practical technique could a psychologist suggest to someone to avoid those extreme feelings that would be so disruptive, like anger, at the moment or at the time of dying?"

Dalai Lama: "Again, much depends on the individual person. According to my own experience, I think the best thing is to analyze, to think, reason."

D. K.: "Just reasoning through the situation?"

Dalai Lama: "If you feel very angry, it doesn't help. But now, at this moment there's something very extraordinary, how do you say, this is a very important period, this is a time to investigate about the mind. You tell that to the person, you see. Then he may have some new thoughts to investigate or to check into, or to look at his own mind. Then that may help him to forget feelings of hatred or other things."

D. K.: "Aha, taking advantage of the situation to investigate would draw one away from the feelings of hatred or anger."

Dalai Lama: "It is a very important period to investigate or to try to realize the nature of consciousness."

D. K.: "This makes me wonder about something else. Many people who are dying are in severe pain and are given drugs to dull the pain, but these drugs also dull the consciousness or alter it in other ways. How might these drugs affect the process of dying? I mean, must a person have clear consciousness unaffected by drugs to die in the most beneficial way?"

Dalai Lama: "It's better to have a clear mind."

D. K.: "It's better to have a clear mind. So in some cases it might be preferable to avoid taking the drugs and have pain?"

Dalai Lama: "Right."

The idea of dying without access to pain killing drugs was very disconcerting, so I pressed the subject. "What if the pain is so strong that it keeps the mind focused on the pain and one can't look at the more beneficial aspect of investigating the mind at
the time of death?" He, of course, realized that his answer had made me very uncomfortable and laughed, "Of course, you see, there are exceptions everywhere."

_D. K._: "O.K. Are the visionary experiences of the dying, if they see beings coming to greet them or bright lights, something like that, are they merely projections out of their own mind or hallucinations? Are they merely experiencing their own mind? Can these experiences be used in some sort of beneficial way by the dying person, or should they be ignored?"

_Dalai Lama_: "[As to the first part of your question.] there are two types. There are certain visions. One is just merely projection [mam rtog]. As to the other, we believe that there is some indication [ten 'brel] or some reason or some kind of influence [or intimation] of the next life, the next stage which appears. So there are two categories. Now, the second part of your question, about their being beneficial. Now suppose he sees some positive visions which give him some happiness, some kind of satisfaction. Then, he may get some peace or relaxation."

_D. K._: "So, he should embrace those visions that are positive."

_Dalai Lama_: "Yes. If something is negative, or creates fear or something like that, then it is better to tell him, 'Ah, this is just a vision or your own projection—nothing to worry about.'"

_D. K._: "So let the person embrace the positive, but say that the negative are merely projections."

_Dalai Lama_: "In reality, as I mentioned earlier, there are two things. For the person who has some practice, some Buddhist practices, especially these tantric practices, then that moment is very important, a very crucial period to implement some of these teachings. At that moment, if it is some person who has some knowledge about these practices, then, remind him or her. That is important."

_D. K._: "For a person who perhaps has religious faith in their own Christian tradition, it might then be useful to keep the mind attending to an image of the Virgin Mary or Christ, or something like that, and that would be very beneficial."

_Dalai Lama_: "Oh yes."

_D. K._: "A question which one of our readers asked is how does one decide on the appropriate balance between the inner
practice for enlightenment vs. service to others
self-control as prerequisite for service
judging the usefulness of activity

meditative kind of work, and work in the world for the service of humanity? He's read that in early Buddhist texts it's suggested that one's first responsibility is to attain deep levels of awakening for oneself before going out into the world. So for us how would one strike the appropriate balance between working for one's own enlightenment and serving other people?"

Dalai Lama: "I think it is difficult to say because there may be a variety, or many different cases, with different circumstances. The basic thing is that, when you are involved in worldly life, there are many cases or occasions or many factors which create anger, attachment, and such things. So, before committing oneself in those activities, first you should reach a certain stage where you can control these things."

D. K.: "Control the anger,"

Dalai Lama: "Yes, so that is the general thing. Another factor is that you should judge the value of an activity, its usefulness. If in order to make some achievement you are completely isolated for some time, [there may be some] value or usefulness in that, and despite your low stage of spiritual development, if you do some work in society, and there may be some more usefulness in that, then do that. So the main thing is, you should judge the usefulness of actions. But as for being isolated, for some preparation, all right for the beginning, [and later] some involvement, so like that. So that depends on the individual case, according to one's disposition."

D. K.: "So it differs according to one's disposition. How would one judge when one is perhaps being overly selfish and withdrawing into one's self and avoiding responsibilities? This would be hard, especially if someone's not very well developed; they could think, well, it's very important that I sit here and practice, practice, practice. Meanwhile, they're not really meeting their responsibilities to others."

Dalai Lama: "Now, you see, if we look at my own case, if I just pursue practices for my own improvement or development, I would need some time completely isolated. Say ten or fifteen years. Now I would gain some good results, but that usefulness and the negative effect on the Tibetans as a whole, especially those Tibetan refugees outside of Tibet...."

D. K.: "They would lose the benefit of your guidance, although you would gain by withdrawing yourself."

Dalai Lama: "There is that viewpoint, some kind of sacrifice.
So it is like that. Say there is a Buddhist teacher, someone involved in the field of teaching, at least a few students gain something practical and beneficial. If he remains isolated someplace for ten, fifteen, twenty years, he may gain something, but those students would lose out. So one has to judge according to one's own circumstances."

D. K.: "Right. In the case of psychologists, it might be a beneficial kind of thing to take short retreats in order to get a better sense of themselves and develop themselves, but not to completely drop the work because then they wouldn't be benefitting others.

"In previous statements, Your Holiness had said that the disturbed need to build up the conventional self [something like the 'ego', sometimes called the 'conventional I'], so they can function properly in the world. For the normal person, part of growth would be the refutation of the false self (a self which is believed to be independent and permanent). As an example of the building-up process, as it's followed in the West, psychologists teach people to assert themselves in situations and perhaps to try to attain the objects of desire in order to strengthen the weak person's ability to function in the world. Now, how would the psychologist know when to stop the first part of this process, this growth process, so as to avoid making the false self even stronger, and the grasping at that false self even more firm?"

Dalai Lama: "On this level where you have one person who is completely discouraged and one person who is over-confident, I think that the main thing is that both cases deal with the 'conventional I'; this has nothing to do with the shunyata theory. And also for the person who is unusual in the spiritual field, there are two extremes. If there is too much ego feeling, pride, then there is every danger of neglecting Dharma practice; 'So I know everything, I have everything.' That sort of thing. So in that case you need, how to say, the clear realization of the weakness of oneself. This includes even your physical weakness, physical defects. For example, in my own case, I do not have good eyesight. Even at just a simple human level, I need these glasses. Now like that, even at just an ordinary human level, my eyesight is much poorer than the normal person. Think, then, of one's own weaker points and the pride will go, like that. Then you see, if one feels much too low, 'Oh, I'm very weak, I can't do anything,' that's a feeling of complete discouragement. Then, for that problem, reason with him, 'Oh, you have a human brain; even a great person such as Mahatma Gandhi, or even Shakyamuni Buddha; now they had no more than just our brain, the same human brain as us, the same
human wisdom, human intelligence, human opportunity. So, you see, why not, you can also accomplish things.'

D. K.: "Likewise, do the same."

Dalai Lama: "So with that sort of encouragement they gain balance. Too high, go down, too low, go up. This has nothing to do with shunyata [the analysis of the apparent 'self' nature of persons and phenomena]."

D. K.: "So this building up of the ego would not increase the grasping after the 'self-nature'?

Dalai Lama: "When you're feeling very weak, and you can't do anything, in that case, in fact, you have grasping for self. If you think, 'There's nobody weaker than myself,' then at that point, you're thinking very strongly about 'myself.'"

D. K.: "Now, I see that, O.K. Now if the psychologist were to say, 'Look,' as you say, 'Gandhi had a brain, you have a brain, you have the capacity to do very wonderful things,' then that's not increasing the self-cherishing [grasping after one's 'self' nature] because that person has strong self-cherishing anyhow. Is that what you're suggesting?"

Dalai Lama: "Grasping for the self, this is the basic problem."

D. K.: "So this kind of technique is not going to increase grasping after self because there's so much of it already that it doesn't matter?"

Dalai Lama: "I don't know. Now that largely depends on the interpretation or the understanding of the ana/rna theory. Now the remarkable thing is that the proper understanding of non-self theory, that knowledge will help all the positive thoughts and will obstruct all the negative thoughts. If a person is too weak, or discouraged, then that understanding may help. Now again, if the person is too high, then this thought [of emptiness] will help control [that inflation]. I think, you see, in another way, the proper understanding of shunyata makes you realistic: Because of your grasping at things in a way and considering things in a way in which they don't actually exist, that kind of thought or consideration is the real trigger of all these emotions. Having an improper evaluation of things [is the real trigger of all these emotions]. The realization of the knowledge, the proper knowledge of shunyata will control all those thoughts. Once those thoughts are controlled, it is something like stopping the trigger."

D. K.: "So, understanding shunyata is the best psycho-
therapy of all, if one can gain that understanding."

He laughed as he had done a year ago when I had suggested that the shunyata theory might have a place in psychotherapeutic practice, saying, "Something like that, I think."

We concluded the interview with some small talk and a lot of laughter, and then Tendzin Choegyal and Alex and I left the audience hall to continue the conversation over coffee in one of the offices next to His Holiness's palace. After coffee, I walked across the courtyard to the temple and looked out over the plain of North India and the rice paddies 5,000 feet below. Above me, the hawks continued to circle and cry out, while below me the young monks began to practice on the long horns.

NOTES

1. Here His Holiness refers to the use of the imagination to generate or visualize an image in the 'mind's eye.' This type of exercise is a portion of the 'complete practice' often referred to as 'deity yoga.' For an authoritative discussion of deity yoga, see Tsong-ka-pa (1977,1981), each with an extensive introduction by the Dalai Lama.

2. Shunya (empty) and shunyata (emptiness) are Sanskrit terms which designate the actual nature of persons and phenomena as these are known to the consciousness of the master yogi. While ordinary consciousness perceives phenomena as permanent, partless and independent substances with distinct identities, the wisdom consciousness of the master yogi perceives them as empty or devoid of permanence, as made of parts, as dependent on causes and conditions, and as without an identity based on their own natures (Cf. Tsong-ka-pa, 1980, pp. 50-74). Bodhichitta is a Sanskrit term which is variously translated as "altruistic mind of enlightenment or awakening mind." It designates the attitude cultivated by the yogi that all actions of body, speech, and mind are undertaken not merely for the benefit of the yogi himself, but for the benefit of all sentient beings. Such motivation and actions are said to be as firm as a diamond because they do not have the fault of selfishness. This is the meaning of His Holiness's use of the word "determination" (cf. Tsong-ka-pa, 1980, pp. 36-39, 46-49).

"These techniques are based on the view that one can only develop excessive attachment towards persons and things if one misunderstands their nature. Thus, the antidote to excessive attachments (such as lust or greed) is knowledge of the true nature of persons and things, which is that they are devoid or empty [shunya] of permanence, partlessness, independence and identity (Cf, note 2). Analyzing the human body into its constituent organs, for example, forcefully reminds one that it is composed of parts-s-who could feel lust for an aggregation of organs? Rather, the attachment is a response of instinct [bag chags] toward an object whose actual nature is incorrectly understood and which is only considered on a superficial level.

4. Here His Holiness refers to the Buddhist assertion that the objects of perception have their own nature but that we don't know them as such. Ordinary persons only know objects as perceptions to which they have attached labels or identities, which means that their appearance is derived in part from the objects' own nature ('their side') and in part from 'our side', which is the perceptual process, the mental process of labeling, and the influence of desire, habit, instinct, and the ignorance which is the attribution of selfhood to all phenomena.
*SAna*/*na* means "non-self." When the wisdom consciousness knows persons and phenomena to be *shunya* or empty of permanence, independence or partlessness, it knows them to be lacking an identifiable self-nature. *Atma* refers to this self-nature, and wisdom knows persons and phenomena to be *anatma*, "without self," or "selfless."

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