

Three Practices of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness: An Investigation in Comparative Soteriology

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Abstract

This paper investigates three sets of meditation practices each of which follows a distinct approach to the Buddhist teaching known as “the four foundations of mindfulness.” The philosophical framework, or *view*, of these meditation practices is explored, but the primary focus of the paper is the method of *practice* of the instructions and the perceived *result* of that practice. Practice and result are investigated primarily through participant observation.

This investigation illuminates the soteriological process or *path* of each of these sets of practices, and inquires into their consonance with each other, thus it is an essay in comparative soteriology. The paper observes that although aspects of these practices overlap one another, each of the sets of practices addresses most effectively one of three varieties of mental disturbance that are recognized to be the roots of suffering in Buddhist literature. The paper concludes that these sets of practices are complementary, not contradictory, and that one set of practices does not supersede another.

Introduction

This paper is a summary of the Master’s thesis that I submitted to Naropa University in May 2011 in partial completion of a Master’s degree in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.¹ This degree program is based on the traditional pedagogy of the *shedra* or monastic college of the Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. In this pedagogy, a distinction is drawn between the *Hīnayāna* (small vehicle) [*better known since 1950, as Theravada, see footnote #2*] and the *Mahāyāna* (great vehicle). The term *Hīnayāna*² was an historical invention of the schools that consider themselves *Mahāyāna*.³ It is a somewhat derogatory [*antiquated*] term; many *Mahāyāna* texts speak of the lesser attainments of *Hīnayāna* practitioners and the greater attainments of *Mahāyāna* practitioners.⁴ Within this two-level hierarchy, the *shedra* tradition recognizes a further four-fold division into the “four schools” of Buddhism – the *Vaibhāṣikas*, *Sautrāntikas*, *Yogācāras*, and *Mādhyamikas*. The schools of the *Vaibhāṣikas* and *Sautrāntikas* are represented as *Hīnayāna* [*extinct schools*] and the schools of the *Yogācāras* and *Mādhyamikas* are represented as *Mahāyānists*. The four schools are presented as progressive stages of understanding, starting from the (error-ridden) *Vaibhāṣikas* and leading to the “correct” view of the *Mādhyamikas*: each “higher” school refutes the errors of the view “below” it.⁵

¹ Thomas A.C. Weiser, *Three Approaches to the Four Foundations: An Investigation of Vipassanā Meditation, Analytical Meditation and Śamatha/Vipaśyanā Meditation on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness*. (Master’s Thesis, Naropa University 2011)

² Editor’s Footnote: With all apologies to the author, see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinayana> - the term should no longer be used, and that people still discuss the term, in whatever context shows their disregard for historical circumstances. Such usage still propagates the negativity. Respectful Buddhist scholarship since 1950, should replace the term. Here in this article, because of the way Thomas Weiser uses it, it cannot be edited out and replaced with: *Theravada*.

³ Andrew Skilton, *A Concise History of Buddhism* (Birmingham: Windhorse, 1994) 93

⁴ For example, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche, *Gateway to Knowledge, Volume III*, (Boudhanath: Rangjung Yeshe, 2002) 186 - 189.

⁵ This is the approach taken by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso in *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*, (Australasia: Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal, 2001). It is also fundamental to the approach of the Nitartha Institute, which is under the guidance of the Dzogchen Pönlop Rinpoche, who is a student of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso. For examples of

In the course of my studies, I noticed that I was never presented with texts of the lower schools. Instead, I was directed to memorize a collection of truth statements attributed to those schools. These truth statements seemed at best a biased summary of the views of that school and at worst a caricature those views. It took me a while to recognize that this presentation is meant to serve as a pedagogical device, and is not meant to be an accurate historical presentation of the schools in question.⁶ The “lower” schools presented in this way are all dogs, not meant as representations of valid wisdom tradition but rather representations of certain kinds of failures of Mādhyamikas.

I argue that this style of teaching is appropriate within a lineage; it identifies errors and pitfalls that have been identified by practitioners within that lineage. By projecting those errors out onto other (historically questionable, perhaps even fictional) schools, the lineage promotes confidence in its own root teachings. This is a useful strategy in the cloistered environment of a monastery, where students are not in contact with those other schools. But it’s not as useful when trying to establish dialog between lineages, nor is it useful in establishing reasonable comparisons between lineages.

At this time, lineages are coming into contact with each other in unprecedented ways. Not only are lineages of Buddhist teachings likely to be geographically proximate to one another in large cities, they are virtually proximate through the widespread exchange of information fostered by digital technology. It is less and less likely that students of any given lineage will remain insulated from contact with other lineages. In this environment, the pedagogical strategy of projecting an error on to an external school becomes quite dangerous, because students can determine the accuracy of such a projection. If the inaccuracy of that projection is glaring enough, it might cause the student to question the validity of the teachings *in toto*. This was certainly my experience: my first reaction to the pedagogy of the four schools was that it seemed to be a very poor example of comparative scholarship.

In this way, the contact between lineages represents a danger to an established pedagogical method. But this very contact also represents an unparalleled opportunity; rather than looking for error, Buddhist lineages could consult one another for their wisdom. This paper represents an attempt at the approach of *comparative soteriology*, which encourages the discovery of commonality of efficacious practice across lineages.

Methodology

This paper uses introspective inquiry in the form of participant observation to compare three sets of meditation practices, each of which represents a distinct approach to the commonly held Buddhist teaching known as “the four foundations of mindfulness.” In the course of my research, I practiced *vipassanā* meditation in the tradition of the Insight Meditation community, *analytical meditation* in the tradition of the Tibetan Kagyü lineage, and *śamatha/vipaśyanā* meditation as practiced by the lineage of Shambhala Buddhism. Each of these practices cites one or more texts as scriptural basis. My practice of *vipassanā* meditation was based on the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta (in the translation of Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi);⁷ my practice of analytical meditation was based on the text of the ninth chapter of Pawo Tsugla Trengwa Rinpoche’s commentary

Nitartha’s presentation of the four schools, see *The Gateway That Reveals the Philosophical Systems to Fresh* by the Dzogchen Pönlop Rinpoche and Acharya Lama Tenpa Gyaltsen (Canada: Nitartha Institute, 2001) and Acharya Sherab Gyaltsen’s commentary on that work entitled *Hīnayāna Tenets* (Canada: Nitartha Institute, 2001)

⁶ As Karl Brunnhölzl asserts in *The Center of the Sunlit Sky: Madhyamaka in the Kagyü Tradition* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 2004.), 862 n, 137.

⁷ Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu and Bodhi, Bhikkhu, trans. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005).

(in Karl Brunnhölzl's translation) on Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*⁸, and my practice of śamatha/vipaśyanā was based on teachings on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness given by Trungpa Rinpoche in 1973 and 1974.⁹

I relied on contemporary meditation instructors to guide me in my practice. I followed the instructions of Gil Fronsdal¹⁰ and Lloyd Burton¹¹ in my practice of vipassanā meditation. (I followed recorded instructions from Fronsdal, and instructions given to a group class by Burton.) I followed instructions given to me personally by Lama Tenpa Gyaltzen¹² in my practice of analytical meditation. I followed the instructions given to me personally by Gaylon Ferguson¹³ in my practice of śamatha/vipaśyanā meditation. I practiced each of these sets of instructions for a fifteen-week semester and kept journals of my experiences. These journals are a source of my research materials.

After each of these semesters of practice I undertook a meditation retreat. After practicing vipassanā meditation, I took part in a ten-day group vipassanā retreat following the recorded instructions of S. N. Goenka.¹⁴ After practicing analytical meditation, I undertook a five-day solo practice intensive following instructions given by Lama Tenpa Gyaltzen. After practicing śamatha/vipaśyanā meditation, I took part in a thirty-day dathün following the instructions of Allyn Lyon.¹⁵ I kept journals of my experiences during the solo intensive and the dathün (I was not permitted to keep a journal during the vipassanā retreat). These journals are also a source of my research materials.

It is clear that my research represents only a first foray into this style of comparative soteriology; it is by no means conclusive. However, I hope that my research will provide valuable groundwork for others and that the framework of such appreciative comparison will be a benefit to the Buddhist community at large.

Summary of Research Findings

Vipassanā Meditation:

Textual Basis for the Practice of Vipassanā Meditation

The textual basis for my practice of vipassanā meditation was the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta,¹⁶ a discourse of the Buddha contained in the Majjhima Nikāya, which I read in translation. The Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta, also in translation,¹⁷ provided an additional textual basis. The Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta is found in the Dīgha Nikāya and includes, in addition to the full text of the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta, a more extensive treatment of the Four

⁸ Translation of this commentary is found in Karl Brunnhölzl's *The Center of the Sunlit Sky: Madhyamaka in the Kagyü Tradition* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 2004.)

⁹ Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *The Heart of the Buddha* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1991) 21 – 58.

¹⁰ Gil Fronsdal is a senior teacher at the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City. For biographical information see <http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/teachers/>.

¹¹ Lloyd Burton is a senior teacher at the Insight Meditation Center of Denver for biographical information see <http://www.insightcolorado.org/teachers/index.html>.

¹² Lama Tenpa Gyaltzen is a faculty member of Naropa University and a senior teacher in the Nalandhabodhi Sangha. For biographical information see <http://www.rebelbuddha.com/profiles/acharya-lama-tenpa/>.

¹³ Gaylon Ferguson is a faculty member at Naropa University and a senior teacher in the lineage of Shambhala Buddhism. For biographical information see (www.shambhala.org/teachers/acharya/gferguson.php).

¹⁴ S. N. Goenka is a student of Sayagyi U Ba Khin of Burma (Myanmar). For biographical information see <http://www.dhamma.org/en/goenka.shtml>.

¹⁵ Allyn Lyon is a senior teacher in the lineage of Shambhala Buddhism. For biographical information see <http://www.shambhala.org/teachers/acharya/alyon.php>

¹⁶ Bhikku Nāṇamoli and Bhikku, Bhodi, trans., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005, 145 – 155 (i.56 – i.63).

¹⁷ Maurice Walshe trans., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 1995) 335 – 350 (ii.290 – ii.315).

Noble Truths. I also consulted writings by the Theravāda masters Anālayo,¹⁸ Sayadaw U Sīlānanda,¹⁹ Nyanaponika Thera,²⁰ and S. N. Goenka,²¹ as well as Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh,²² as supplementary research. As can be inferred from the large number of commentaries available, the Satipaṭṭhāna and Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna suttas are considered fundamental teachings in Theravāda Buddhism.²³

Following Anālayo's analysis²⁴, I note that the sutta is composed largely of thirteen subsections separated by a repeated refrain. Each of these subsections describes one of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. Six of the subsections describe mindfulness of body (*kāya*); one of the subsections describes mindfulness of feeling (*vedanā*); one describes mindfulness of mind (*citta*); and the remaining five describe mindfulness of mental objects (*dhamma*).

The Satipaṭṭhāna sutta is often interpreted as a compendium of practice instructions. Gil Fronsdal hypothesizes that it is not the record of a teaching delivered in its entirety at any one time, but rather a collection assembled from a variety of teachings.²⁵ This hypothesis links the composition of the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta with that impulse toward systemization of the Buddha's extensive teachings that may also have resulted in the creation of the abhidhamma literature. Each of the subsections of the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta highlights a different practice, and therefore, ostensibly a new object of meditation. In practice however, some traditions use a single object of meditation for all of the practices included in the sutta, or a limited subset of practices included in the sutta.²⁶

The sutta describes the practice of the four foundations as *ekayāna*, a single or direct path, which leads to the cessation of suffering. It predicts that one who develops the foundations will achieve "either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return."²⁷ Thus, the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta characterizes the four foundations of mindfulness as a practice that, in itself, is sufficient to bring the practitioner either to the completion of the Path or near to that completion.

Practice Instructions for Vipassanā Meditation

For my primary practice instructions, I used a series of fourteen dharma talks given by Gil Fronsdal to the California Insight Meditation Community (August 25 - December 15, 2003).²⁸ Fronsdal's talks concentrated on explication of the text, but they also gave sufficient instructions for me to practice. I supplemented Fronsdal's instructions with a series of four dharma talks given by Lloyd Burton to the Denver sangha of the Insight Meditation Community of Colorado (October 4 - 25, 2009.) I attended these teachings in person.

¹⁸ Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization* (Cambridge: Windhorse Publications, 2003)

¹⁹ Sayadaw U Sīlānanda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2002)

²⁰ Nyanaponika Thera *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (San Francisco: Weiser Books, 1965)

²¹ S. N. Goenka, *The Discourse Summaries of S. N. Goenka: Talks from a ten-day course in Vipassanā Meditation* condensed by William Hart (Onalaska: Vipassanā Research Publications, 1987) and S. N. Goenka, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Discourses* (Seattle: Vipassanā Research Publications, 1998)

²² Thich Nhat Hanh, *Transformation and Healing: The Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990)

²³ Mahinda Deegalle, "Soteriological Fundamentalism and Interreligious Dialogue" World Council of Churches. (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd37-03.html>) accessed 4/14/11.

²⁴ Anālayo, 17.

²⁵ In support of Fronsdal's thesis, we find sections of the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta extant in the Satipaṭṭhānasamyutta, Ānāpānasati sutta and Ānāpānasamyutta, Kāyagatāsati sutta, Sāmaññaphala sutta, and Potṭhapāda sutta.

²⁶ For example, S. N. Goenka uses bodily sensation as the object of meditation throughout the four foundations, and Thich Nhat Hanh uses the breath as the object of meditation throughout the four foundations.

²⁷ MN i.63, p 155.

²⁸ Gil Fronsdal, Satipattana Sutta [sic] (<http://www.audiodharma.org/series/1/talk/1742/>) Accessed September – December 2009.

Fronsdal and Burton are both practitioners in the Insight Meditation tradition, which is in the lineage of Theravāda Buddhism via Mahasi Sayadaw of Burma; Burton acknowledges Fronsdal as one of his teachers. Fronsdal notes that the Insight Meditation tradition is ecumenical in its approach: it embraces many different techniques of cultivating mindfulness, although it finds its main root in the teachings of Mahasi Sayadaw.²⁹ Both Fronsdal and Burton bring additional influences to their teachings: Fronsdal is also a Soto Zen priest and a Stanford PhD; Burton has a Master's degree in counseling and guidance.

Fronsdal asserts that the practices of the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta cultivate awareness of those psychophysical processes and states of mind that lead toward suffering, and those that lead away from suffering.³⁰ In the course of the practice, one places bare attention on these processes and states of mind; one experiences them without judgment and storyline.³¹ One becomes familiar with the quality of them; one learns what the mind is like when they are present and when they are not; one develops a “felt sense” of them.³² As one engages in this process, one recognizes that certain states hinder the mind from experiencing happiness. One naturally gravitates toward states of mind free of such hindrance; one begins to relinquish attachment and clinging, and begins to experience the seven factors of enlightenment more and more clearly. By completely relinquishing attachment and clinging, one achieves liberation from suffering. This non-attachment is not a frosty detachment: as the practitioner's mind becomes less hindered by unhelpful mental states, it contacts sensory experience directly, unobscured by concept: the practitioner becomes more intimate with the world.³³ The experience of such a practitioner is suffused with energy, interest and joy.

The objects of meditation - which Fronsdal characterizes as “processes and states of mind” above - correspond to many of the familiar enumerations of the abhidhamma (such as the five skandhas, the six ayatanas, mind and mental factors, etc.). Here, I agree with the Judith Simmer-Brown's assertion that we should understand that the goal of the abhidhamma is not primarily ontological, but soteriological: the abhidhamma is “the notebook of the practice tradition.”³⁴ The Satipaṭṭhāna sutta is a soteriological guide -- a collection of instructions that address a wide array of mental disturbances.

Fronsdal's practice instructions closely followed the text of the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta and were inclusive in their approach: when he explicated sections of the sutta, he would often offer several alternate practice instructions based on that text.³⁵ Sometimes, he would note that in his training he had not practiced a certain technique, but would nonetheless offer that technique as a practice that might be beneficial. Fronsdal's instructions stressed the application of bare attention, but not all of the instructions he presented were simply observation: he also included meditations that were meant to soothe and calm the body;³⁶ contemplations on cause and effect;³⁷ and visualizations.³⁸

At the end of my semester-long practice of Fronsdal's and Burton's instructions, I undertook a vipassanā retreat in the tradition of S. N. Goenka at the Dhamma Dharā center in Shelburne, MA. Goenka studied under the Burmese Theravādin teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin. The practice instructions given by Goenka were recorded on DVD and played

²⁹ Fronsdal 8/25/03

³⁰ Fronsdal, 11/24/03

³¹ Fronsdal, 10/06/03, 10/13/03

³² Fronsdal, 11/03/03

³³ Fronsdal, 9/15/03

³⁴ Judith Simmer-Brown, lecture from course “First Turning”, Naropa University, Fall 2009.

³⁵ For example, his treatment of the “breath body” 8/25/03.

³⁶ For instance, using the breath to tranquilize bodily formations, 9/1/03.

³⁷ For instance, contemplation of the arising and ceasing of mental hindrances 11/10/03.

³⁸ Fronsdal offers this interpretation of the practice of corpse meditation 9/29/03.

to the participants of the retreat. (This is the standard procedure for Goenka's vipassanā retreats.)

In Goenka's view, suffering is a result of mental reactions, *saṅkhārā*³⁹, that arise on the basis of sensations (*vedanā*) that occur when consciousness makes contact with an object.⁴⁰ We take the sensations and their accompanying reactions as accurate feedback about the nature of the object. But in reality, the feelings we experience have much more to do with our response to our own *saṅkhārā* than they do with our direct experience of the object.⁴¹

Through this process, we create more and more *saṅkhārā* and become imprisoned by them. Since the process by which *saṅkhārā* proliferate is based on sensations, we can only liberate ourselves by cultivating equanimity to all sensations.⁴² When the mind truly rests in equanimity with regard to sensation, it does not create any new *saṅkhārā*,⁴³ and older *saṅkhārā* can emerge from the depths of the mind up onto its surface.⁴⁴ If the practitioner rests in equanimity with regard to the arising of these old *saṅkhārā*, they too dissipate.⁴⁵ In Goenka's view, the continued dissipation of old *saṅkhārā* leads to purification of the mind and is the path to liberation.⁴⁶

Where Fronsdal's approach is inclusive, Goenka's approach is exclusive; it always takes bodily sensations, *vedanā*, as its object of meditation. Fronsdal offers many different practices to address many different needs; Goenka stresses consistency of practice in order to deeply affect the mind: students are cautioned against practicing other forms of meditation (not because they are "bad" but because they may interfere with the process that Goenka teaches.)⁴⁷ During Goenka retreats, practitioners are also prohibited from practicing any other kind of meditation technique, and any yoga or other "energy work."

Perceived Results of Vipassanā Meditation

After practicing vipassanā meditation, I found myself much more interested in and appreciative of the details of my physical and mental experience, particularly in my experience of my body. I felt more comfortable in my body, and much more able to endure physical and mental discomfort with equanimity. I felt more cheerful, and experienced a natural renunciation of "non-virtuous" actions - I naturally avoided actions that caused myself pain. I had an experiential understanding of the way in which I created suffering by – paradoxically – moving toward unpleasant thoughts in order to ward off anticipated pain. I developed an appreciation for the efficacy in "non-doing" as embodied in the practice of bare attention. I developed a felt sense that the teaching of the *khandhas* is accurate – that I am actually composed of parts. Prior to this practice, my understanding of the *khandhas* was theoretical and a bit threatening. After practicing I felt that being composed of parts is not a frightening state of affairs, but actually rather interesting.

Analytical Meditation

³⁹ Goenka defines *saṅkhārā* narrowly, as "reactions" to begin his presentation but opens it later to include both reactions and the mental states that result from those reactions. I personally find it useful to think of *saṅkhārā* as psychophysical complexes.

⁴⁰ S. N. Goenka, *The Discourse Summaries of S. N. Goenka: Talks from a ten-day course in Vipassana Meditation condensed by William Hart*. Onalaska: Vipassana Research Publications, 1987, 47.

⁴¹ Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 70.

⁴² Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 41.

⁴³ Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 40.

⁴⁴ Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 49.

⁴⁵ Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 56, 69.

⁴⁶ Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 49.

⁴⁷ Goenka, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Discourses* (Seattle: Vipassanā Research Publications, 1998) 78 – 79.

Textual Basis for the Practice of Analytical Meditation

The textual basis for my practice of analytical meditation was a selection from the ninth chapter of Pawo Tsugla Trengwa Rinpoche's commentary on Śāntideva's Bodhicaryāvatāra, translated by Karl Brunnhölzl.⁴⁸ I found an additional textual basis in the transcript of a talk given by the Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal⁴⁹ (a lama and retreat master of the Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism), given to the Nalandabodhi sangha in Boulder, Colorado on June 7 through June 9, 2002.⁵⁰ This talk closely followed Pawo Tsugla Trengwa Rinpoche's commentary. In addition, I consulted Kunzang Pelden's commentary *The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech*,⁵¹ which parallels Pawo Rinpoche's commentary, and the Dzogchen Pönlop Rinpoche's article "The Four Foundations of Mindfulness,"⁵² which integrates Pawo Rinpoche's commentary with Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Pawo Rinpoche (1504 -1562) was a student of the Eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje. Karl Brunnhölzl notes that Pawo Rinpoche's commentary is considered a fundamental text in the scholastic tradition of the Karma Kagyü lineage.⁵³ Pawo Rinpoche's commentary on the ninth chapter of the Bodhicaryāvatāra is divided into two sections: one entitled "the general topic", and one entitled "the meaning of the text". The section entitled "the general topic" concentrates on refutations of the faulty views of purity, pleasantness, permanence and Self. Each of these faulty views is associated with one of the foundations of mindfulness. (The body is not pure, feelings are not pleasant, mind is not permanent, phenomena have no Self)⁵⁴ In this section, Pawo Rinpoche does not refer to Śāntideva's text, but uses Asaṅga's *Abhidharma Samuccaya* as his textual basis.⁵⁵ He follows Asaṅga in distinguishing the path of the lesser vehicle from the path of the greater vehicle. The second section of Pawo Rinpoche's commentary, entitled "the meaning of the text," is a close interpretation of Śāntideva's text. In this section Pawo Rinpoche explicates logic that demonstrates that none of the objects of the four foundations are truly existent.

The expected soteriological path is not specifically delineated in this section of Pawo Rinpoche's commentary, but I suggest that it conforms to the model adumbrated in Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*: that śamatha is necessary for stability of mind, but it is insight (specifically insight into emptiness) resulting from vipaśyanā that ultimately liberates the practitioner. Śāntideva himself supports such an interpretation: "Penetrative insight joined with calm abiding / Utterly eradicates afflicted states."⁵⁶

Penetrative insight may begin by positing a right view that negates a wrong one, but when all wrong views have been negated, the need for any view at all falls away by itself.⁵⁷ Thus, the predicated fruition of this practice is the ability to rest non-conceptually

⁴⁸ Karl Brunnhölzl, *The Center of the Sunlit Sky*, 713 – 732.

⁴⁹ For biographical information see (<http://www.nalandawest.org/teachers/western-teachers/karl-brunnholzl>).

⁵⁰ The Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal, "Vipaśyanā Talk." Transcript of Lecture Series. Nalandabodhi Sangha. Boulder, CO, June 7 – 9, 2002.

⁵¹ Kunzang Pelden, *The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech: A Detailed Commentary on Shantideva's Way of the Bodhisattva* (New Delhi: Shechen Publications, 2008).

⁵² Excerpted from a teaching in Vermont, 1996, presumably at Karne Chöling. Originally published in Bodhi Magazine, Issue 3.

⁵³ Brunnhölzl, *The Center of the Sunlit Sky*, 613

⁵⁴ Brunnhölzl, *The Center of the Sunlit Sky*, 713

⁵⁵ In Brunnhölzl, *The Center of the Sunlit Sky*, 713, Pawo Rinpoche cites "The higher abhidharma" as his source. Karl Brunnhölzl elucidates this, "'Higher abhidharma' refers to Asaṅga's *Compendium of Abhidharma* (P 5550, fols. ii4b.3 - 4). In the great vehicle [Mahāyāna], the presentations in Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* are considered "the lower abhidharma." Brunnhölzl, *The Center of the Sunlit Sky*, 951, n. 1681.

⁵⁶ Śāntideva, 110 (8.4)

⁵⁷ Śāntideva 9.34 p 142

in a mind that does not cling to anything.

Practice Instructions for Analytical Meditation

I received practice instructions in one-on-one sessions with Lama Tenpa Gyaltzen. Lama Tenpa is a Vajrayāna practitioner and senior teacher, or *ācārya*, in the Karma Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. He studied with Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso at the Kagyü shedra (monastic college) at the Karma Shri Nalanda Institute at Rumtek monastery; the Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal and the Dzogchen Pönlop Rinpoche were both fellow students. Pawo Rinpoche's commentary on the Bodhicarāvātāra was among the texts Lama Tenpa studied in shedra while earning his *ācārya* degree.

In Lama Tenpa's view, the goal of analytical meditation is to enable the practitioner to wake up from confusion. In order to do so, the practitioner must understand that this confusion is the result of thoughts that have taken on weight and solidity. Through analytical meditation, the practitioner examines these solidified thoughts in order to come to the realization that they are not actually solid at all, and that they are not the reliable guides they seem to be. In the technical language of analytical meditation, these thoughts are the *object of negation* of the analysis. Analytical meditation is always targeted toward a specific object of negation: the practitioner performs analysis not to determine the nature of reality, but to let go of a particular incorrect thought.

In the process of analytical meditation, thoughts seem to proliferate, but these thoughts are lighter, less monolithic than the solidified confusion mentioned above, and therefore they are easier to see through. Eventually the practitioner no longer believes the solidified thought, and can relinquish it. This process of relinquishing confusion in the form of solidified thoughts is understood to be the path to liberation. Eventually the practitioner may arrive at a state free from clinging to any thought or view.

I assumed that in the course of the semester we would follow the sequence of analyses found in Pawo Rinpoche's commentary. But as we progressed, Lama Tenpa presented me with analyses that diverged quite a bit from those found in Pawo Rinpoche's commentary. He added the following practices and analyses:

- Experience feelings without associating them with “Me”⁵⁸
- Analyze “permanent” and “self.” What is your view of permanence? What is your view of a Self? Does this view cause you any suffering?⁵⁹
- Can you imagine something that your mind can't think of that might not be impermanent?⁶⁰
- Does a Generally Characterized Phenomenon have any inherent characteristics?⁶¹ (This analysis refers to the *pramāṇa* teachings of Dignaga and Dharmakirti, which I had previously studied with Lama Tenpa.)
- What is the source of your most disturbing emotion (*klesha*)?⁶²
- How does “best” exist? (This question is a response to my discovery that my greatest *klesha* involves a fear of not having “the best” experience.) Is “best” separate from the experiencer?⁶³
- What exactly is the Self of Phenomena (the object of negation of the second turning)?⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 9/29/10

⁵⁹ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 10/6/10

⁶⁰ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 10/15/10

⁶¹ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 10/20/10

⁶² Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 10/27/10

⁶³ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 11/3/10

⁶⁴ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 11/10/10

I found these instructions very helpful and illuminating (particularly the exploration of the nature of concept). But I also became somewhat concerned because we seemed to be departing from the text, and the text was, I had thought, the basis of my research. It seemed to me that Lama Tenpa was giving to me were related to those found in *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*, by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso, Lama Tenpa's teacher. At one point I asked Lama Tenpa whether we were following Pawo Rinpoche's commentary or that of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso. He replied (I paraphrase) "I'm keeping both of those texts in mind, and I'm helping you clarify those things that you personally need to clarify." This was the hallmark of Lama Tenpa's work with me: he insisted that rather than go through some standard procedure, I should find the appropriate *object of negation* for myself. He told me that it was possible that "textbook" meditations might not always be appropriate to my particular case.⁶⁵ This assertion raises the issue of the proper relationship of text and oral instruction. Lama Tenpa asserted that while the root text is always honored as the most important, generally it was acknowledged that oral instruction was the most helpful. (My experience studying within the Tibetan tradition has generally confirmed this. The bulk of the study tends to be on commentary, not on original texts. For instance, in my work with Lama Tenpa, I received oral instruction on a commentary on a doha referring to a sutra, where the sutra was ostensibly considered primary, since it contained the words of the Buddha, but the words of the sutra were completely obscured by the levels of commentary above.)

In the traditional language of Tibetan Buddhism, one could say that the practitioner applies the *antidote* of analytic meditation to the object of meditation. Lama Tenpa stressed that an antidote need not express the truth: truth is, in any case, beyond expression.⁶⁶ The antidote merely helps dissolve the unhelpful concept. Clinging to the antidote as truth is another problem (and will require another antidote).

Perceived Results of Analytical Meditation

As a result of practicing the analytic meditation approach, I experienced a greater interest in and understanding of the effect of concepts. I realized that concepts were both the main hindrance and the main vehicle for progress on the Path. I became convinced that simple concepts arise naturally and spontaneously and could be employed usefully; that no concept is in itself problematic -- rather the problem lies in our relationship to concepts, particularly in our clinging to the belief that certain concepts are "true." I realized that even the most useful concept could not be true in itself, and began to see that any view, even the most helpful view, could not possibly be ultimately true. I began to understand the nature of my own habitual clinging to view, and I opened up to the use of "untrue" views as antidotes. Since one of my prime areas of clinging is view, this understanding had quite an impact on me.

My appreciation of the use of concepts led me to a greater appreciation for textual study, and in particular for the style of contemplative analysis that I undertook during retreat; I saw how textual analysis could be of enormous help in combating pernicious concepts. I also saw how an emphasis on conceptual exploration could lead to an excited, ungrounded mental state. This led me to an appreciation of the assertion that *vipaśyanā* must be grounded in *śamatha*.

⁶⁵ In *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*, (New York: Random House, 2010), p 45, Stephen Batchelor mentions his disenchantment at debates and logical analyses that seemed only to confirm foregone orthodox conclusions. This was not my experience with Lama Tenpa --he insisted that I come to my own conclusions. (Of course, he would debate me on those with which he disagreed.)

⁶⁶ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 9/17/10

Through my exploration of the nature and use of concept, I achieved a greater understanding of the teachings on emptiness, particularly the way in which objects are neither existent nor non-existent, but nevertheless appear clearly and can be used functionally.

Śamatha/Vipaśyanā Meditation

Textual Basis of Śamatha/Vipaśyanā Meditation

The textual basis for my practice of śamatha/vipaśyanā meditation is the chapter “The Four Foundations of Mindfulness” in *Heart of the Buddha* by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. This chapter is based on the lecture series entitled “Techniques of Mindfulness” given by Trungpa Rinpoche at Karne Chöling in August 1974 and edited by Judith Lief for publication first in *Garuda* magazine (issue IV) and later in *Heart of the Buddha*. I also referred to transcripts of the Vajradhatu Seminary led by Trungpa Rinpoche in Jackson Hole, Wyoming during the months of September through November, 1973, as well as audio files of the lecture series entitled “Training the Mind” given by Trungpa Rinpoche at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center in August 1974, and audio files of the lecture series entitled “Techniques of Mindfulness” mentioned above. I consulted Gaylon Ferguson’s *Natural Wakefulness*⁶⁷ as additional research. (In this text, Ferguson integrates Trungpa Rinpoche’s teachings with those of Trungpa Rinpoche’s dharma heir, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, as well as with the teachings of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.)

Although Trungpa Rinpoche prefaced his article in *Garuda IV* with an abridged version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, his presentation of the four foundations differs significantly from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: in place of the four traditional foundations -- body, feeling, mind and mental objects -- Trungpa Rinpoche presents the foundations of body, life, effort, and mind. Trungpa Rinpoche asserts that his teaching is “taken from the treasury of the living oral tradition,” and shows “the essence of each of the four foundations, the inner key to its practice.” This assertion connects his presentation of the four foundations with *upadeśa*, pith instructions, rather than the collections of sūtra (*Kangyur*) or shastra (*Tengyur*).

Trungpa Rinpoche does not identify a specific source for his teaching. This is not uncommon among Buddhist teachers —teachings are often given without any citation of the textual basis for those teachings.⁶⁸ It is possible that Trungpa Rinpoche received this teaching in its current form from one of his teachers. It is also possible that he received these teachings in a different way: within the Shambhala lineage, Trungpa Rinpoche is understood to be a *tertön*, a discoverer of *terma*, or hidden dharma teachings.⁶⁹ Given that Trungpa Rinpoche refrains from citing any underlying sutra or commentary, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that his teachings on the four foundations teaching might be *terma*.⁷⁰

Trungpa Rinpoche did not teach extensively on the four foundations of mindfulness, nor does his successor, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.⁷¹ However, Trungpa

⁶⁷ Gaylon Ferguson, *Natural Wakefulness: Discovering the Wisdom We Were Born With* (Boston: Shambhala, 2009)

⁶⁸ For instance, as mentioned above, the Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal never mentioned that his presentation was a summary of Pawo Rinpoche’s commentary.

⁶⁹ Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Carolyn Rose Gimian, *The Mishap Lineage: Transforming Confusion Into Wisdom*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2009 109 n. 2. Fabrice Midal, *Chögyam Trungpa: His Life and Vision* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2004) 219 – 220.

⁷⁰ Gaylon Ferguson has mentioned to me in conversation that he finds these teachings to be “virtually *terma*”. (Private correspondence 7/12/10)

⁷¹ My research has uncovered only three instances in which Trungpa Rinpoche gave formal teachings on the four foundations of mindfulness: at the Hīnayāna/Mahāyāna Seminary given at Jackson Hole in 1973; at the seminar

Rinpoche's presentation of the four foundations of mindfulness is still taught regularly by senior teachers, or *acharyas*, and other teachers within the Shambhala Lineage.⁷²

Trungpa Rinpoche uses the outgoing breath as the primary object of meditation throughout his presentation of the four foundations. On the inhalation, the practitioner is directed to let go of the object and allow for a space or gap. Rather than encouraging concentration, this technique fosters a lightness that Trungpa Rinpoche characterized as *touch and go*: "You focus on the object of awareness, but then, in the same moment, you disown that awareness and go on."⁷³ In the process of Trungpa Rinpoche's four foundations, the practitioner is encouraged to develop awareness of aspects of experience in addition to the object of meditation.

In Trungpa Rinpoche's first foundation, mindfulness of body, the practitioner develops mindfulness of his relationship to and confusion about his own body.⁷⁴ The meditator comes to realize that what he normally thinks of as "body" is in reality a complex of projections about the body. This *psychosomatic* body is not rejected; instead, it is accepted as the basis of practice.

In the practice of the second foundation, mindfulness of life, the practitioner identifies the fundamental activity of mind, the "survival instinct"⁷⁵. The survival instinct incessantly categorizes objects as attractive, threatening, or neutral. As we have seen in the presentation of Goenka above, this activity could be understood to be the basis of the three *kilesas*, or disturbing emotions, passion, aggression, and ignorance which are traditionally held to be the roots of suffering. But Trungpa Rinpoche's approach does not aim at uprooting this process. Instead, the meditator is instructed to harness the survival instinct. As a result of accepting and harnessing the survival instinct, the practitioner can integrate all the facets of his life with meditation. The practitioner does not need to retreat into a yogic cave to practice (nor should he pretend that he has so retreated).

In the practice of the third foundation, mindfulness of effort, the practitioner develops an awareness of the way in which the mind moves. Trungpa Rinpoche characterizes this movement, as sudden, non-conceptual and effortless. The easiest way for the meditator to notice this effortless movement of mind is to track the moment when he realizes that he's lost the primary object of meditation (which, as noted above, continues to be the breath throughout the four foundations.) Once the meditator loses the object, he has the opportunity to witness the spontaneous effort of the mind that notices and returns to the object. There is no work involved in this spontaneous effort, but there is work involved in maintaining the discipline of the practice that makes the spontaneous effort evident. I suggest that this is a reason that Trungpa Rinpoche advocated the technique of light awareness on the outgoing breath: this technique provides enough structure for the meditator to be aware of breath as the object of meditation, and enough openness so that it is very likely that the meditator will lose that object of meditation, and therefore have the opportunity to witness the movement of mind.

In the practice of the fourth foundation, Mindfulness of Mind, the meditator develops awareness that encompasses all aspects of experience. Trungpa Rinpoche

entitled "Training the Mind" given in Rocky Mountain Dharma Center in August, 1974; and the seminar entitled "Techniques of Mindfulness" given at The Tail of the Tiger in August, 1974. I have found only one instance of the Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche teaching on the topic: *1999 Seminary Transcripts: Teaching From the Sutra Tradition – Book Two*, (Halifax: Vajradhatu Publications, 2000) 177 – 180. In this transcript, the Sakyong's teaching does not refer to Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation of the four foundations, but is consistent with the Mahāyāna portion of Pawo Rinpoche's commentary

⁷² See http://www.chronicleproject.com/CTRlibrary/training_the_mind.html, for a discussion of this.

⁷³ Trungpa, *Heart of the Buddha*, 33.

⁷⁴ "The process of meditation has to take into account that the mind continually shapes itself into bodylike attitudes."

Trungpa, *Heart of the Buddha*, 30.

⁷⁵ Trungpa, *Heart of the Buddha*, 32-33.

characterizes this *panoramic awareness* as the fruition of the practice of the four foundations. In its fruition, mindfulness of mind dispenses with the dualism of *noticing* the experience and embraces the non-dualism of *being* the experience. I maintain that the fruition of Trungpa Rinpoche's approach to the four foundations of mindfulness is the experience of a mind that rests in the non-dual, spontaneous activity of awareness. This is the union of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*.

In the preface to his article in *Garuda IV*, Trungpa Rinpoche cites the Tibetan convention of a three *yana* path — Theravada, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna — and places the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness within the practices of the Theravada.⁷⁶ Based on this, we might assume that these practices are appropriate only for the beginning of the path and that they would be superseded by “higher” Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna practices as the practitioner progressed along the path. However, at the very beginning of the 1973 seminary, (during which he taught publicly for the first time this version of the four foundations of mindfulness) Trungpa Rinpoche asserted that it is not the specific practice, but the quality of involvement and inclusiveness of that practice that determines realization. Above, I noted that we could reread Trungpa Rinpoche's definition of the fruition of the practice of the four foundations, mindfulness of mind, as “mind that rests in the spontaneous play of unadorned non-duality.” This is tantamount to the realization of the Mādhyamikas, a realization appropriate to the end of the path, not the beginning. I suggest that it is consistent with nature of mind teachings that “preliminary” instructions point to the same fruition as do the highest teachings.

Practice Instructions for Śamatha/Vipaśyanā Meditation

Gaylon Ferguson⁷⁷ was my meditation instructor during my semester-long practice and Allyn Lyon⁷⁸ was my meditation instructor during dathün. Both Ferguson and Lyon studied with Trungpa Rinpoche directly and both are *acharyas*, senior teachers, within the Shambhala lineage. Ferguson's meditation instructions corresponded to the text of Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation on the four foundations of mindfulness as well as meditation instructions found in Trungpa Rinpoche's *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*⁷⁹. In his book *Natural Wakefulness*, Ferguson integrates Trungpa Rinpoche's teaching and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta presentation of the four foundations. However, in his instructions to me he did not stress the teachings of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta; instead, he made a connection between Trungpa Rinpoche's four foundations and the Kagyü teachings on nature of mind practices, Mahāmudrā and Maha Ati.

The treatment of the breath as object of meditation given in Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation on the four foundations of mindfulness correspond closely to the treatment of the breath as object of meditation in the introductory levels of Shambhala Training. The structure of the Shambhala Training levels might seem to imply that there is an introductory style of meditation in which one uses the breath as an object of meditation, and a more advanced style of meditation in which one rests without an object of meditation. In his instructions to me, Ferguson advised me not to make this inference, asserting that if I developed a sense that resting with an object was a problem, I might develop a tendency to turn away from the world in favor of some formless meditative state. This would be contrary to the spirit of *śamatha/vipaśyanā* meditation, since Ferguson asserts that the result of the practice of the four foundations is integration with

⁷⁶ “Mindfulness is the level of the Hīnayāna...” Trungpa, *Garuda IV*, 15

⁷⁷ For biographical information, see note 15 above.

⁷⁸ For biographical information, see note 17 above.

⁷⁹ Chögyam Trungpa, *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* (Boston: Shambhala, 1984) 37 – 40.

society, not separation from it.⁸⁰

Ferguson rejected the notion that the practices of the four foundations of mindfulness necessarily lead toward a specific level of realization. Instead, he asserted that these practices were a set of tools, and that the result of the practice depended on the way in which they were used: in his view it was possible, through the practice of Trungpa Rinpoche's four foundations, to arrive at realizations normally associated with "higher" practices. (This is consistent with my assertion above.)

Ferguson urged me to not to pursue any specific fruition of my practice. Rather, he urged me to relax and not strive so hard; to allow myself to be "dumber"; to allow myself to be bored and to cease trying to make any particular discoveries. In *Natural Wakefulness*, Ferguson characterizes this relaxed, "not too tight" approach to meditation as demonstrating faith in the fundamentally awakened nature of mind.⁸¹ Ferguson's meditation instructions to me as well as his scholarly approach support an interpretation of Trungpa Rinpoche's four foundations as concordant with Mahāmudrā "nature of mind" practices⁸².

Ferguson's approach is consistent with the approach Allyn Lyon took in her meditation instructions to me during the Summer 2010 dathün. In her talks during this retreat, Lyon made a link between the teachings of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation. Her presentation of Mindfulness of Body stressed awareness of physical sensations -- for instance, she instructed me to drop my awareness into my torso.⁸³ Like Goenka, Lyon presented Mindfulness of Body as a purification practice: she said that traumas get buried in the body; that meditation allows them to emerge again; and that non-doing (equanimity) allows them to unwind.⁸⁴ She presented Mindfulness of Feeling as the "pleasure/pain meter" (I like it/I don't like it/I don't care),⁸⁵ which corresponds to the extremely simple nature of vedanā presented in the Abidhamma.

In her instructions to me, Lyon referred to the text of Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation, but did not hold rigidly to it. In the course of the retreat, the meditation instructions she gave to me shifted from stressing the śamatha aspect of the practice to stressing the vipaśyanā aspect of the practice,⁸⁶ and she asked me to contemplate what she called the Mahāmudrā questions: where do thoughts arise, where do they dwell, where do they go?⁸⁷ Lyon encouraged me to become lighter and lighter with the technique; like Ferguson she encouraged me to have faith in my awakened nature.

Perceived Results of Śamatha/Vipaśyanā Meditation

As a result of practicing the śamatha/vipashyanā approach, I developed the aspiration to connect with and integrate all parts of my experience. I became quite interested in the specificity of each moment of experience and interested in the way in which I experienced a given moment of mind as quite distinct -- even discontinuous -- from the next. I became interested in how appearances coalesce into *maṇḍalas* -- coherent and meaningful arrangements -- and I became interested in the process by which, upon perceiving such an arrangement, I habitually attempt to solidify it into some sort of stable

⁸⁰ Ferguson, *Natural Wakefulness*, 21.

⁸¹ This is a central thesis of Ferguson, *Natural Wakefulness*. See for example, 19 – 24.

⁸² Ferguson, *Natural Wakefulness* xiii.

⁸³ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 8/2/10.

⁸⁴ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 8/15/10.

⁸⁵ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 8/4/10.

⁸⁶ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 8/12/10.

⁸⁷ Weiser, *Meditation Journal*, 8/6/10. Trungpa Rinpoche poses these questions in *1973 Seminary Transcripts*, p. 35. The Ninth Karmapa, Wangchug Dorje, also poses these questions in *The Mahāmudrā Eliminating the Darkness*, Commentary given orally by Beru Khyentze Rinpoche, trans. Alexander Berzin (Dharmasala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1978) 70, 73.

ground. I particularly noticed that I attempt to solidify by elaborating a view or explanation of the mandala. I developed the aspiration to refrain from such explanations and instead rest in the groundlessness of constant new arisings. I became more confident in allowing openness to permeate my interactions with my environment and with others, and in allowing things to “self-liberate.” I became more open to the experience and use of non-ordinary reality.

Conclusion

Each time I finished a semester-long practice and retreat, I felt that I could continue practicing that approach quite profitably for an extended period. None of the three practices seemed as if it were in error; none seemed likely to lead me toward greater suffering; all three helped me alleviate my own suffering; none seemed to be in conflict with the others.

When I had contemplated my research, I noticed that each of the practices addressed habitual patterns of mind in a different way. Vipassanā meditation focuses on examining certain *characteristics* of mental states and psychophysical processes. These characteristics correspond to categories of the Abhidhamma teachings. Practicing vipassanā meditation led me to natural renunciation of actions of body, speech and mind that result in painful mental states, and cultivation of actions of body, speech and mind that result in mental states conducive to happiness. Analytical meditation focuses on the *content* of conceptual mind. It examines concepts, particularly those that have solidified into views. It targets these solidified concepts by way of logical reasoning that corresponds to the analyses found in the Madhyamaka teachings. Practicing analytical meditation led me to an understanding that such solidified views are not reliable, that they lead to suffering and not to happiness, and therefore to the renunciation of such views. Śamatha/vipaśyanā meditation focuses on the *process* of mind, particularly the process whereby the meditator creates rigid distinction between Self and that which is perceived as Other. It encouraged me to include into my awareness that which cannot be characterized (space/gap) as well as to notice the effortless movement of mind that is beyond his control. It shares this interest in “unconditioned phenomena” with the teachings on Buddhanature. Śamatha/vipaśyanā meditation led me to a renunciation of the habit of making separations between myself and environment and myself and others.

At the risk of oversimplification, I note that each of these three approaches can be understood to address most effectively one of three fundamental types of mental disturbance – greed, hate and ignorance – that are traditionally understood to be the roots of suffering.

Vipassanā meditation most effectively addresses the mental disturbance of desire. It helped me clarify the way in which I cling to those actions of body, speech and mind that I mistakenly believe will relieve my discomfort and give me pleasure. As a result of the practices of vipassanā meditation, I developed a felt sense of the suffering that this clinging causes, and therefore developed natural renunciation. Analytical meditation most effectively addresses the mental disturbance of ignorance. It helped me clarify the way in which I create views in the attempt to establish a stable and reliable description of reality. I cling to these views as trustworthy guides that will enable me to successfully manipulate my physical and emotional environment. As a result of the practices of the analytic meditation approach I understood better the baselessness of such descriptions of reality. I developed greater flexibility of view, and understood better the nature and use of concept. I understood that views and concepts have no inherent value and might best be understood as antidotes. Śamatha/vipaśyanā meditation most effectively addresses the

mental disturbance of aggression. It helped me clarify the way in which I create separation between parts of my experience, and attempt to cling to one part of that experience and banish another. As a result of the practices of śamatha/vipaśyanā meditation I was better able to integrate all parts of my experience, even those parts that cannot be characterized as “My” experience. I was better able to see that the goal of the path is not separate from wherever I am right now: wisdom is present in neurosis; mental confusion, *samsāra*, and liberation from that confusion, *nirvāna*, are inseparable.

At the end of my research, I was convinced that all of these practices are quite complementary. I agree with Karl Brunnhölzl when he writes:

Given that all Buddhist teachings are meant as a help for beings in their individual situations in life, the question is not what is absolutely right or politically correct, but what makes sense and is beneficial for a certain time and place in life. Needless to say, that can be the exact opposite of what is good for somebody else.⁸⁸

In the introduction to this paper, I noted that there is an opportunity that has arisen as a result of the unprecedented contact between lineages that is taking place at this time: lineages of practice can enrich their praxis by comparing and learning from one another. In order to enjoy such enrichment, practitioners must be willing to adopt an attitude of non-sectarianism. A model for this kind of non-sectarian interchange of praxis can be found in the *Ri-me* movement that flowered in nineteenth century Tibet. In her article “Without Bias - The Dalai Lama in Dialogue,” Judith Simmer-Brown lists four characteristics of the *Ri-me* movement:

1. The *Ri-me* advocated that all traditions of meditation practice are to be appreciated, valued and preserved, regardless of the lineages or schools from which they have come.
2. *Ri-me*'s abiding interest was in meditation and contemplative practice as the ground of spiritual life.
3. Meditation is not to be regarded with naive passivity; rather, intelligent investigation and inquiry are crucial supports to a mature meditation practice.
4. The *Ri-me* movement was not merely an academic or elite spiritual movement, it also had a strongly popular side.⁸⁹

I suggest that the practice of comparative soteriology informed by the above four characteristics could lead to a strengthening of praxis within lineages. I also suggest non-sectarian dialog could further clarify the particular strengths of each method of practice, and help identify populations that might best be served by these methods. In this way, effective praxis developed by one lineage could be available to help alleviate the suffering of practitioners of another lineage, and to alleviate the suffering of non-Buddhists as well.

⁸⁸ Karl Brunnhölzl, *Straight from the Heart: Buddhist Pith Instructions*, (Ithaca, Snow Lion, 2007) xii.

⁸⁹ Judith Simmer-Brown, “Without Bias—The Dalai Lama in Dialogue” *Criteria of Discernment in Interreligious Dialogue*, Catherine Cornille (ed) (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2009) 213.