



# MONASH University

***Mindfulness: The Feeling of Being Tuned-in,  
and Related Phenomena***

*Phenomenological Reflections of a Buddhist Practitioner*

*Erol Copelj*

*B.S., B.A (Hons), M.A.*

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## Abstract

This work develops a phenomenological account of mindfulness, and related phenomena. It is divided into two main parts. The aim of part one is to articulate a pre-phenomenological sketch of mindfulness (and related phenomena) by (1) drawing on passages from some of the classic works of Western literature and everyday life, (2) through an interpretation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and (3) by the means of a critical analysis of the contemporary attempts to account for these phenomena. Part two adds further detail to the sketch by entering a dialogue with the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. A key distinction made here is between the transcendental horizon (which is filled in by our possibilities) and the *open horizon* (which is filled in by *thingly possibilities*). This difference allows *cultivating mindfulness* to be defined as the practice of *tuning-out* of the transcendental horizon and *tuning-in* to the open horizon. Mindfulness—the potential fruit of *tuning-in-tuning-out*—is defined as the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open horizon (or to *thingly possibilities*). A key finding of this research is that *tuning-in-tuning-out* is a difference practice than the *phenomenological epoché*; whereas the latter discloses the transcendental horizon, the former discloses the open horizon—on which the transcendental horizon (and the practice of the *epoché*) is dependent. These findings open up the possibility of a phenomenological description of certain phenomena that are closely related to mindfulness (and with which mindfulness may be confused). Some of these phenomena are: *Mindful attention*, which is defined as the function of *foregrounding* a sub-horizon within the open horizon and the pushing of the other sub-horizons into the *background*. *Concentration (samādhi)*: the *narrowing* down of the open horizon to one of its sub-horizons. *Insight (vipassanā)*: the activity of *isolating* a sub-horizon, discerning its *thingly possibilities*, zooming out, *isolating* a second sub-horizon and discerning its *thingly possibilities*, and then contrasting the two in such a way that their difference becomes *vividly present*.

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## **Declaration**

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:

Print Name: Erol Copelj

Date: 20/06/2019

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Erol Copelj

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*Phenomenological Reflections of a Buddhist  
Practitioner*

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## INTRODUCTION

Two factors were central in bringing this work into existence. The first was the love I developed for the practice of phenomenological seeing, the practice of looking deeply into what at first appear as the most ordinary things until something like a hidden dimension announces itself therein, “a secret glimmering” to borrow the words of the Japanese poet Matsuo Basho (1966). The second is the sense of wonder, joy, meaningfulness and clarity that the practice of mindfulness (together with the other aspects of the Buddhist path) introduced into my life. I was introduced to both around the same time, over a decade ago. And, from the very beginning, I felt a deep connection running between them: when the practice of mindfulness was going well, phenomenological seeing became natural, almost effortless; while a decline in my practice singled the return of the ordinary, mundane way of relating to the world, and this made it almost impossible to relate to things in the phenomenological way. This dynamic interplay was at first only implicit in the background of my awareness. But gradually it became more and more explicit until eventually it articulated itself in the form of the question: *What is the nature of this dynamic relationship that binds mindfulness and phenomenological seeing together?* This question lead to a more fundamental one: *Phenomenologically speaking, what is mindfulness?* And, being someone deeply immersed in the works of classical phenomenology<sup>1</sup>, I was naturally to ask: *what are the implications of these questions for our understanding of the main phenomenological themes (such as the practice of the epoché)?*

I wrote this work in order to answer these questions, which can also be phrased as its

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the term ‘classical phenomenology’ to refer to the philosophical movement inaugurated by Edmund Husserl and which was continued, in one form or another, by such figures as Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, just to give a few of the better known names. This term also encompasses the contemporary philosophers who continue to engage and develop this tradition, such as Anthony Steinbock and Dan Zahavi.



two main objectives: (1) to articulate a phenomenology of mindfulness, and other closely related phenomena and (2) to work out the implications of this phenomenology for some the main themes that preoccupied, and continue to preoccupy, classical phenomenology.

This work is divided into two main parts, each of which is made up of three chapters. This division is based on the way that I believed (at the time of commencing this work) a phenomenological investigation ought to proceed.<sup>2</sup> According to this view, a phenomenological study of X presupposes that X is already understood in a pre-phenomenological manner. This ‘pre-phenomenological sketch’ serves the phenomenological study as a map or a guide. With this in mind, the main task of Part I can be described as the task of articulating a pre-phenomenological sketch of mindfulness and related phenomena. Part II aims to develop this sketch phenomenologically. But this requires some qualification.

I used to believe that a pre-phenomenological sketch should not make use of phenomenological ideas and concepts at all (either those that are to be found in the classical phenomenological texts or which stem from our own earlier phenomenological investigations). Rather, the pre-phenomenological sketch is to be derived solely from the naïve, pre-phenomenological understanding of the phenomenon; the way that the phenomenon is understood in ordinary life; the way it appears in the *lifeworld*. No matter how sophisticated such a pre-phenomenological understanding may be on its own terms, it will remain phenomenologically naïve until it is subjected to a phenomenological critique and analysis, which takes these ideas and concepts back to the phenomenal ‘sources’

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<sup>2</sup> The findings of this work have caused me to abandon the idea that phenomenological descriptions must proceed in this way, on the basis of a pre-phenomenological sketch. I now believe that the most important and powerful phenomenological insights arise *spontaneously* from the feeling of being *tuned-in* to life. Even the *true* theme of our phenomenological investigations arises from the *things themselves*, and not from some arbitrary choice of subject matter. For the immediate purposes, however, this point can be put aside.

wherein they have their origin. In practice, however, I found this dictum impossible to follow.

My heavy involvement with phenomenology has had the effect of *sedimenting* certain phenomenological concepts—such as *retention*, *lived body*, *readiness-to-hand* and so on—into my *lifeworld*. In other words, my engagement with the phenomenological tradition has shaped my pre-phenomenological understanding of phenomena. Perhaps this would not be a cause for alarm if every time that a phenomenological concept appeared before my mind I was to follow it back to its original source and validate it in experience. But that is not what is/was happening. Rather I was using phenomenological concepts blindly or *emptily*, and was therefore in the position of someone using a mathematical formula without doing the proof. For example, I could speak of ‘protentions’ and ‘retentions’ simply because it made sense in certain contexts to do so and without actually waking up to these elements of experience. This caused me no small degree of bother. Try as I might, however, I found it impossible to filter out the phenomenological element from my initial encounter with the phenomenon, whether that encounter was ‘direct’ or second hand and encountered through the writings of others. In either case, the background phenomenological concepts kept on flowing in. Reflecting further on this predicament, I reasoned that as in any case ‘*bracketing*’ of empty concepts should come after the pre-phenomenological sketch, there is no need to force myself to bracket anything at this stage of the process. If this is how the phenomenon appears to me then this is how it appears. Differently put, in my attempt to formulate the pre-phenomenological sketch I was facing the following choice: either forcefully and artificially filter out the phenomenological concepts, and pretend that they did not feature in my initial experience of the phenomenon or go right ahead and express without reservation how the phenomenon appears, phenomenological concepts and all. The latter struck me as the natural course of action. The implication of this for the current work

is that the pre-phenomenological sketch developed in Part I does resort to certain phenomenological notions. This is especially true of the second chapter. But I do not consider this use of phenomenological concepts to be phenomenology in the strict sense of the term.<sup>3</sup> This is because, for the most part, these concepts are not derived from actual concrete phenomenological investigations but are simply applied to certain issues because doing so makes sense ‘intellectually’. In contrast, the main ideas and concepts that constitute the phenomenological account developed in Part II are (or at least aspire to be) phenomenological in the proper sense.

The first chapter of Part I does not so much aim to answer a question as to convey a feeling; the feeling of what it is like to be mindful. Towards this end it appeals primarily to certain passages from classic works of Western literature that, or so I claim, capture the essence of this feeling. This chapter also takes the first step towards giving a definite form to this feeling and in that way it throws down the first blots of ink on the pre-phenomenological sketch of mindfulness.

The second chapter aims to sharpen these lines by considering how the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (which, according to Bhikkhu Bodhi (2011), is “...the most influential text in the Pāli Canon on the systematic practice of mindfulness...”) describes ‘*sati*’, the term that is usually translated into English as ‘mindfulness’. This is one of the very few, and certainly the most important, original Buddhist texts that this work will draw upon and engage with. This raises the following questions:

*Why restrict the discussion to a single Buddhist text in this way? And given that Buddhist ideas and doctrines (including the ideas about mindfulness) evolved in many ways throughout the centuries, how can I describe the objective of this work as being the*

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<sup>3</sup> But there are occasions in Part I where I do enter the *things themselves*, even if briefly. An example is the analysis of a phenomenon that I call ‘*thematization*’ in chapter two.

*articulation of a phenomenology of mindfulness itself, and not just of one the many things that can be called 'mindfulness'?* On this theme, Georges Dreyfus (2011) writes:

Buddhism is a plural tradition that has evolved over centuries to include a large variety of views about mindfulness. Hence, there is no one single view that can ever hope to qualify as “the Buddhist view of mindfulness.”

I am prepared to agree with Dreyfus that there are a ‘wide variety of views about mindfulness’, both within and outside of Buddhism. But does it follow from this that no view can ever hope to qualify as the *Buddhist* view of mindfulness? How we answer this question will depend on what is meant by ‘Buddhist view’. Allow me to explain.

I accept as a basic truth that there is a difference between the word itself, on the one hand, and the phenomenon to which the word refers, on the other.<sup>4</sup> The word ‘mindfulness’ is not the phenomenon to which the word refers. This allows me to describe the approach that I will take towards the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the Buddhist tradition in general. Whoever spoke the words recorded in this text (and this person is widely believed to be the historical Buddha himself) was using these words in order to draw the attention of his audience towards a particular phenomenon, a particular dimension of their experience. The crucial question, as far as I am concerned, is this one: *what phenomenon did this person have in mind when using the term ‘sati’ and related notions? To what was this person trying to direct the attention of his audience?* The presupposition of this work is that it is possible, by following the ‘clues’ that the Buddha left behind, to circumscribe and describe the element of our experience that he was trying to point out. In one sense, then, to isolate this phenomenon is to give an account of *the* Buddhist view of mindfulness. But this is not

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<sup>4</sup> But I leave open the possibility that the difference between and the relation of the word and its referent can be understood in a number of different ways.

incompatible with the idea that the meaning of this word evolved and changed over the centuries.

In using the term ‘sati’ the Buddha did not simply try to point out a particular phenomenon. He was also concerned to bring this phenomenon into view from a particular perspective. Mindfulness offers a range of possibilities. But, in the context of the Buddha’s teachings, certain of these possibilities are more important than others (such as the possibility of developing mindfulness into wisdom). Now, as the Buddha’s teachings were taken up and developed throughout the centuries, it is possible that while the word ‘sati’ or ‘mindfulness’ continued to pick out the same phenomenon that the Buddha was pointing at, the phenomenon now came into view from a different perspective; that some of its other possibilities came to be emphasised. This is one sense in which the conception of what mindfulness is may have evolved and changed. Another possibility is that the referent of the word completely altered; that ‘mindfulness’ came to refer to something other than what the Buddha had in view. And yet another possibility is that the referent of the word was completely lost, that people started to value the word for its own sake instead of using it in order to reach the thing itself.

These issues—of how the word changed and what it came to refer to in the later Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions—will not concern us here. To repeat, this work aims to bring into view the phenomenon that the person who spoke the words recorded in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* was pointing at with ‘sati’ (and related notions). To articulate such a description is to set the stage for future work, work that can enquire into such question as whether different traditions still have this phenomenon in view and, if so, then in what way and from what perspective. This does not mean, however, that the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* will be the only Buddhist text that this work will engage with. It will draw on other Buddhist sources, ancient and modern. But it will do so by using these sources in order to enrich the

description of the phenomenon that the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* helped us pick out and isolate in the first place.

Chapter three of Part I is an interpretation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. This text defines ‘*sati*’ by situating it in the wider context of a kind of contemplative state (*anupassanā*). Within this contemplative state, *sati* necessarily co-exists with certain other factors: the object being contemplated, freedom from desires and discontent (*vineyya abhijjhādomanassa*), a specific kind of effort (*ātāpi*) and clear comprehension (*sampajāna*). Unfortunately, however, these terms do not carry their meaning on their sleeves, and it is not straightforward to know what aspects of our experience they are meant to be pointing out. This is why an interpretation is necessary, a theme that Bodhi (2011) touches upon in the following passage:

For four centuries, the Buddhist scriptures were preserved and transmitted orally, from one generation of reciters to the next. This method of transmission required that the compilers of the Buddha’s discourses compress the main points into simple repetitive formulas that were conducive to easy memorization. Thus when we consult the texts to find out what they mean by *sati*, what we mostly encounter, instead of lucid explanations, are operational demonstrations that indicate, in practical terms, how *sati* functions in Buddhist psychology and meditation practice. It is from these that we must tease out the word’s implications, testing them against each other and evaluating them by personal reflection and experience.

While chapter two sheds much light on the nature of mindfulness, it also leaves a number of crucial questions unanswered, including: what kind of awareness is mindfulness awareness? And what is the nature of the relationship that obtains between mindfulness and wisdom? Chapter three of Part I considers what the contemporary literature has to say about these issues. Here the general view seems to be that the key to making sense of mindful awareness and of its relation to wisdom lies in understanding the relation of mindfulness and attention. And the general tendency is to conceive of this relation as being one of identity:

mindfulness *is* a form of attention. But the contemporary literature is split on the question of the kind of attention that mindfulness is to be identified with. Some conceive it as ‘bare attention’, attention as it is in the absence of all cognitive activity, while for others ‘mindful attention’ involves a special kind of cognition. I agree that the question of the relationship between mindfulness and attention is an important one. But I question whether it is the most important question that a phenomenology of mindfulness needs to concern itself with. And I also question the other presuppositions of the contemporary view by asking: *does attention constitute the very definition of mindfulness or, rather, is it the case that attention only takes a specific form, the form of ‘mindful attention’, when it occurs within a mind in which mindfulness has been established?* I raise a similar question regarding the cognitive processes that, according to some contemporary thinkers, accompany mindfulness and in terms of which they try to explain the kind of wisdom that mindfulness can give rise to. *Do these cognitive processes belong to the very definition of mindfulness or, rather, does cognition only take the form of ‘mindful cognition’ or ‘mindful reflection’ when it occurs within a mind that has established itself in the mindful attitude?*

The first part of chapter three is mostly critical; arguing for what mindfulness is not. But at the end of this critique the question still remains: *what is mindfulness in positive terms?* In the concluding part of chapter three, I raise the possibility that mindfulness exemplifies a kind of feeling that Matthew Ratcliffe (2008) calls ‘the feeling of being’ or ‘existential feeling’. Feelings of being are differentiated from other feelings in that they are not directed at particular objects or situations within the world but rather determine the all-encompassing sense of what it means to be in the ‘world’ in the first place. And existential feelings are differentiated between themselves by the kind of possibility that they open up or disclose. Here I propose that mindfulness can be understood as the feeling of being *tuned-in*. This raises the question: *what kind of a possibility does mindfulness, as the feeling of being*

*tuned-in, open up or disclose? And in what sense can mindfulness be described as an all-encompassing shift in the way that one finds oneself in the world?* These issues are addressed in Part II.

According to the letter of phenomenology, with pre-phenomenological sketch in hand, the next step should be to go directly to the phenomenon itself in order to ask it directly: what are you? Can you please hold still so that we can fill in this sketch? And, in fact, when I first began to reflect on the phenomenological nature of mindfulness, this is the route I took. And some of the main ideas that the reader will meet in Part II (such as the notion of ‘thingly possibilities’) emerged from these early attempts to describe the phenomenon directly. But it quickly became clear to me that mindfulness cannot be constrained to an isolated chapter of phenomenology, as if a phenomenology of mindfulness did not have major implications for the fundamental themes of phenomenology. With this in mind, I found that the most natural way to approach the task at hand was by way of an ‘internal critique’ of the phenomenological tradition. As I understand it, an internal critique involves, first, paying close attention to the classical descriptions and pointing out certain gaps therein. Then, second, showing that, when we look in the right way, novel structures begin to peer through these gaps. The third step involves articulating a phenomenological description of mindfulness in terms of these structures. While I believe that such gaps appear throughout the entire phenomenological literature that I am familiar with, the scope of this work constrains it to working only with a few key ideas of Husserlian phenomenology.

These ideas are: the natural and transcendental attitudes and the phenomenological *epoché* (the procedure that is meant to lead the phenomenologists from the former to the latter). The first chapter of Part II is largely (but not solely) an exposition of these Husserlian ideas. Its objective is to present these ideas from an angle that allows the aforementioned gaps to clearly come into view and it does so by asking: *what conditions the possibility of*



*the epoché? More precisely, what kind of a possibility does the practice of the epoché presuppose? And from what perspective does this kind of possibility come into view?*

It is in response to these questions that the second chapter of Part II articulates a phenomenological account of mindfulness, including both the practice of cultivating mindfulness and the state of being mindful. Then, on this basis, it attempts a complementary description of *concentration* and tries to spell out how it relates to and arises from mindfulness. It also raises the question: *do mindfulness and concentration exhibit other forms?* It answers in the affirmative and sketches out a description of another form that these phenomena can take.

The last chapter left us without an answer to some important questions. *What is the phenomenological nature of the practice of insight (vipassanā) that mindfulness makes possible? And how does mindfulness make this kind of insight possible (how, in other words, does vipassanā arise on the basis of and from within the feeling of being tuned-in)? And: What is the relation between this kind of insight practice and the practice of phenomenological seeing?* Finally: *Can our phenomenological descriptions of mindfulness and related phenomena help with understanding the positive nature of ‘ātāpi’, the kind of effort that goes into the practice of cultivating mindfulness?* The third and final chapter of Part II attempts to deal with these questions by scrupulously observing two individuals as they go about actually engaging in this kind of practice: Edmund Husserl himself and the great meditation master from the Thai Forest Tradition of Buddhism: Acariya Maha Boowa.

PART I  
Mindfulness: A pre-Phenomenological  
Sketch

## OVERVIEW

Drawing primarily on passages from Western literature, *chapter I* tries to show that the seeds of mindfulness are already present in ordinary experience and that, in the right circumstances, these dormant seeds can bloom into life. At that point a *shift in perspective* takes place, taking the person in whom it occurs away from the ordinary to the mindful way of being in the world. This way of being is characterised by: a feeling of being tuned in to the natural rhythm of things (a kind of immersion in the phenomena), a blurring of the difference between self and other, where the engaged agent takes the form of a detached witness, and other qualities besides. Just as it can happen that, in certain circumstances, sleep simply takes over without preliminaries, so these literary passages suggest that becoming mindful is a *spontaneous and passive event*; it is something that happens to one, rather than being something that one cultivates intentionally.

Just as it is possible to intentionally cultivate the conditions under which the state of sleep appears (i.e. crawling your legs together, breathing deeply and slowly etc.) so a key teaching of the Buddha is that the conditions of mindfulness too can be intentionally cultivated. The difference between the practice of cultivating mindfulness and the state of being mindful (the fruit of the practice) sets the stage for *chapter II* which attempts to formulate a preliminary definition of both phenomena through an interpretation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Here the practice of cultivating mindfulness is defined as the practice of *tuning-out of our possibilities and tuning-in to the intrinsic intelligibility of the phenomenon* or simply *tuning-out-tuning-in*. Mindfulness is defined from two perspectives. ‘Subjectively’, it is the state of *lucid awareness* and *clear comprehension*. ‘Objectively’, it is *a vivid presentation of the phenomenon’s intrinsic intelligibility*.

The main objective of *chapter III* is to undertake a critical analysis of the way that the contemporary literature addresses the questions: *what is this lucid awareness in terms of which mindfulness is to be defined? And what is the relation between this lucid awareness*

*and cognition?* On this issue, the contemporary literature can be divided into two opposing camps, which I call the ‘Quietists’ and the ‘Cognitivists’. According to the Quietists, lucid awareness is ‘bare’ attention, which is characterised by the absence of all cognitive activity, such as thinking, remembering, judging and so on. While there are stronger and weaker readings of the Cognitivist position, all in this group agree that lucid awareness is not exclusive of cognitive activity and that the most important forms of mindfulness demand that a kind of cognition be brought into play. Despite all their differences, however, the Quietists and the Cognitivists share the presupposition that mindfulness can be explained as the presence or absence of such familiar experiences as attention, working memory, judgment, including the various combinations and higher-order modifications of these experiences. This way of looking at things, I argue, misses certain key distinctions. The first being the distinction between the experience of establishing mindfulness (a term that encompasses both the spontaneous arising and the intentional cultivation of the conditions under which mindfulness comes to be) and mindfulness itself. The other is the distinction between mindfulness and the effects that this being in state has on the ‘stream of consciousness’, on such familiar experiences as attention, judgment and so on. In particular, not seeing this distinction leads the contemporary literature into conflating *mindful* attention (the form that attention takes within mindfulness) and mindfulness itself. The final part of chapter III proposes that mindfulness is an example of a kind of feeling that Matthew Ratcliffe has called ‘existential feeling’ or ‘feeling of being’. Mindfulness is the *feeling of being tuned-in*.

## CHAPTER I:

### *Mindfulness in Literature and Everyday Life*

Mindfulness is not accessible only to Buddhist monks and their ilk. It is a possible way of relating to the world that is open and available to all of us, right here in the midst of ordinary life. In fact some of the best Western writers have taken note of this possibility and tried to describe it. Their efforts constitute the crux of this chapter. With the help of these passages, this chapter aims to awaken in you, the reader, the feeling of what it is like to be mindful. This means that the literary passages, as superbly put together as they are, are not here simply for your aesthetic pleasure. They are here to steer a hidden part of yourself into life. Having woken up the feeling, this chapter will begin to give it a definite form by extracting some of the key characteristics that these passages attribute to it. The ensuing chapters will make this form more and more definite until, hopefully, the phenomenon of mindfulness stands clearly before the mind, distinguishing itself from everything else with which it may be and tends to be confused.

The following passages allow of different interpretations. What I interpret to be descriptions of mindfulness someone else may interpret as descriptions of something else.<sup>5</sup> I mention this to prevent the reader from being distracted by the thought that I am twisting the meaning of the following passages in order to serve my own ends. I am not trying to say that these passages *must* be interpreted as descriptions of mindfulness. Nor am I claiming that their authors had that purpose in mind. But I do believe that they can be taken in that way, and that is how I will take them.

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<sup>5</sup> The very possibility of this fact—that the ‘same’ description can refer to quite different phenomena—itself calls out for an explanation. But I will not go into this here.

I will begin with a personal example. This is my father's encounter with, what I believe to be, mindfulness. A little background first. My family comes from Kasindol, a small town not very far from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. A vibrant little river splits the town in half as it stretches in two contrary directions. In one direction, the river surges towards the rustle and bustle of Sarajevo, with its pubs and cafes. My father tells me how he would spend time at such places, drinking *rakija*—the Yugoslav version on vodka—smoking cigarettes and getting involved in the social and political events of his day. But it quickly becomes clear to anyone who takes the time to know him that that is not where his most cherished memories rest. He speaks with awe and wonder about that which he found when he followed the river in the other direction. In *that* direction, the Kasindol river leads into a thick, largely unexplored forest, where he fished trout, picked mushrooms and received other gifts that nature sent his way. When his legs became heavy, he recalls with nostalgia shimmering behind his eyes, he would rest his backpack, forget his fishing rod and find a soft patch of grass on which to stretch out. Slowly and invariably, perhaps following a short nap, something would sneak up on him. And when it grabbed him this something would *erase him from this world*. This is no fancy description. My father speaks quite seriously when he says that in these moments it is as if he ceased to exist. And with his absence for the first-time reality would bloom into life: the clouds slowly and patiently striding across the clear blue sky, the gentle murmur of the river, the whispering conversation between the trees, all would become magical, wondrous. And as this state deepened, he recalls, that which usually appears as distinct and separate, including himself, would merge into a kind of harmonious unity. He once illustrated this by asking me to imagine a wheel with the different colours painted on it. And then to imagine the wheel as spinning really fast, and it keeps spinning until the different colours merged into a homogeneous and undifferentiated quality. The different colours stand for the distinct phenomena of which our everyday world

is made, the homogeneous quality represents the reality that revealed itself to my father in these moments. These experiences, he says, would refresh him completely, and memories of them served him as an unfaltering source of strength upon which he drew when faced with the endless, trivial difficulties and agitations that he encountered when he followed the river in the other direction. Because of my Buddhist background, I had not the slightest doubt that what my father was describing was an encounter with mindfulness, something that I was trying to harness through my meditation practice.

Experiences like my father's have been expressed in some of the classic works of Western literature. The first instance that I will consider comes from Fyodor Dostoevsky's (1983) *Memoirs from the House of the Dead*, a work inspired by the author's experience while a prisoner in Siberia. Mindfulness is often preceded by some kind of anguish or anxiety, which arises as one begins to disconnect from ordinary existence. This is certainly so in the case of Dostoevsky, whose anguish finds its source in the fact that he is imprisoned. In prison, the conditions are arranged in such a way as to prevent the prisoner from pursuing the projects that defined their pre-prisoned existence (e.g. socialising, raising a family, the freedom to go wherever one wants, etc.) While the surrounding conditions prevent their pursuit that does not mean that these projects are annihilated from the prisoner's consciousness; they now float painfully in front of the prisoner's awareness in the form of realisable but currently non-pursuable ends—"if not for these conditions, I could do all that". It is this tension—between what the prisoner is capable of in the conditions that he finds himself in and the kind of life he *could* live in different circumstances—that make prison life so tormenting.

This tension, as Dostoevsky is about to tell us, is especially amplified in spring, the season that in ordinary circumstances opens up a whole range of possibilities, including such simple pleasures as strolling through the fresh green grass underneath the clear blue sky.

While the prisoner senses these gifts of spring, and senses them very keenly, they nevertheless remain out of reach. “Even a man in fetters...” writes Dostoevsky (1983, p. 267), “...was moved by the advent of the fine weather, which awakened even in him vague aspirations, striving and longings. I think that men pine more bitterly for freedom in the bright sunshine than in the grey days of winter or autumn, and this was noticeable amongst all the prisoners”. The freedom that Dostoevsky is longing for here is the freedom to pursue his desires or projects. Soon, he will find a very different, much more fulfilling kind of freedom. But for now let us get a little more acquainted with his anguish. A little after the above passage, Dostoevsky (1983, p. 272) retells his own impressions of the torment that spring brings into the life of the prisoner:

The spring had its effects on me also. I remembered how sometimes I gazed hungrily through the gaps in the stockade, and how I used to stand for long periods leaning my head against the fence and looking obstinately and insatiably at the green grass on the fortress rampart and the sky whose blue grew deeper and deeper. My restlessness and longing increased every day and the prison became more and more hateful to me.

Because his mind is still holding onto the dreams and desires of his pre-prison life, and because the current conditions are such that he is unable to move towards their realisation, because of all that anguish and melancholy arise in Dostoevsky’s mind with an incredible force, and he is brought down by a sense of hopelessness. This anguish also hides from Dostoevsky the intrinsic beauty of the surrounding reality—the greening grass, the distant sky etc.—which, at this point in the narrative, are only apprehended as unusable means towards non-pursuable ends, as a kind of painful reminder of his confined freedom. He appears to only see the surrounding reality vaguely, as if through a fog or a veil.

But this very hopelessness, in certain circumstances, forces Dostoevsky to find a



whole new way of relating to reality, and to the discovery of a very different and much deeper kind of freedom. The *shift* from the old attitude to the new takes place at a *special spot* by the river Irtysh

I speak of that river-bank so often because that was the only place from which God's earth could be seen, the pure bright distance and the free, lonely steppes, whose wild emptiness had a strange effect on me...on the river bank you might forget yourself; you would look at the vast, solitary expanse as a captive gazes at freedom from the window of his prison. To me, everything there was dear and lovely: the bright hot sun in the unfathomable blue sky, the songs of the Kirghiz tribesmen carried from the farther bank (Dostoyevsky, 1983, p. 276).

The contrast is striking. In the light of his anguish, the surroundings are suffocating. With the dimming of that light and "the forgetting of self" the surroundings take on a very different significance. Freed from the sense of being mere means for his unrealisable ends, they reveal themselves as they are:

You would gaze for a long time and finally you would distinguish the beggarly, sooty tent of some nomad; you would see the wisp of smoke near the tent and the Kirghiz woman busy there with her two sheep. It was all poor and savage, but it was free. You would make out a bird in the clear blue translucent air and tenaciously follow its flight for a long time; now it skimmed the water, now it disappeared in the blue, now it reappeared, a scarcely discernible speck...Even the poor, sickly flower I found in the early spring in the cleft in the stony bank—even that arrested my attention... (ibid.).

Here is a state of mind where the self is forgotten, where the surroundings are bathed in a

positive light, where things are freed to exhibit their own intrinsic nature and rhythm and where attention becomes fixated in a quite peculiar manner (how many of us would stay so long with such a mundane thing as a flower fading by the side of the road?) Keiji Nishitani (1982, p. 8) comments:

The things that Dostoevski draws attention to—the curling smoke, the women tending her sheep, the poor hut, the bird in flight—are all things we come in touch with in our everyday lives. We speak of them as real in the everyday sense of the word, and from there go on to our scientific and philosophical theories. But for such commonplace things to become the focus of intense a concentration, to capture one’s attention to that almost abnormal degree, is by no means an everyday occurrence.

There is no evidence in these passages that Dostoevsky was *intentionally* trying to bring about some special state—as a meditation master might do. For that reason, we cannot truly say that he was engaged in any kind of meditation practice, or that he had any such skill. The transformation appears to occur quite spontaneously; all Dostoevsky needed to do was to place himself in that special spot by the Irtysh—the shifts in consciousness, including the attentional changes, took care of themselves. Here it is worth asking: what is it that brings about this perspectival shift? Is it a special way of paying attention? Or, perhaps, are the shifts in attention only a consequence of entering a new kind of a relationship with one’s surroundings?

The entire segment of Dostoevsky’s consciousness that I have been considering can be represented with an image of a line divided into two sections. Their border is the spontaneous shift from one state of mind to the other. The section to the left of the border represents the conditions of mindfulness, which include the old, anguished state of mind and the events that lead to the shift (e.g. the attentional changes, being placed in a particular

situation.) The segment on the right represents the state of mind that arises after the shift, which is characterised by the absence or forgetfulness of self, and the discovery of something like a hidden dimension in the most ordinary things. The feeling of melancholy associated with the earlier state is replaced by a positive feeling of sorts, which paints everything as “dear and gracious”. Attention, too, functions differently now: before the shift, it was fixated upon his personal (non-pursuable) projects, now it effortlessly follows reality; it flows with the rhythm of the things themselves.

A similar transformation takes place in life of Levin Konstantin, a character from Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*. Levin is a farm owner who has decided to join the peasants in the annual mowing of his fields. Levin came to this decision because, Tolstoy (2003, pp. 175-176) writes, “...once last year, coming to the mowing and getting angry with the steward, Levin has used this remedy for calming down—he had taken a scythe from a muzhik and begun mowing.” It seems that in this kind of labour Levin has found a way of escaping unwholesome states of mind, such as anger. Now, on the day when the mowing is to take place, a heated debate with his older brother left Levin feeling “...himself roundly beaten, but together with that he felt that his brother had not understood what he had wanted to say” (ibid.). Beaten, frustrated and misunderstood. And that is not all there is to Levin’s misery: we find him dreading the upcoming labour itself. Levin, you see, is quite inexperienced with the scythe, and in informing the peasants that he will be joining them he is anxious about being unable to keep up and he self-consciously anticipates that he will be the butt of their jokes. While not quite to the degree that we saw with Dostoevsky—who is after all imprisoned—the reader gets a definite impression that, at this point, Levin’s mind is filled with all sorts of anxieties, worries and agitations.

Levin begins the work. At first, as anticipated, he struggles to keep up with the

peasants and grows tired to the point of almost giving up. His misery multiplies. But just as he is about to embarrassingly voice his need for rest, the other workers stop of their own accord, as if the whole labour was governed by some invisible, finely tuned mechanism. The timely break tremendously refreshes Levin. The pattern repeats again, and again: exhaustion, break and rejuvenation. Slowly, Levin stops struggling and completely lets go into the rhythm of the work. As he does so, single-mindedness and focus begin to grow in his consciousness, cleansing it of superfluous thought: “He thought of nothing, desired nothing, except not to lag behind and do the best job he could” (Tolstoy, 2003, p. 178). And so the transformation begins:

The longer Levin mowed, the more often he felt those moments of oblivion during which it was no longer his arms that swung the scythe, but the scythe itself that lent motion to his whole body, full of life and conscious of itself, as if by magic, without a thought of it, the work got rightly and neatly done on its own. These were the most blissful moments (Tolstoy, 2003, p. 179).

As ‘forgetting his self’ leads Dostoevsky into a new relation with his surrounding, so as Levin loses the sense of being a doer (an intentional agent who must plan and think everything out) he engages the work in an entirely new, and quite unexpected way:

They finished another swath and another. They went through long swaths, short swaths, with bad grass, with good grass. Levin lost all awareness of time and had no idea whether it was late or early. A change now began to take place in his work which gave him enormous pleasure. In the midst of his work moments came to him when he forgot what he was doing and begun to feel light, and in those moments his swath came out as even and as good as Titus’s (Tolstoy, 2003, p. 178).

Tolstoy uses such expressions as ‘moments of oblivion’ and ‘state of unconsciousness’ to describe Levin’s state of mind. And these are good descriptions. Compared to our normal state of mind (which is constantly flooded by thoughts, memories, expectations and other such things) the state that Levin finds himself in is quite different. It is a silent and open way of relating to the world. But, in an important sense, this state is the very opposite of oblivion, of unconsciousness. It is rather that only now, with the extinguishing of explicit mental chatter, everything blooms into life and becomes fully aware.

Just contrast the way Levin’s body becomes “full of life and conscious of itself” with the way the body appears, or rather fails to appear, in the normal, agent-driven kind of activity that underlies and powers the more ordinary and familiar modes of being. In instrumental practice, the body is experienced as a peculiar instrument; it is not apprehended for itself but withdraws into a kind of a background from where it is utilized for the purpose of manipulating the surrounding environment, as Jean Paul Sartre (2003a, p. 347) describes in the following passage, which begins with the example of how the hand is experienced in the act of writing:

...the hand is at once the unknowable and non-utilizable term which the last instrument of the series indicated (“book to be read—characters to be formed on the paper—pen”) and at the same time the orientation of the entire series. But I can apprehend it—at least in so far as it is acting—only as the perpetual, evanescent reference of the whole series. Thus in a duel with swords or with quarter-staffs, it is the quarter-staff which I watch with my eyes and which I handle. In the act of writing it is the point of the pen which I look at in synthetic combination with the line of the square marked on the sheet of paper. *But my hand has vanished; it is lost* in the complex system of instrumentality in order that this system may exist.

As Levin is released from instrumental practice, his up to then ‘evanescent’, ‘lost’ or ‘withdrawn’ (whatever adjective you want to use) body emerges into the foreground of awareness. And when Levin described himself as “feeling light” he is pointing to the fact that this foregrounding of the body is associated with a positive feeling tone of some kind. Tolstoy (ibid.) describes the feeling that overtakes Levin in this moment as a kind of “blissfulness” and as an “enormous pleasure”. For Dostoevsky, recall, everything became “dear and gracious”. I will call this activity, which involves the forgetting of the doer and self, foregrounding of the body and the arising of blissful feelings, ‘non-instrumental practice’.<sup>6</sup>

Levin is not only the subject to this transformation; he is also a witness of it in those around him (take special note of how the old man’s awareness of his body is described here):

The old man, holding himself erect, went ahead, moving his turned-out feet steadily and widely, and in a precise and steady movement that apparently cost him no more effort than swinging his arms while walking, as if in play, laid down a tall, uniform swath. Just as though it were not him but the sharp scythe alone that swished through the succulent grass (Tolstoy, 2003, p. 178).

To the forgetfulness of the self, foregrounding of the body and arising of a deep equanimity it is now possible to add a kind of effortlessness to the characteristics of the state of mind that arises after the shift. This last quality is nicely captured in Muriel Berbery’s (2008, p. 275) commentary on these Tolstoyan passages:

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<sup>6</sup> I have borrowed the expressions ‘instrumental’ and ‘non-instrumental’ practice from Maraldo (2012).

Gradually, [Levin's] movements are freed from the shackles of his will, and he goes into a light trance which gives his gestures the perfection of conscious, automatic motion, without thought or calculation, and the scythe seems to move of its own accord. Levin delights in the forgetfulness that movement brings, where the pleasure of doing is marvelously foreign to the striving of the will...

Berbery (2008, pp. 275-276) gives a wonderful example of non-instrumental practice of her own, which illustrates that such a state can be realised even in intellectual work and which I therefore quote with no small degree of pleasure:

Freed from the demands of decision and intention, adrift on some inner sea, we observe our various movements as if they belonged to someone else, and yet we admire their involuntary excellence. What other reason might I have for writing this—ridiculous journal of an ageing concierge—if the writing did not have something of the art of scything about it? The lines gradually become their own demiurges and, like some witless yet miraculous participant, I witness the birth on paper of sentences that have eluded my will and appear in spite of me on the sheet, teaching me something that I neither knew nor thought I might want to know. This painless birth, like an unsolicited proof, gives me untold pleasure, and with neither toil nor certainty but the joy of frank astonishment I follow the pen that is guiding and supporting me. In this way, in the full proof and texture of my self, I accede to a self-forgetfulness that borders on ecstasy, to savor the blissful calm of my watching consciousness.

In Dostoevsky's case, this effortlessness is implicitly present in the way that his attention follows the natural rhythm of the surroundings: the rising of the smoke, the flight of the bird through the air and so on. These descriptions produce the impression of a kind of rhythm that sharply contrasts with the ordinary one that we are all so used to, the rhythm of chasing

some desire or other.

This contrast is vividly depicted in another one of Tolstoy's passages, this time from *War and Peace*. We join Andrei Bolkonski on the battlefield of the French-Russian war. In the passages leading up to the one that describes 'the event'—the moment, I contend, when Andrei becomes mindful—and which I will quote shortly, Andrei is wholly occupied with such human concerns as gaining promotion and recognition for some act of heroism that he is constantly and obsessively looking to perform in battle and, in the moment just prior to the event, with the outcome of a struggle taking place near him between a French and a Russian soldier. While strenuously trying to determine the outcome of the struggle, a bullet strikes Andrei and he begins to fall towards the ground. As he does so, a remarkable transformation takes place in him:

'What is this? Am I falling? My legs are giving away,' thought he, and fell on his back. He opened his eyes, hoping to see how the struggle of the Frenchman with the gunners ended, whether the red-haired gunner had been killed or not, and whether the cannon had been captured or saved. But he saw nothing. Above him there was nothing but the sky—the lofty sky, not clear yet still immeasurably lofty, with grey clouds gliding slowly across it. 'How quiet, peaceful, and solemn, not at all as I ran, thought Prince Andrei '—not as we ran, shouting and fighting, not at all as the gunner and the Frenchman with frightened and angry faces struggled for the mop: how differently do those clouds glide across that lofty infinite sky! How was it I did not see that lofty sky before? And how happy I am to have found it at last! Yes! All is vanity, all falsehood, except that infinite sky. There is nothing, nothing, but that. But even it does not exist, there is nothing but quiet and peace. Thank God! (Tolstoy, 1941, p. 299).

How wonderfully Tolstoy contrasts the rhythm of the human pursuits with that of the reality



of the sky and the clouds as they are in themselves! The ‘effortlessness’ I have been speaking about is reflected in such terms ‘peace’ and ‘solemnity’ that Andrei feels as he simply lets himself drift with the clouds above him. Note also Andrei’s surprise—‘How was it I did not see that lofty sky before?’—that he could have been so oblivious to something, so peaceful and pure and, yet, not entirely foreign.

Back to Levin, we learn that the new state that he finds himself in is easily shattered by the re-appearance of conscious effort: “...as soon as [Levin] remembered what he was doing and started trying to do better, he at once felt how hard the work was and the swath came out badly” (Tolstoy, 2003, p. 178). Lastly, I wish to consider the alteration that takes place in Levin’s experience of time. This was already touched upon in a previous passage, where it was said that “Levin lost all awareness of time, and had no idea whether it was late or early”. A little later in the narrative, Levin is surprised that “...the muzhiks had been mowing without a break for no less than four hours” and that he “...did not notice how the time passed. If he had been asked how long he had been mowing, he would have said half an hour—yet it was nearly dinner time” (ibid).

Dostoevsky and Levin’s experience share many common elements: the forgetfulness of the self, tuning into the intrinsic rhythm in the surrounding world, which comes with a certain effortlessness and a positive feeling tone, and in both cases the most ordinary things reveal a quite extraordinary side. But there are also some points of difference. Dostoevsky’s state, and Andrei’s too, is associated with a kind of detached observation of the surrounding environment. Levin, by contrast, finds mindfulness in a special kind of activity, in non-instrumental practice. Does this imply that what we have in our hands are really different phenomena? Not necessarily. But it does point at something very interesting: that neither pure detached observation, a kind of looking without doing, nor non-instrumental practice are essential to mindfulness, if indeed all of these cases are taken as instances of

mindfulness, as I am encouraging the reader to take them. That leaves the possibility open that detached observation and non-instrumental practice belong to a class of phenomena some members of which are essential to mindfulness, just as a flower is neither blue nor red necessarily but is necessarily some colour. This can be illustrated through another example. Arguably, one can be anxious without experiencing either resentful memories, negative thoughts and projections or images. But it is plausible that anxiety is necessarily associated with some such phenomenon. In the same way, we can think of mindfulness as being necessarily associated with neither detached observation nor non-instrumental practice but as nevertheless being necessarily associated with and serving as the ground for some experience from that class. More on this later.

With the above, we have put down the first lines of our pre-phenomenological sketch of mindfulness. It is now time to add further detail to it by considering how the phenomenon is depicted in a key Buddhist text dealing with the subject: *the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

## CHAPTER II:

### *An Interpretation of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*

To become mindful is to undergo a certain shift in perspective. After the shift, the person in whom it occurs is taken away from the normal, everyday way of relating to the world to a way of being where the most ordinary things (the surrounding environment, the body, one's activities) reveal a quite extraordinary dimension. While this dimension was never entirely absent, it laid dormant beneath the surface of ordinary existence as a seed always ready to sprout into life in the right conditions. It is with the idea that to become mindful is to undergo a shift in perspective, that I now approach the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (henceforth, 'the Sutta'), the authoritative text on mindfulness in the Pali Canon.<sup>7</sup> Does the text provide any support for the idea that becoming mindful involves a perspectival shift?

While the Sutta does not explicitly mention a perspectival shift, I do believe that it is there implicitly. Before I give some reasons in support of this claim, let me begin by quoting the passage (henceforth, 'the definition') where mindfulness is defined. According to Bhikkhu Anālayo (Anālayo, 2003, p. 45) the definition functions as "...the standard way of defining right mindfulness (*sammā sati*)" in the Pali Canon and it will be the primary point of focus of this chapter. Anālayo (ibid.) offers the following translation of the definition:

Here, monks, in regard to the body a monk abides contemplating the body, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to feelings he abides contemplating feelings, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to the mind, he abides contemplating the mind, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to *dharmas*, he abides contemplating *dharmas*,

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<sup>7</sup> The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is found in the *Majjhima Nikāya* as *sutta* 10.

diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world.

The first thing to note is that defining mindfulness (the usual translation of ‘*sati*’) here means listing the phenomena (diligence, clear knowing, freedom from desires and discontent) without which mindfulness, or to be more specific ‘right’ mindfulness (*sammā sati*), could not exist. This chapter will begin making phenomenological sense of these co-existing phenomena, of how they fit together with mindfulness, and what ‘co-existence’ means in this context. At this point, however, we are still with the question: does anything in *the definition* speak in favour of the idea that becoming mindful involves a perspectival shift of some kind?

To show that something does indeed point towards such a shift consider the following. Even before taking up the practice of meditation, all of us have some kind of an understanding of the objects that the Sutta instructs us to contemplate: the body, feelings, mind and dhammas.<sup>8</sup> Call this the ordinary or everyday understanding. This everyday understanding is not only responsible for our ability to use the body (to focus on that particular example), but also for the know-how of how to move it about and do things with it. It is also that which differentiates the body from other phenomenon in our everyday experience. To put it differently, everyday understanding has already cut up the world into distinct regions of facts and it is only because of the existence of this everyday understanding that the Sutta’s instruction to turn towards these familiar objects and to contemplate and understand them in some new manner even makes sense. From this we can take the lesson that, implicitly, the text is instructing the practitioner to undertake a shift in

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<sup>8</sup> It is a little more difficult to show that this is true of *dhammas*, which I would translate as ‘transcendental phenomena’. While this is not the occasion to go into this, I think that the point I wish to make still holds true even if one puts aside the issue of ‘*dhammas*’ for now and focuses exclusively on the first three objects.

perspective from the everyday understanding to a ‘contemplative understanding’ that allows the phenomenon to be understood as it is—more on this below.

Further support for the notion that becoming mindful involves a perspectival shift can be found in the Sutta’s bivalent title. ‘*Satipaṭṭhāna*’ is a compound term that can be understood in two ways: either as a combination of ‘sati’ and ‘paṭṭhāna’ or of ‘sati’ and ‘upaṭṭhāna’ (Bodhi, 2011).<sup>9</sup> ‘Paṭṭhāna’ means *foundation, base* or *cause*. ‘Upaṭṭhāna’ has two meanings: on the one hand, it means *setting up* or *establishing something*. On the other hand, it carries the sense of *presence*, in the sense of being present to something (ibid.). Not only in the contrast between ‘upaṭṭhāna’ and ‘paṭṭhāna’ but within the latter itself there exists an ambiguity between the process of setting something up, on the one hand, and the foundation or base upon which that something is established, on the other. Now there is a tendency in the secondary literature to choose one meaning over the other. As Bodhi (2005, p. 1189, fn.136) writes:

Thus the four satipaṭṭhānas may be understood as either the four ways of setting up mindfulness or as the four objective domains of mindfulness...The former seems to be the etymologically correct derivation...but the Pali commentators, while admitting both explanations, have a predilection for the latter.

But the ambiguity can be taken as an informative one and as pointing at the difference between the process of setting up or establishing *sati*, on the one hand, and to the state of affairs where *sati* has actually been established and where one is now actually present to the object, on the other. To put it differently, the process of establishing *sati* leads, or potentially leads, to a shift in perspective after which *sati* is actually established.

At this point I would like to explicitly distinguish the phase of experience that takes

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<sup>9</sup> In Pali, the ‘u’ of ‘upaṭṭhāna’ is dropped through vowel elision (Anālayo, 2003, p. 29)

place before the shift from the phase that comes after it. What takes place before the shift can be described as the process or practice of cultivating mindfulness. After the shift, one is actually being mindful. This difference can be compared to the difference between falling and being asleep; while the one can lead to the other, and while they are obviously connected in important ways, they are nevertheless different phenomena. But, as I will now try to show, instead of speaking of cultivating ‘mindfulness’ and of being ‘mindful’ it may be more accurate to speak of the difference between cultivating the ‘contemplative state’ and actually being in the contemplative state.

#### i. CONTEMPLATION

‘Contemplation’ translates into Pali as ‘anupassanā’. This term is derived from the verb ‘anupassati’, a compound made up of the verb ‘passati’, meaning *to see* and the emphatic ‘anu’ (Anālayo, 2003, p. 32). ‘Anu’ can also carry the meaning of *along* or *together with*. The kind of contemplation here in question, then, can be understood as a *close-seeing-of-how-the-phenomena-fit-together* (the dashes between the words in order to emphasise that these distinct qualities constitute a single, unified process). To put it differently, the kind of contemplating now in question is a seeing with a definite and inextricable cognitive dimension; seeing and cognizing being to *anupassati* what heads and tails are to a coin.

What is the relation between *anupassanā* and the other phenomena listed in the definition (i.e. diligence (*ātāpi*), clear knowing (*sampajāna*), mindfulness (*sati*) and freedom from desires and discontent in regards to the world (*vineyya abhijjhādomanassa*)? I think that Bodhi (2011) should be interpreted literally when he speaks of these phenomena as being “parts of” and as “entering into” *anupassanā*. According to this way of looking at things, *anupassanā* does not belong on the same logical level as the other factors that feature

in the definition and to think of it as just another item on the same list is to commit a category mistake, akin to the error that one makes when one conceives of the university as being just another item on the list that includes the cafeteria, the library, the auditorium and so on.<sup>10</sup> Rather, I propose, *anupassanā* is the whole of which the other factors are constitutive parts. But I do not think that the whole can be reduced to its parts; what is in question here is not a mere *sum* but an organic whole. This, I hope, will become clearer as the discussion unfolds. For now the ontological status of *sati* or mindfulness can be compared to that of colour, the existence of which depends on some instance of visual spread and shape with which it co-exists in the context that is the concrete visual thing. Analogously, *sati* depends on the other factors listed in the definition with which it co-exists within *anupassanā*.

This raises the question: if this is so why, then, is the Sutta called the *Satipaṭṭhāna*? Why the emphasis on that which is in truth only an aspect of a larger whole? Would it not have been more accurate to title the text the *Anupassanāpaṭṭhāna* Sutta? I believe that the commentary raises a similar question in the following way: “Why is the Arousing of Mindfulness intended by the word “way”? Are there not many other factors of the way...?” (Soma, 1949, p. 20) And the answer is given: “To be sure there are. But these are all implied when the Arousing of Mindfulness is mentioned, because these factors exist in union with mindfulness” (ibid). This point, which I take to be a good one, can also be put in the following way. Whenever the phenomenon that ‘*sati*’ designates is brought before mind, certain other phenomena are necessarily co-apprehended as a kind of accompanying background. This is true even if this accompanying background is not explicitly grasped and articulated. Again, it is instructive to compare this to colour: to imagine a colour is necessarily to also imagine a definite instance of visual spread and shape (even if one does

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<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of the idea of ‘category mistake’. See Ryle (1984)

not usually focus upon this accompanying background in an explicit way) all of which together make up the imagined visual thing. The idea here is that *sati* is comparable to colour, (at least some) of the other elements mentioned in the definition to visual spread and shape and *anupassanā* to the visual thing.

It should now be clear why instead of cultivating ‘mindfulness’ and being ‘mindful’ it may be more accurate to speak of cultivating the ‘contemplative state’ and actually being in that state. And in this chapter, I will generally prefer the latter terminology. But when, either in this chapter or in the forthcoming ones, the occasion calls for emphasising the aspect of the contemplative state that is mindfulness, I will resort to speaking of cultivating mindfulness and being mindful. In general, the hope is that the context will make the meaning clear.

It is now possible to define the aims of this chapter more precisely. Given that *anupassanā* is a special kind of a whole or totality, the main task of this chapter is to grasp and define the whole as such by, so to speak, allowing it to shine through its parts. While different parts of the whole will be distinguished, this activity does not imply the fragmentation and destruction of the whole. Differently put, the process of bringing the parts into view and understanding their structure and interrelations will proceed by always keeping the whole in mind as the background context within which its parts make sense. Now, when I speak of ‘the whole’ here I really have in mind two different wholes, which correspond to the two phases before and after the shift in perspective. The establishing phase is arguably much more dynamic (the conditions for the sprouting of the seeds must be brought into play sequentially) than the phase after the shift (where the parts can be taken as co-existing simultaneously). So, and this will become much clearer as the discussion progresses, the establishing phase is perhaps best described as a *temporal whole* and, in this sense, it can be compared to a melody whose parts, the tones, are spread out in time. Like



the blotches of paint that constitute a painting, the parts that make up the contemplative state itself can be taken as existing simultaneously. The difference between cultivating the contemplative state and being in it opens up the possibility that some of the factors mentioned in the definition are aspects of the establishing phase, that others make up the contemplative state itself while multivalent terms can be taken as designating aspects on either side of the process. This question—of what belongs where—will guide the following analysis of the phenomena that feature in the definition, beginning with the object to be contemplated.

## ii. THE OBJECT

The factors mentioned in *the definition* can be grouped into two basic categories: the subjective and the objective. ‘Objective’ here refers to the object that is to be contemplated. In the last chapter, it was almost always some ‘external’ event that stirred mindfulness into life; in the case of Dostoevsky, it was a bird flying through the air, for Levin the scythe swooshing through the grass, for Andrei the clouds drifting across the sky... Clearly in the context of the Sutta ‘object’ does not mean ‘external object’. For, in an important sense, the ‘objects’ that the text instructs the practitioner to contemplate, such as feelings, are ‘internal’ and are aspects of the ‘mind-body’ complex (In Pali: ‘nāma-rūpa’).<sup>11</sup> At this point, I suggest, ‘object’ can be interpreted as *intentional object*: the object towards which the contemplation is to be directed. But here the possibility must be left open that the kind of contemplative practice now in question transcends the subject/object dichotomy and that it cannot be ultimately understood in those terms. While the intentional object can either be internal or

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<sup>11</sup> This is certainly true for the first three domains: the body, feelings and mental objects. But I am a little less certain about categorising *dhammas* as an aspect of the mind-body complex. But, for the present purposes, the *dhammas* can be left aside.

external, in the context of the Buddhist path as it is set out in the Sutta the contemplation *should* be directed ‘inwards’ (i.e. towards the mind-body complex). To put it differently, the contemplative state contains the possibility of being directed towards internal objects. But this is not a necessary possibility; it must be intentionally cultivated from a whole range of possibilities that the contemplative state offers. The cultivation of this possibility is therefore an important aspect of the Buddhist path and it could be argued, although I will not do so here, that mindfulness would not be *right* mindfulness (*sammasati*) if it were not directed inwards.

The Sutta lists four objective domains suitable for contemplation: the body, feeling, mind and *dhammas*. An important question, which I will not address at this point, is: is this sequence necessary? In other words, must the aspirant begin by contemplating the body, then feelings, the mind and finally *dhammas*? Or is the order arbitrary; can the contemplation be undertaken on any object, do particular ones perhaps suit different personality types? I will leave this issue aside for now in order to focus on a more basic question: how is the object—of whatever kind it is—to be taken in the context of contemplation?

This question can be interpreted in at least two ways. (1) How does the object appear within the practice of cultivating the contemplative state? (2) How does it appear within the contemplative state itself? To illustrate what this difference is getting at, it may help to contrast the way that an object (say the body) appears in the process of falling asleep, on the one hand, and how the body (fails to) appear in the state of sleep itself, on the other. The following discussion will begin by focusing on the role of the object in the establishing phase, while the question of how it appears within the contemplative state will be taken up later on. Regarding the body in particular, the instructions say: “...in regards to the body a monk abides contemplating the body...” Ñānamoli (2005) translates this as: “...abides

contemplating the body as body” and Bodhi (2011) as “...dwells contemplating the body in the body...”. This is an answer to the question: to contemplate the body is to allow it to appear *as* body or, more generally, it is to allow the object to manifest *as* the object that *it is*. But what does that mean?

On the way to addressing this very question, Anālayo (2003, p. 32) notes that in the Buddha’s other discourses contemplating designates “...an examination of the observed object from a particular point of view” where “...particular features of the object are to be given prominence, such as its impermanence, or its selfless nature”. Here contemplation appears as a kind of discriminative judgment, or at least as the support for such a judgment, where some quality of the phenomenon, such as its impermanent nature, is emphasised. But, as Anālayo (*ibid.*) goes on to note, this is *not* the meaning that the phrase carries in the Sutta, where “...the feature to be contemplated appears to be the same as the object of contemplation”. Differently put, what the aspirant is being asked to focus upon and isolate here is not some quality of the body but the body *as such*. Anālayo admits to being puzzled by this. In an attempt to clarify the issue, he proposes that the two occurrences of ‘body’ in ‘the body as body’ do not carry the same meaning. The first occurrence, according to his interpretation, stands for the body as a whole. The second “...stands for a particular aspect from the general area of contemplation...” (Anālayo, 2003, p. 33). Here ‘particular aspect’ designates one of the six bodily regions that the later parts of the sutta instruct the aspirant to contemplate, namely: breathing, postures, activities, anatomical constitution, the four primary elements and the decomposition of the body after death. It appears, then, that in Anālayo’s final understanding of the expression ‘contemplate the body as body’, ‘contemplating’ retains the sense it has elsewhere in the discourses, the sense of being a kind of *discriminative judgment*, a judgment that emphasises a part of a whole, with the difference that ‘part’ no longer means, as it does elsewhere in the discourses, the three

natures (i.e. impermanence, no-self, suffering) but rather stands for the different parts, regions or life phases of the body. I do not find this interpretation very convincing.

I do not deny that there is a point in the practice where it is necessary to divide the body into distinct regions, to isolate and focus on the different postures that the body can assume and to become conscious of the different phases of its life cycle. But that point belongs to the *vipassanā* or insight stage of practice, a stage that *presupposes* the establishment of mindfulness or contemplation. But what is in question at this point is how the body appears on the way to the establishment of that state, within the establishing phase of the process.

Towards the end of his discussion of this issue, Anālayo (2003, p. 34) mentions the commentarial interpretation of the expression, which seems to me to be at odds with his own and which I believe to be more satisfactory:

According to the commentaries, the repetition of the object of contemplation also indicated emphasis, implying that the object of contemplation should be considered simply as perceived by the senses, and in particular without taking it to be “I” or “mine”. In this way the repetition—body in body—underlies the importance of direct experience, as opposed to mere intellectual reflection. One should let the body speak for itself, so to say, disclosing its true nature to the scrutiny of the meditator.

In a footnote to the Sutta, Bodhi (2005, p. 1189 fn.138) also mentions this commentarial interpretation:

The repetition in the phrase “contemplating the body as body”...has the purpose of precisely determining the object of contemplation and of isolating that object from others with which it may be confused.

The key terms here are ‘direct experience’, ‘emphasis’, ‘letting the body speak for itself’, ‘precisely determining it’ and ‘isolating the object’, which contrast with ‘mere intellectual reflection’ and taking the body to be “I” or “mine”. This will now serve as a clue for developing an alternative and what I believe to be a more satisfying interpretation of what it means to contemplate the body as body or, more generally, object as object.

What does it mean to let the body speak for itself and to experience it directly, outside of all additions made by intellectual speculation and judgment? It cannot mean to isolate a part of the body. For that presupposes that the body as a whole has already been brought into view, and brought into view *as it is*. But the question is concerned with the issue of how the body as a whole is to be isolated, and isolated just *as it is*. To begin making sense of this, recall the earlier observation that in everyday understanding (the kind of understanding at work before the perspectival shift) the body already appears in a specific way. What way is this? The phenomenologists, such as Jean Paul Sartre (2003a) and Merleau-Ponty (2002), present a strong case for the idea that the body originally appears in our experience as a kind of an instrument that *withdraws* and which is therefore *hidden* or *forgotten*. This *withdrawal* of the ‘instrumental body’ is simultaneously an *externalisation*. Here the body appears as the ‘invisible’ or ‘hidden’ medium through which the world announces its instrumental dimension, as Sartre (2003a, p. 325) illustrates:

...my body always extends across the tool which it utilizes: it is at the end of the cane on which I lean against the earth, it is at the end of the telescope which shows me the stars, it is on the chair, in the whole house, for it is my adaption to these tools.

“Contemplate the body as body” can be interpreted as instructing the practitioner to *bring the body forth from its withdrawn, instrumental state*. This can be described as the practice of *foregrounding* the body. We already touched upon this phenomenon in the last

chapter to some degree. Recall how Levin's body appeared as "full of life and conscious of itself". But in Levin's case *foregrounding* was a spontaneous, passive happening. However, in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* foregrounding of the body is to be taken up as a practice, as something to be cultivated. But in addition to breaking through this instrumental hiddenness of the body, which I believe is the primary meaning of the practice of seeing the body as it is, I think this phase can have yet other meanings, which I will now briefly touch upon.

In the context of ordinary life the body primarily appears as an instrumental body but most people are oblivious to this fact. This is because the body's instrumental dimension tends to be overlooked, misunderstood and misconceptualised due to the tendency to treat the body as though it was a mere object, as a thing amongst other things and not as the medium through which things appear and disclose their instrumental dimension. Alongside and prior to *foregrounding*, the instruction to "contemplate the body as body" can also be taken to designate the need to put aside our interpretative tendencies (everything we believe about the body that stems from our past learning and what our society tells us about it) in order to let the body speak for itself, to let it emerge *as it is*. There is yet another, closely related sense in which the body can be hidden in the context of everyday understanding, which is prominent in the Husserlian phenomenological method. It may be hidden because the body is apprehended, not in that original and *sui generis* experience in which it appears as itself, but *emptily*: through empty, symbolic thinking burdened with preconceived notions about what the body is.

These interpretations of what it means to "contemplate the body as body" are not incompatible and it could be argued that the practice involves all three. Moreover, there appears to be an order in which the practice should proceed: (1) break through the empty apprehension of the body; stop looking at the body through your speculative thoughts and images and turn directly to the experience in which it appears originally (2) break through

the tendency to look at the body simply as an object; in other words, resist the tendency to attribute to the body the mode of being of a mere object and (3) *foreground* the body: suspend the instrumental dimension of the body in order to reveal it as really is. The first move is Husserlian, the second Heideggerian while the third can be interpreted as Buddhist. While arguably all three meanings have an important role to play in the practice, in the following I will focus almost exclusively on *foregrounding*.

This interpretation is promising. But for it to be truly satisfying it needs to be further developed. An important task here is to work out the sense in which the other objects—feelings, the mind and *dhammas*—are instrumental and *withdrawn* in the context of everyday understanding and prior to the shift. This is not as straightforward as extending what was said about the body to the other objective domains. Feelings, for example, are not instrumental in quite the same sense as the body. Nevertheless a strong phenomenological case could be made for the idea that feelings, too, *externalise* themselves; that to experience a feeling in everyday life does not first and foremost mean to be thematically aware of the feeling itself but to be aware of some aspect of the reality as repugnant, as enticing, as valuable etc.<sup>12</sup> To contemplate the feeling *as* feeling, then, would be to break the kind of *externalising* tendency that is proper to it and the kind of *hiddenness* that correspond to this *externalisation*. But clearly more work is needed in order to spell out the details. The same applies to the mind. How do thoughts, memories, expectation etc., *externalise* themselves? And what would it mean to *foreground* them? The point can be put in the following way also.

Phenomenologists conceive of pre-reflective consciousness as being directed towards the world, towards that which it is not or at least towards that which it does not apprehend itself as being. It does this in many different ways, depending on the kind of intentional act in

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<sup>12</sup> Scheler (1973) develops the idea that feelings disclose or reveal values in a phenomenological fashion.

question. The Buddhist contemplative practice can be understood as the practice of breaking through this externalising tendency of pre-reflective life, a breaking through that reveals pre-reflective life *as it is*.

According to the Sutta, to contemplate X as X is to reveal its *true nature* (or at least it is to take the first step in that direction). But it could be argued along broadly Heideggerian lines that, far from being a revelation of some fundamental truth, foregrounding is in fact an objectifying *distortion* of the phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the being of the body is most originally revealed in its instrumental/*externalising* nature. Perhaps the instrumental body *is* what the body really is, primordially and originally. What reason is there to think that when we apprehend the body as body, when we foreground it, that we are not distorting it? Would this not be like dissecting the butterfly in order to find out what its life consists in? Here one could also raise the concern that this kind of contemplation is a way of escaping from the world, a world with which we are in touch through pre-reflective life and wherein we love and suffer. What else, one may wonder, could it be, given that it involves a turning away from instrumental solicitations and a turning towards some kind of a de-contextualised and detached surveying of phenomena? Is this not an (artificial) creation of some isolated abstract inner realm that is far removed from the concreteness of life?

But the opposite view could also be argued for. Contemplation, the rejoinder could be, is a kind of modification of *being-in-the-world* that is not a distortion but a way of revealing phenomena as they really are. Far from turning to some abstract inner subjective realm, contemplating is the practice of allowing things to speak their true nature, of seeing the phenomenon from which our subjectivity is constituted precisely in their constituting function. The turn ‘inwards’ should not be taken too literally; the real force of the kind of

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<sup>13</sup> This view, that to objectify an aspect of ourselves, to see it as ‘present-at-hand’, is to distort its true nature is articulated in Heidegger (1967).



contemplation now in question is that it allows the real structure of phenomenon to be explicated. If this is right then Buddhist contemplation escapes the kind of criticism that Heidegger directed at the Husserlian *epoché*.<sup>14</sup> But how does it escape it? What is the relation between and the difference of Buddhist contemplative practice and the phenomenological *epoché*? Some of these issues will be dealt with in Part II.

According to the above, establishing the contemplative state involves the practice of breaking through the object's *hiddenness*. Success in the practice leads into the contemplative state, wherein the object appears *as it is*. Just as spectacles transform a blurry vision into a sharp one, so the practice of contemplating transforms the *withdrawn* object into a *foregrounded* one. It is now time to turn way from contemplation's objective dimension, from its intentional object, to the 'subjective' factors that make up this state itself. To continue with the metaphor, what remarkable properties bestow on the spectacles the power of so radically transforming vision, of bringing the object out from its instrumental hiddenness and into view just as it is?

### iii. FREEDOM FROM DESIRES AND DISCONTENT

The discussion of the 'subjective' factors commences with '*vineyya abhijhādomanassa*' translated here as 'being free of desires and discontent'. What is it that one is being, or trying to be, freed from? What, in other words, is the meaning of 'desires and discontent' (*abhijjha domanassa*)? I think that the term 'desire' can be roughly interpreted as being synonymous with 'our possibilities', a category that includes different

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<sup>14</sup> Heidegger's (1985) critique of the *epoché*, in my opinion, is misguided. As far as I can see, he takes the *epoché* to be a kind of abstractive procedure wherein the phenomenologist ignores the being of the world of consciousness in order to bring its intentional experiences into view. This is a serious misunderstanding. But this is not the place to expand upon this. I hope to deal with the issue in a forthcoming publication. In so far as this work is concerned, the *epoché* is dealt with in some length in Part II, Chapter I, Section v.

kinds of possibilities. Here the focus will be primarily on ‘projects’, examples of which include such possibilities as writing this text, going to the cafe, chatting with friends, becoming a philosopher and so on. While there may not be an exact correspondence between ‘desires’ and ‘projects’, the connection is sufficiently close to justify using these terms as synonyms for the current purposes. As to ‘discontent’, I will for now interpret this term as designating the dissatisfaction that arises on the basis of the realisation that there is always a *gap* between us and our projects; not only in the obvious cases where we fail to realise some project but also in the cases where we do bring some project to completion. The discontent exists because a human being never stands still but is always striving for some future project that is *not-yet*. While I will no longer explicitly discuss discontent here, its existence will be implied whenever I speak of striving for the realisation of projects, desires or our possibilities. Leaving aside for the moment the question of why one should want to become free of one’s projects in the first place, the remainder of this section will focus on the meaning of ‘*vineyya*’.

According to Anālayo (2003, pp. 69-71), this expression can be interpreted in two ways: as meaning either (1) *complete* and *permanent freedom* or (2) the *process of becoming free*. While admitting that (1) is probably the ‘best’ translation of *vineyya* in general, he opts for (2) as being the one that makes most sense in the context of *the definition*. This is because, Anālayo (ibid) argues, this early stage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* practice cannot demand of the aspirant complete and permanent removal of desires. For the later sections of the Sutta instruct the practitioner to contemplate the hindrances that are tied up with desires in their very nature. And this would make no sense if one were already permanently freed from them.

I agree that (1) is not a satisfactory interpretation of *vineyya*. But it does not follow that (2) is correct. For there is a third way to interpret *vineyya*: as *complete* but *temporary*

freedom from projects. While Anālayo does not explicitly consider this possibility, it appears fleetingly in his claim that “[d]uring these initial stages the task is to build up a degree of inner equipoise within which desires and discontent are *held at bay*” (Anālayo, 2003, p. 77 my emphasis), and Thanissaro Bhikkhu (1996, p. 16 my emphasis) also seems to point at it when he speaks of “*putting aside* greed & distress with reference to the world”. According to this interpretation of *vineyya*, while the establishment of the contemplative state implies the *complete* removal of the bond that ties us to our various projects, what persists is (something like) the disposition for these projects, and the associated discontent, to return when the contemplative state lapses, as it is bound to do, at least in these early stages of practice. This can be comparable to the temporary relief from an illness that some drugs bring about, where all symptoms of the ailment are temporarily absent but not therefore the underlying disposition for the illness to return.

While this is, I contend, how the expression ‘*vineyya*’ should be interpreted when used to describe the *contemplative state* itself, the sense of *permanent freedom* from desires and discontent also has a place in the practice. This can be described as the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path but I will have not too much more to say about it here. As for ‘*vineyya*’ in the sense of the *process of becoming free* of desires and discontent, I suggest that this is a description of what takes place in the context of cultivating the contemplative state. I would now like to discuss this in a little more detail.

To begin with, it is important to note that there is a deep connection between projects, the instrumental body and the instrumental meaning of objects (‘the content’ of an action). Let’s take an example. I am drinking coffee. This act includes as an aspect of itself the project of, say, being caffeinated. It is in virtue of this project that the coffee mug appears with the instrumental meaning *to-be-sipped-from*. But the instrumental body, the sense that I have of the possibility of picking the cup up, of placing it against my lips and so on, plays a

key role in the constitution of this instrumental meaning. This instrumental meaning is the content of the action. In the above example, the content of the action can be described as the cup *to-be-drunk-from*. Next, I would like to distinguish internal and external actions. The content of external action is determined, in part at least, by the materiality of the immediate environment, which we know through the five external senses. In contrast, this content of the internal actions is not determined in that way.

While the project plays an important role in the formation of the content, it is not itself the content of the action but its basis or foundation. The relation that obtains between the content of the external actions and the project that underlies it is such that, in ordinary circumstances, the project appears through and as a structure of the content; we *discover* what the project is, not by some detached act of contemplation, but precisely by *realising* the content or, better, by responding to the instrumental meaning of the object, as Sartre (2003a, p. 36) illustrates in the following passage:

In lighting this cigarette I learn my concrete possibility, or if you prefer, my desire of smoking. It is by the very act of drawing towards me this paper and this pen that I give to myself as my most immediate possibility the act of working at this book; there I am engaged, and I discover it at the very moment when I am already thrown into it...Thus in the quasi-generality of everyday acts, I am engaged, I have ventured, and I discover my possibilities by realizing them and in the very act of realizing them as exigencies, urgencies, instrumentalities.

This disclosure of projects by the means of responding to instrumental solicitations can be described as a kind of mindlessness and it is how most of us live our lives most of the time.

But here I wish to focus on the following. It can happen that the link between the external action and the underlying project becomes severed. And when that happens, it can

also happen that while the content of the action stays the same, the way of relating to it alters; whereas before we were related to it through external action, the instrumental meaning now becomes the content of some internal act. An innocuous example of this is found in the case where I simply close my eyes, thereby preventing myself from drinking coffee. What can happen at this point is that I start imagining the cup *as-to-be-drunk-from*; I start anticipating how I will be realising this instrumental meaning in the future when I open my eyes. Here I continue to relate to the instrumental meaning, i.e. cup *to-be-drunk-from*, except that in the mental act this content is posited as *absent*. The underlying project has remained the same as it was in the external action; it is just that now, because I have been prevented from realising it in the ‘real world’, I relate to it mentally. To put it differently, the old projects continue to structure my ‘world’ but when the situation prevents that project from being realised through external actions, the project can ‘pop up’ in the mental realm, in thoughts, images and so on. And for it to pop up in the mental realm means: the project appears through instrumental meanings or contents of internal actions. When we can no longer pursue our projects through the external action and instead become aware of them through the content of internal actions, I will call this event *thematization*. The crucial point in here is that in order to practice becoming free from our projects, they must first be *thematized*.

In the description of Dostoevsky’s experience in the first chapter, we said that in prison “...the conditions are arranged in such a way as to prevent the prisoner from pursuing the project by which their pre-prison life was defined...” In prison the surroundings are arranged in such a way the prisoner can no longer pursue the basic projects that make up normal human existence through external actions. Hence the projects that were previously (in pre-prison life) pursued mindlessly, without much reflection, and which were responsible for that sense that life is worth living, that it has a meaning “...now float before the

prisoner's awareness in the form of realisable but currently non-pursuable ends". The lesson here is that *thematization* can be triggered by a felt lack of something in the surrounding environment.

But *thematization* can also be brought about through the *foregrounding* of the instrumental body. If, for some reason, we find ourselves in a position where our instrumental body is no longer available and functioning, then we will be in a position of not being able to realise any projects in our immediate environment. Both—the removal of the external conditions through which projects appear and the *foregrounding* of the body—play a role in the *practice* of establishing the contemplative state. It is for this reason, I believe, that shortly after *the definition* the Sutta gives the following instructions:

And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating the body as body? Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and having established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breaths in, ever mindful he breaths out.

The effect on the practitioner of feeling the absence of the usual means or instruments in the environment is comparable to the effect that prison has on the prisoner: in both cases, the person is left confronting the *absence of familiar equipment*. The consequence is *thematization*, the appearance of 'our world'—the total set of projects that make us who we are—through internal actions, perhaps as thoughts of the following kind—"I cannot wait to get out of here. Oh, how I look forward to a long conversation over coffee with Brett"—or memories—"ah, how nice it was just to be able to stroll through the town on a Friday night, and look at me now, stuck here, watching my breath like some idiot, with nowhere to go". Commitment to the practice forces the aspirant to sit down, and keep the body still and erect. This *foregrounding* of the body ensures that even the most innocuous and taken-for-granted

projects, such as moving around, stretching and scratching, can no longer be felt and pursued through external actions. At this point even these proximate projects will, so to speak, bubble up as contents of images and thoughts. This is *thematisation par excellence*. As I see it, *thematisation* precedes and conditions the possibility of the practice of becoming free from desires and discontent. This involves *tuning-out* of our projects and *tuning-in* to something else—the precise nature of which will be discussed below. For now, however, I would like to distinguish this practice of *tuning-out* from what may be called the practice of becoming *disenchanted* from our (*thematised*) projects.

*Disenchantment* is not discussed in the Sutta. It is, however, treated in other Buddhist texts, including the *Stages of Meditation (Bhāvanākrama)*, a work by the eighth century Indian scholar Kamalaśīla. What follows is a brief summary of some of the main points from this text which will strengthen the above line of thought. After withdrawing to a “place conducive for reflection”, Kamalaśīla (2004, pp. 639-340) writes, and having set “the body erect in a comfortable posture, with legs crossed”—in short, after bringing about the suspension of external action—, the mind Kamalaśīla warns us, will be “...pulled away to externals by other objects like those that induce passion, disgust and the like...” (ibid). Here ‘distraction’ and ‘being pulled away to externals’ correspond to ‘thematisation’; the appearance of projects through internal acts. “Once the distraction is noted...” the Kamalaśīla (ibid.) continues “...one should counteract it. For instance, if the distraction is pleasurable, one should bring to mind a mental image of the impure and the unpleasant, or a similar meditation object.” In other words, depending on the nature of the *thematised* project, and in particular its *feeling tone*, the aspirant is to *counterbalance* it by bringing to mind an object that neutralises its affective pull. When undertaken earnestly with persistence and patience, such practice can lead to *disenchantment* with the project. At that point the project, temporarily at least and so to speak, ceases knocking on the door of the mind. One

has become completely but only *temporarily* free of it. But, while it can be extremely helpful, I believe that disenchantment is neither necessary nor sufficient for the practice of meditation (indeed, disenchantment on its own can lead to serious depression for one may get the sense that life is meaningless). Instead, it is possible to become temporarily free from the project by taking the awareness away from the *thematized* content directly to one's meditation objects; through the practice of *tuning-in*, which I will discuss shortly. To succeed in this practice is to realise the state of being *tuned-out*, the complete but temporary freedom from projects.

'Complete but temporary detachment from desire' is a negative description of the contemplative state, pointing towards that which it lacks. Anālayo (2003, p. 67) notes that in the Buddha's other discourses 'being free of desires and discontent' is replaced by "...reference to concentrated mind and experiencing happiness". These expressions are not, I believe, meant to be synonymous. Rather, they point at different aspects of the same facet of the contemplative state: one negative, the other positive. What was above negatively described as complete but temporary detachment from our projects can be positively characterised as a state of equanimity and concentration. This is important as it implies that concentration is a characteristic of mindfulness or contemplation itself. In other words, establishing mindfulness implies establishing some degree of concentration, where this kind of concentration must be distinguished from high concentrative states into which mindfulness *can* but need not be developed. The kind of concentration now in question could very well be what some Buddhist texts call '*khanika samādhī*' or 'momentary concentration'.

How does momentary concentration relate to freedom from our projects? Why does the one imply the other? At this point, I can do no more than sketch the answer to these questions and bring into light certain distinctions that will be treated in detail later on (see:



Part II, Chapter II, Section v.). To begin with, we can say that the opposite of one-pointedness or concentration is scattered attention, which is constantly darting from one thing to another. And why does attention scatter? Scattering of attention implies at least the presence of the project to be aware of what is happening in the surrounding environment. It is based in the project to see this, to investigate that. To completely let go of one's projects means to let go of this one too. The consequence of this letting go is the cessation of scattered attention and the establishment of one-pointedness or concentration. This is a state that the mind finds itself in when it is no longer striving to realise its own ends but is *there* with the phenomena themselves. Here the multiplicity of objects that make up our normal scenery gives way to a kind of oneness or togetherness (recall our earlier definition of *anupassanā* as close-seeing-of-how-the-phenomena-fit-together). Was this, I wonder, what my father was trying to convey with the metaphor of the multiple colours merging into a homogeneous quality?

#### iv. MINDFULNESS

‘Sati’ carries two meanings in the context of the Pali Canon. On the one hand, the term points back towards the Sanskrit ‘smṛti’ from which it originated and which is usually translated as ‘memory’ or ‘recollection’. On the other hand, ‘sati’ carries a sense that has been rendered in English in several ways including ‘lucid awareness’, ‘undisturbed watchfulness’ and ‘attentiveness’. On this multivalence, Rhys Davids (1910) wrote long ago:

Etymologically Sati is Memory. But as happened at the rise of Buddhism to so many other expressions in common use, a new connotation was then attached to the word, a connotation that gave a new meaning to it, and renders ‘memory’ a most inadequate and misleading translation. It became the memory, recollecting, calling-to-mind, being-aware-of, certain specified facts. Of these the most important was impermanence (the coming to be as the

result of a cause, and the passing away again) of all phenomena, bodily and mental. And it included the repeated application of this awareness, to each experience of life, from the ethical point of view.

The question of how to harmonise this apparent semantic dissonance has received quite a bit of attention in the secondary Buddhist literature. There one can detect a trace of the tendency to do away with the meaning of *recollection* or *memory* altogether. However, this is never pursued to the very end and the author in question ends up having to, in one way or another, retain the meaning of *memory* in the final explication of the term. A good illustration of this is the above quotation itself, which accuses ‘memory’ of being “a most inadequate translation” while at the same time asserting *sati* to be a (special) kind of memory, the recollection “...of certain specified facts”. Similarly, Bodhi (2011) writes that in the Buddhist context “...*sati* no longer means memory” and that “...it would be a fundamental mistake to read the old meaning of memory into the new context” while also holding that “...it is not a mistake to determine how *sati* acquires its new application on the basis of the old meaning”. The general lesson here is that there must be something left in the meaning of ‘*sati*’ that points back to its origin in ‘*smṛti*’. After all, the Buddha chose ‘*sati*’ and not some other Sanskrit term for his purposes, and this suggests a special connection between the phenomenon he was trying to demarcate and memory or recollection. What is the nature of this connection? In what sense is *sati* recollection?

I will try to show that ‘*sati*’ can be interpreted as *memory* or *recollection* in two distinct senses. Both play an important role in the context of the Buddhist path as it is set out in the Sūtra (and the Pali Canon more generally) and must be distinguished from the third sense of ‘*sati*’ as *lucid awareness*.

The first meaning of ‘recollecting’ is closely related to the previously discussed *foregrounding* of the object, bringing it forth from its instrumental hiddenness, from its

withdrawn state. This *withdrawal* of the object can also be described as a kind of forgetfulness. While the above discussion of foregrounding focused on the way that the object appears when its instrumental meaning is broken through, ‘sati’ in the sense of *recollecting* can be understood as designating the ‘subjective’ dimension of the contemplative state that corresponds to *foregrounding*. While, as far as I am aware, it is nowhere articulated explicitly, traces of this interpretation can be found in the existing literature.

It fits Davids’s somewhat vague claim quoted above that *sati* is the recollecting of certain specified facts, if ‘specified facts’ is taken to mean the object *as it is* underneath its instrumental covering. The interpretation is more clearly anticipated in the following set of statements made by Bodhi. *Sati*, Bodhi (2011) writes, “...brackets the ‘objectification’ of the object that occurs in our everyday interaction with the world, whereby we treat the objects as things ‘out there’ subservient to our pragmatic concerns”, it is the activity of bringing the object out “...from the twilight of unawareness into the clear light of cognition”, it “...illuminates the object without the usual overlay of distorted conceptual elaborations that obscure their real nature”. And if ‘makes’ is in the following quote replaced with ‘making’, thereby emphasising the active nature of the process, then it too can be interpreted as being in harmony with the interpretation on offer: “[*sati*] makes the objective field ‘present’ to awareness as an expanse of phenomena exhibiting their own distinctive phenomenal characteristics, as well as patterns and structures common to all conditioned phenomena” (ibid.). In summary, *sati* in this sense of *recollecting* or *remembering* can be understood as the activity of bringing to awareness the object’s inner *intelligibility* and structure, which is usually hidden underneath its instrumental meaning. Leaving the details aside until later, at this point I would only like to make the observation that the object’s *inner intelligibility*, (which I will argue is the best way to interpret ‘*sampajāna*’, one of the two factors

mentioned in the definition yet to be discussed) is not something that the practice introduces into the object. The inner intelligibility is *discovered* when the object's instrumental cover is broken through with the power of recollection. To avoid unnecessary confusion, and to distinguish this meaning of 'sati' from those to be discussed shortly, I will reserve the term *tuning-in* for this activity of remembering the object's intrinsic intelligibility. Bodhi (2011 my emphasis.) touches upon this meaning in the following passage:

...the suttas do not give us a formal definition of sati that enables us to clearly differentiate it from sati as memory, but rather an operational demonstration that indicates, in practical terms, how its role in Buddhist meditative practice differs from that of memory. Certain definitions...show that the two are not entirely distinct, and thus it would be an interesting theme for inquiry how a word originally meaning "memory" came to mean "attention to the present." Perhaps the root idea is that to be mindful means "to remember" to pay attention to what is occurring in one's immediate experience rather than to allow the mind to drift away under the dominion of stray thoughts and tumultuous emotions.

*Tuning-in* is the other side of *tuning-out*: the practice of becoming free from one's projects (*vineyya abhijjhādomanassa*). *Tuning-out* and *tuning-in* are two sides of the same coin. From here on, I will refer to whole structure of which these two are but moments as *tuning-out-tuning-in*. In the following passage, which I already quoted but which is worth repeating, Bodhi (2011) can be taken as pointing to both of these moments of *tuning-out-tuning-in*:

...on the one hand, we might say that [sati] brackets the 'objectification' of the object that occurs in our everyday interaction with the world, whereby we treat objects as thing 'out there' subservient to our pragmatic purposes. On the other hand, sati makes the objective

field ‘present’ to awareness as an expanse of phenomena exhibiting their own distinctive phenomenal characteristics, as well as pattern and structures common to all conditioned phenomena.

*Tuning-in* is the first sense in which ‘sati’ means memory. In order to bring the second into view, it is necessary first to understand the sense in which ‘sati’ means *lucid awareness*. While *tuning-in* is a moment of the practice of cultivating mindfulness or contemplation, lucid awareness is an aspect of the contemplative state itself, which can now be described as the state of *being tuned-in*. Insightfully and helpfully, Bodhi (ibid.) draws a distinction between *lucid awareness*, the ‘subjective side’ of the contemplative state, and *vivid presentation*, which describes the way that the object appears within that state. On lucid awareness, Bodhi (ibid.) writes that...

I characterise this as a stance of observation or watchfulness towards one’s experience. One might even call the stance of sati a ‘bending back’ of the light of consciousness upon the experiencing subject in its physical, sensory and psychological dimensions. This act of ‘bending back’ serves to illuminate the events occurring in these domains, lifting them out from the twilight of unawareness into the light of clear cognition.

To put the two meanings together we can say the following. There comes a point when the practice of waking the object up from its instrumental slumber (i.e. *tuning-in* to its intrinsic intelligibility) yields a result: the object actually wakes up. At that point, *tuning-in* gives way to the *state* of lucid awareness, the state of being *tuned-in*. Here the practitioner is no longer trying to awaken the inner intelligibility of the object and is no longer struggling with the pull of one’s projects and the instrumental meanings that that pull gives rise to. The practitioner is now lucidly aware and dwelling in the phenomenon’s inner intelligibility. A

shift in perspective has taken place. It is as if after all the flickering, the lights have finally come on. Shedding its instrumental skin, the up-to-then dimly lit inner intelligibility of the object now shines brightly, illuminating awareness and exposing itself to further explication. I must, however, at this point leave the question open of whether the bending back metaphor—which seems to point towards something like what the phenomenologists have called *reflective awareness*—adequately captures *sati*'s illuminating quality. I have my doubts about lucid awareness being some kind of a reflective act that bends back and takes as its object some pre-reflective experience. More will be said about this in the forthcoming chapters.

It is now possible to discuss the other sense in which 'sati' can be interpreted as *memory*. When *sati* is defined as 'memory' in some of the other discourses of the Pali Canon, it seems to refer to that which we usually have in mind when we use the term: the recollection or memory of something that occurred in the past. Thus, in sutta 48.9 of the *Samyutta Nikāya* *sati* is defined in this way:

And what, monks, is the faculty of mindfulness? Here, the noble disciple is mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and alertness, one who remembers and recollects what was said long ago. This is called the faculty of mindfulness.

According to Bodhi (2011), *sati* in this sense is grounded on lucid awareness in the following way. In the terms developed above, with the state of being *tuned-in* established it is possible that some past event 'enters' the lucidly aware mind. And when it does so, lucid awareness assumes the form of memory. But this is no ordinary memory; rather it is an amplified memory of sorts. I will call it *mindful* memory. Bodhi (2011) writes:

Sati makes the apprehended object stand forth vividly and distinctly before the mind. When

the object being cognized pertains to the past—when it is apprehended as something that was formerly done, perceived, or spoken—its vivid presentation takes the form of memory.

Similarly, Anālayo (2003, p. 48) argues that the lucid awareness makes the remembrance of a present moment easier later on, amplifying the normal, recollective function. To put this in different terms, mindful memory can be said to make up the *pattern* of the contemplative state, the unique form that the stream of consciousness takes when one becomes *tuned-in*. Mindful memory is an essential factor in the Buddhist path. To fully understand its role, however, we must first understand the meaning of *sampajāna*, which we will study below. For now, we can say that ‘*sampajāna*’ stands for the intrinsic intelligibility of the object, which comes into view when we *tune-in* to it. But without a map on what to do with this intrinsic intelligibility, there is a good chance that the practitioner would become lost from the Buddhist path. The function of mindful memory, I propose, is to recollect the Buddhist teachings; *not* in order to impose a meaning onto an otherwise meaningless field of phenomena but to serve as a *guide* on how to proceed once the intrinsic intelligibility of the phenomenon has come into view.

## v. EFFORT

The first chapter characterised mindfulness as involving a kind of *effortlessness*. More over, this state of mind was described as being incompatible with that which is usually called ‘effort’. Recall how “...as soon as [Levin] remembered what he was doing and started trying to do better, he at once felt how hard the work was and the swath came out badly.” And if in the following passage ‘serenity’ is taken as referring to the contemplative state or mindfulness then this is also Kamalaśīla’s (2004, pp. 641-342) view: “...when the mind moves effortlessly as it wishes on the object, then one should know that serenity has been

perfected” but, Kamalaśīla warns, “...if one applies effort as the mind is moving in equilibrium, then the mind will be distracted”. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* does not directly discuss this quality of effortlessness. But it does point out a kind of effort as an essential factor in the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*.

This is ‘*ātāpi*’. Besides *effort*, this term has also been translated as *diligence* or *ardency*. According to Anālayo (2003, p. 35), *ātāpi* designates the “...firm opposition to unwholesome thoughts and tendencies”, which calls for “...a strong and uncompromising commitment” and involves “...keeping up one’s contemplation with balanced but dedicated continuity, returning to the object of meditation as soon as it is lost”. The tendency of the object to become *lost* is the same as, I suggest, the tendency of the object to *withdraw*, to be forgotten underneath its instrumental meaning. ‘Thoughts and tendencies’ can be interpreted as designating *thematized* projects. *Returning* to the lost object is *tuning-in*. If this reinterpretation is accepted, so far Anālayo’s statements contain nothing new. The novelty comes in with the idea that this returning to the lost object calls for *a strong and uncompromising commitment* and a *dedicated continuity*. These are different ways to describe *ātāpi*. What kind of effort is in question here? How does it fit into the definition of mindfulness or contemplation as developed so far?

An illustration may help at this point. Suppose that I am engaging in breath meditation. According to the interpretation so far, this means that I am *tuning-out* of my projects—to write philosophy, to go out for a walk, to sit around and do nothing—and *tuning-in* to the way that the breath is unfolding in and of itself. As I listen in to the breath, however, I find myself being constantly pulled away towards the *thematized* projects (which manifest as the content of thoughts, expectations, and the like or simply through the way I am tempted to move around, to open my eyes etc.) In fact, usually I do not even experience being pulled towards a project. Rather, without knowing how exactly I got there, I usually



find myself as already being drawn-in to some project or other. When—usually after quite some time has gone by—I realise that I have become lost a peculiar kind of mental energy is called for in order to attempt to *tune-in* to the breath again, to find its natural rhythm. This is *ātāpi*. While *ātāpi* cannot be isolated from *tuning-in-tuning-out* as a self-sufficient phenomenon, it can be discerned as a distinct moment of the process (one that can be represented by the middle ‘-’). But, to return to the question, what kind of an effort is *ātāpi*?

As the term is usually understood, ‘effort’ gets its sense from the endeavour to bridge the gap between how things are and how we desire them to be. It is the expenditure of energy required to overcome “the resistance and adversity” of things and thereby to realise a project in virtue of which things get these qualities of resistance in the first place. To illustrate and to help contrast this phenomenon with *ātāpi*, consider the following situation. While in meditation: I ‘unconsciously’ latch on to the project of solving some philosophical problem with which I was preoccupied earlier in the day. Here certain concepts appear before my mind as *unclear*, as *needed-to-be-sorted-out* and the project in question manifests through this instrumental meaning. It is as if in order to get to the meaning I must push aside the veil of unclarity, which manifests as a kind of resistance to the access of the meaning that I seek. Still drifting off, I respond to this solicitation: I start drawing distinctions, perhaps doing phenomenological analyses, recalling what philosopher X said about topic Y and so on. Here a kind of effort is at work. But is it the same kind of effort that appears when I become aware that I am drifting, and again attempt to *tune-in* to the breath?

Someone could argue for an affirmative answer by stating that here, too, there is a project at work: the project of being *tuned-in* to the breath. In light of this project, the breath appears with the instrumental meaning *to-be-tuned-in-to*. The effort that goes into the practice is then nothing other than a response to this solicitation. According to this view, *ātāpi* is nothing but a special case of the standard kind of effort. To this, a skeptic could

respond by pointing out the apparently self-defeating nature of such an enterprise (where one is resorting to desire in order to overcome desire). Is that not a little like drinking oneself to sobriety? This same skeptic could argue that being *tuned-in* to the breath is not an nonactualised possibility (which it would have to be according to the above account) but an implicit actuality: on some level one is already *tuned-in* to the breath; the practice of *tuning-in-tuning-out* is nothing more than the removing of the covering of projects in order to allow what is already there to shine forth. But the following counter-response suggests itself. Just as a lesser fire can be used in order to control a greater one—as when farmers burn dry grasslands in order to prevent the spread of a raging bushfire—so it could be argued that projecting the possibility of being *tuned-in* to the breath is a preventative measure against being imprisoned by the project that shape's one's everyday existence. Being unable to decide what is actually the case, I will let the matter rest here for now and leave a more definite statement on the phenomenological nature of *ātāpi* for later parts of this work.

Before leaving the question of effort, I wish to suggest the following. Just as the effort that goes into falling asleep is no longer present in the state of sleep itself so *ātāpi* is left behind with the establishment of the contemplative state. But while the contemplative state is effortless in one way, it does not follow that it excludes every kind of effort. In fact, I believe that the contemplative state can, and in the context of the Buddhist path must involve a kind of effort. To begin elucidating this phenomenon recall how, in Levin's case, mindfulness found its expression in what I called *non-instrumental practice*. While this is not an intentional doing, and therefore does not call for the kind of effort that goes into the realisation of our projects, it nevertheless can be described as involving a kind of effort. But more importantly, in the context of the Sutta the establishment of the contemplative state is followed by the practice of *vipassanā*. This is a kind of explicit *reflection* or *cognition* that should not be conflated with the form that these phenomena take in the normal, project-

driven ways of being. Above I mentioned the idea that when one becomes *tuned-in* the stream of consciousness takes on a specific form. This is the *pattern* of the contemplative state. Memory, for example and as I discussed above, now takes the specific form of *mindful memory*. Analogously, the process of thinking or judging now becomes *mindful reflection*; the bringing of the object's intrinsic intelligibility into explicit awareness. This is *vipassanā*. At this point, I do not wish to go into the details of how this *mindful reflection* arises from within the contemplative state—I will have more to say about this later (see: Part II, Chapter III). The only thing that I wish to emphasise here is that *mindful reflection* calls for a kind of effort that, unlike *ātāpi*, is compatible with the state of *being tuned-in*.

#### vi. CLEAR COMPREHENSION

There is one more factor in *the definition* left to consider. This is 'sampajāna'. This is the cognitive dimension of contemplation. Its other translations include: 'clear knowing', 'clear comprehension' and 'thorough understanding.' Here it is important to keep in mind that while sampajāna is a condition for and can be developed into insight (*vipassanā*) and wisdom (*panna*), the more explicit cognitive functions, which take the form of what I earlier called '*mindful reflection*', it cannot be identified with them. *Sampajāna* is a more primordial, basic and implicit kind of discrimination or understanding and it is the seed from which more explicit forms of understanding arise. What role does *sampajāna* play in the context of *anupassanā* and how does it relate to the other factors that we have discussed? I will begin addressing these questions by considering the nature of the relation between *sampajāna* and *sati*.

It is generally agreed upon that *sati* and *sampajāna* occur in close proximity to each other. But the expression 'in-close-proximity' appears to be understood in at least two distinct ways in the secondary literature. On the one hand, the expression is sometimes

interpreted as implying an *interdependence*: a necessary and simultaneous *co-existence* of *sati* and *sampajāna*. According to this understanding, the two factors stand in the same relation as colour and visual spread do in the context of a visual object: whenever the one is there so is the other and it is impossible to tear them apart. Thus in the discourses “...the explanation of *sati* invariably includes the term *sampajāna*” and that “...whenever there is *samma-sati* (wholesome mindfulness) there is also *sampajāna*” (*Importance of Vedana and Sampajañña*, 1990). Bodhi (2011) notes that the presence of *sati* and *sampajāna* in the definition “...shows that [*sampajāna*] has been present to some degree all along”, by which he means that *sampajāna* is not something that enters the picture once the contemplation is already under way but that it has been there from the very start and that it is therefore ‘co-joined’ with *sati*:

Mindfulness, though operating in a simple mode as “bare attention,” doesn’t occur alone, in isolation from other mental functions. One such mental function with which it is conjoined is *sampajañña*, and here we might say that *sampajañña* operates as the simple knowing of the quality of the breath. In commentarial terms, this would be *gocara-sampajañña*, clear comprehension of the meditation object.

That is one way to interpret ‘in-close-proximity’. But, on the other hand, this expression is sometimes taken to mean that *sampajāna* occurs *subsequently* to and on the ground of *sati*. The idea here is that *sati*, in the sense of lucid awareness, is established first, that its establishment illuminates the field of awareness, a field that is, at this point, dumb and unstructured. *Then*, in a distinct step, *sampajāna* enters the picture and performs the function of subsuming the illuminated field under Buddhist categories, like dependent origination or the four noble truths. In an apparent conflict with the statements quoted above, Bodhi (2011) describes *sampajāna* as being like “...a bridge between the observational function of

mindfulness and the development of insight”, implying thereby that mindfulness occurs *first*, and that it is followed by discrimination that is *sampajāna*, in a *second*, distinct step. In a complementary description, Bodhi (ibid) says that in the initial stages of the practice, lucid awareness ‘opens up the phenomenal field’ while “clear comprehension supervenes adding the cognitive element” and places “...the arisen phenomena in a meaningful context”. In the same spirit, Anālayo (2003, p. 42 my emphasis) writes that *sampajāna* “...has the task of *processing the input gathered by mindful observation*, and thereby leads to the arising of wisdom” and that “...the presence of the two factors in the definition point to *the need to combine* the mindful observation of the phenomenon with an intelligent processing of the observation data.” This talk of processing input, and needing to combine *sati* and *sampajāna*, shows that Anālayo opts for the subsequent interpretation of the claim that *sampajāna* exists in-close-proximity to *sati*.

The two interpretations are not necessarily in conflict. For it is possible that one of the two factors belongs in the establishing phase of the process (as an element of *tuning-out-tuning-in*) while the other could be a moment of the contemplative state itself. In a sense, I believe that this is so. This *simultaneous* interpretation seems to fit the way that lucid awareness and clear comprehension fit together in the context of the contemplative state itself. Recall how at the very beginning the contemplative state was described as a *unified whole*, of which the other factors mentioned in the definition (and *sati* and *sampajāna* in particular), are constitutive parts. The existence of one part, *qua* part, therefore implies the *simultaneous* co-existence of all the others. I will return to this shortly. If the *simultaneous* interpretation is correct in so far as the contemplative state is concerned, the *subsequent* interpretation could still hold true in the context of the practice of cultivating this state. And the descriptions developed thus far suggest that some of the factors that constitute the establishing phase enter the picture subsequently, which compliments the idea that the

establishing phase is a kind of a temporal whole, like a melody. In particular, there appears to be a temporal disjunction between the *thematization* of projects, on the one hand, and the practice of *tuning-in—tuning-out*, on the other. Could the same be true of *sati* in the sense of *tuning-in* and *sampajāna*? Could they, in the establishing phase, enter the picture in distinct steps? As I said, in a sense I think that this is so. But, I will now try to show, the secondary literature has got the true situation upside down: it is in fact *sati* that arises subsequently to and on the basis of *sampajāna*.

Following Bodhi (2011), above I distinguished the ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ dimensions of *sati*, and ‘lucid awareness’ was reserved for the former, ‘vivid presentation’ for the latter. An analogous distinction, I believe, should be made in the case of *sampajāna*. Expressions that are usually used to translate this term, such as ‘thorough understanding’ and ‘clear comprehension’, suggest that *sampajāna* primarily designates the subjective activity of discriminating or knowing something. But it is essential to keep apart the activity of knowing or understanding from *that which is understood*; *clear comprehension* from that which is *clearly comprehended*. (To repeat an earlier warning: I am not suggesting that the subject-object dichotomy is at work here. It is important not to jump to conclusions and interpret this as some kind of intentional act—where the knowing subject confronts an object that is known. Nevertheless, despite the caution, the distinction has its purposes).

What is it that is understood by the means of *sampajāna*? According to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, and the Buddha’s teachings in general, the ultimate end is the understanding of the *three characteristics* (the impermanent, selfless and unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned phenomena) and the four noble truths. But these do not exhaust the subject matter to be known. The other facts recognised by Buddhists, such as the structures that make up the links of dependent origination (*paticca-samuppada*), as well as the numberless phenomena spelled out in the Abhidhamma texts, I believe, is first of all made

available by *sampajāna*. But it would be a mistake to assume that the knowledge opened up by *sampajāna* is restricted to only what is to be found in the Pali texts, or even to the Buddhist texts more generally. These texts are only concerned with the knowledge that leads to the final goal of Buddhism: the end of suffering and the realisation of *Nibbana*.<sup>15</sup> But this should not lead one to infer that there is nothing more to be known through the method than what we find in the Buddhist texts. Indeed, it is precisely because there is potentially much more to know that *sati* in the sense of mindful memory plays such a crucial role in the Buddhist path. Differently put, because *sampajāna* opens up the field of potentially infinite knowledge, it is necessary, in the context of the Buddhist path, to *remember* the Buddha's teachings in order to be able to focus on and isolate those bits of knowledge that are relevant for the goal. All this, I believe, points to the necessity of the aforementioned distinction between the subjective activity of understanding, on the one hand, and the 'intrinsic intelligibility of the things themselves' (that which is understood through such activity), on the other. It is merely a terminological issue of whether *sampajāna* was traditionally intended to encompass both meanings. Be that as it may, what is certain is that this distinction is not recognised, or is not recognised clearly enough, in the secondary literature.

Quite frequently in contemporary Buddhist literature, and we will have a chance to see this more clearly in the following chapter, one encounters such notions as 'raw data', 'raw sensations', 'bare input' etc., which are introduced in order to capture the original 'stuff' supposed to be made available to the practitioner through the illuminating power of *sati*. As these terms suggest, that at which they point is portrayed as being devoid of all intrinsic

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<sup>15</sup> In *sutta* 56.31 of *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha compares everything that he knows to the leaves in the forest and everything that he teaches to the handful of leaves in his hand. And he explains to his disciples that the reason he does not teach them everything that he knows is because it does not lead to the end of all suffering (*Nibbana*). Here we can assume that he came to this wealth of knowledge through the practice of meditation and insight, and by the means of *sampajāna* in particular.

intelligibility. Under this interpretation, the structures that the Buddha encourages us to recognise—including the quality of impermanence, the states of affairs such as that feeling arises in dependence on contact etc.— is interpreted, implicitly or explicitly, as being *imposed* on this raw material by our cognitive activity, the most basic kind of which is *sampajāna* itself (for an example of this, the reader can recall Bodhi's claim that *sampajāna* imposes a meaningful context on the field that sati first opens up). But, in so far as I am aware, the very idea of raw material is alien to the Buddha's understanding of reality. According to that understanding, all phenomena are interdependent and *refer to* each other in their very essence—this is one lesson of the law of dependent origination. In other words, according to Buddhism, there is a kind of inner articulation in the very essence of things themselves and the purpose of contemplation is precisely to uncover and not *impose* that structure on a phenomenal field that would be in itself dumb and unstructured. The recollection of the Buddha's teaching is important, not because the phenomenal field would be unstructured without it, but precisely because it would be, so to say, too structured, causing one to become lost from the ultimate aims of the teachings. If this is accepted then the role of *sampajāna* in the context of contemplation becomes clear.

In the context of everyday understanding, the instrumental dimension (and the projects that underlie and make it possible) *conceals* the intrinsic intelligibility of the phenomena. If *sampajāna* is used to designate this intrinsic intelligibility itself, as I suggest, then it follows that *sampajāna* is always already there, albeit implicitly and inconspicuously, underneath the instrumental meaning of things. This means that *sampajāna* is present before, and as a condition for, the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*. Tuning-in, we can now say, is the *tuning-in* to this intrinsic intelligibility of the phenomenon itself, and *tuning-out* is the movement of distancing oneself from one's possibilities and the instrumental meaning that they give rise to. So, according to this interpretation, it is not that (as the secondary literature that I am



familiar with tends to believe), lucid awareness first opens up a field that *sampajāna* subsequently interprets. Rather, tuning-in arises on the basis of *sampajāna* and as the means of, so to speak, *waking it up*. And for it to be awake is for the phenomenon to be *vividly present* or, from the side of the subject, there is now *lucid awareness* of its intrinsic intelligibility.

## vii. SUMMARY

This engagement with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* has brought us to a place where it is possible to formulate an initial definition of the phenomena that we have been studying. The practice of cultivating mindfulness or contemplation is the practice of *tuning-out of our possibilities* (*‘becoming free’ from desires and discontent*). While the concept of ‘our possibilities’ is wider than that of ‘projects’, in the above discussion the focus was solely on the latter. Complimenting the negative movement of tuning-out is the positive movement of *tuning-in* (*sati in the first sense of ‘recollecting’*) *to the intrinsic intelligibility of the phenomenon* (the objective sense of *sampajāna*). A specific kind of effort (*ātāpi*) is constitutive of this practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*. With the dropping off of *ātāpi*, a *shift in perspective* takes place into the contemplative state itself, the state of *being tuned-in*. This state is characterised by lucid awareness (*sati in the second sense*) and clear comprehension (*sampajāna*). From the side of the object, being tuned-in is the vivid presentation of the phenomenon’s intrinsic intelligibility. But this is not all that we learnt from our engagement with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. We also now know that becoming tuned-in alters the stream of consciousness in a specific way. This altered stream of consciousness is the *pattern* of the state of being tuned-in. Two experiences that help constitute this pattern carried a special importance in the above discussion: mindful memory (*sati in the sense of ‘recollection’*) and mindful reflection (*vipassanā*). In the next chapter, we will encounter another aspect of this

pattern that tends to be confused with the state of being tuned-in itself: this is *mindful attention*.

### CHAPTER III:

#### *Mindfulness in the contemporary literature, a critical analysis*

The first chapter offered a glimpse into the possibility of a particular kind of transformation or perspectival shift where the ordinary way of relating to the world gives way to a much more intimate and profound kind of relation with it. This is mindfulness. The engagement with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the second chapter brought this transformation, and what takes place on either side of it, into sharper focus. While the literary passages depict the transformation as a spontaneous, serendipitous happening—something that one falls into in the right circumstances—the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* outlines a way of intentionally cultivating these conditions. On this, in his notes to the *Samyutta Nikāya* (2000, p. 1940), Bodhi writes:

[The factors of] energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom...are not different from mental qualities that arise periodically in the ordinary, undeveloped mind. In the untrained mind, however, their occurrence is sporadic and random. The intention behind the Buddha's presentation of the practice is to train the disciple to arouse these factors deliberately, through the exercise of the will...

According to the findings of the last chapter, the practice of cultivating mindfulness is the practice of *tuning-out of our possibilities or projects and tuning-in to the intrinsic intelligibility of the phenomenon itself*, or simply *tuning-out-tuning-in*. But just as we do not confuse falling asleep with being asleep, so we should keep the cultivation of mindfulness from mindfulness itself—the potential fruit of that practice. Mindfulness was defined (subjectively) as the state of *lucid awareness* and *clear comprehension* and (objectively) as

the *vivid presentation* of the phenomenon's *intrinsic intelligibility*.

Aside from a few remarks from Bodhi about lucid awareness being some kind of a reflective act that bends back and illuminates the contents of consciousness—remarks that we will have a chance to reconsider again in the current chapter—we still remain in the dark as to the character of this lucid awareness. Descriptively speaking, what kind of awareness is in question here? Are we talking about a special way of paying attention? Or is it a question, as Bodhi seems to suppose, of a reflective intentionality of some sort? Another possibility is that lucid awareness is something *sui generis* in which we do it an injustice when we try to reduce it to more familiar phenomena such as attention and reflection. Moreover, while the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* has taught us that the establishment of lucid awareness is simultaneously an opening of a kind of cognition ('clear comprehension' or '*sampajāna*') the text remains silent on the precise nature of the relation between the two factors. More generally, it is not yet at all clear how *mindfulness* in the sense of *lucid awareness* (these terms will be used synonymously here unless stated otherwise) relates to any kind of cognising. To shed light on these issues, this chapter will focus on the question of how 'the contemporary literature' (an expression that I will use to refer to the group of contemporary philosophers, scientists and contemplatives that have taken an interest in the issue) addresses the question: *what is lucid awareness and what is its relation to cognition?*

On this question, the contemporary literature can be divided into two opposing camps, which I will call the 'Quietists' and the 'Cognitivists'.<sup>16</sup> For the Quietists, lucid awareness is

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<sup>16</sup> I would like to make two comments here. The first is a warning not to read any meanings that the terms 'Cognitivists' and 'Quietists' may carry in other philosophical contexts into the current discussion. When I coined these terms, I was not aware that they were used in other areas of philosophy at all. The second point is that I am well aware that drawing a boundary like this is simplifying things somewhat and that not everyone who speaks on the issue of mindfulness will neatly fit into one of the two categories. While the distinction does bring its own difficulties with it (not all of which I can deal with here) I am also confident that it carries more

a kind of attention, ‘bare attention’, characterised by the absence of all explicit cognitive activity, such as conceptualising, thinking and remembering. For the Cognitivist, by contrast, not only is it true that mindfulness does not exclude every kind of cognitive activity; mindfulness (or at least the most important kinds of mindfulness) demands that a special kind of cognition be brought into play. The first two sections will take a closer look at these two standpoints, beginning with the Quietists. The next step will be to uncover some of the common presuppositions held by both camps and to subject those presuppositions to a critical analysis. In the final part, I will put down the first marks of what I consider to be a more satisfactory account of mindfulness (and of its relation to different kinds of cognitive processes) than the contemporary literature has to offer. According to this proposal, mindfulness is *the feeling of being tuned-in*.

#### *i. THE QUIETISTS*

Venerable Nyanaponika (1968, p. 30) was the first to define mindfulness as ‘bare attention’,

...the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moment of perception. It is called ‘bare’ because it attends just to the bare facts of a perception as presented either through the five physical senses or through the mind...When attending to that sixfold sense impression, attention or mindfulness is kept to a bare registering of the facts observed, without reacting to them by deed, speech or by mental comment, which may be one of self-reference (like, dislike, etc.) judgment or reflection.

In the same Quietist spirit, Kabat Zinn (2005, p. 4) defines mindfulness as “...paying

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advantages than disadvantages and I will stick with it until the content of the discussion itself forces us to revise it, if indeed it does.

attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally”. For Bishop et al. (2004) mindfulness is “...a kind of nonelaborative, nonjudgmental, present-centred awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged as it is”. Mindfulness, Joseph Goldstein (1976) writes, means “...observing things as they are, without choosing, without comparing, without evaluating, without laying our projections and expectations on to what is happening, cultivating instead a choiceless and non-interfering awareness”.

At first glance, then, for the Quietists, ‘mindfulness’ designates the presence of ‘bare’ attention and the absence of all cognitive activity. Does this not, however, conflict with the idea derived in the previous chapter, namely that mindfulness is inextricably bound up with a kind of cognition: clear comprehension (*sampajāna*)? If so, can we rule out the Quietist’s view immediately, without bothering to look deeper? If the Quietists believe that mindfulness excludes all kind of cognitive activity, then whatever it is that the Quietists are talking about is not the phenomenon that the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is attempting to demarcate and with which we are concerned here. It is not that simple. When we look at the writings of the Quietists more closely, hidden complexities come into view, complexities that take us beyond their explicit ‘explanation’ of mindfulness as bare attention.

Generally speaking, I can sense two tendencies at work in the writings of the Quietists: the ‘explanatory’ and the ‘descriptive’ or ‘intuitive’. The descriptive tendency is the urge to voice the immediate, inarticulate feeling or intuition of what becoming *mindful* or *lucidly aware* means to the person in whom it manifests. Often the words used to communicate this feeling have a poetic and mystical undertone (this is not intended as a criticism). The intuitive tendency finds its counterforce in the need to *explain*, in more straightforward terms, what this intuitive feeling ‘really is’. It is when it comes to explaining (away) their intuitions that the Quietists grasp at something much more familiar and tangible: the

*presence* of bare attention and the *absence* of thoughts, memories, evaluations and the like. I believe that the descriptive or intuitive aspect of the Quietist account contains an important, (albeit unrefined) element of truth. But I also believe that this truth gets lost in their rush to explain mindfulness as bare attention. And in this work I will tap into these intuitive descriptions and use them as a guide for a more rigorous phenomenological description of mindfulness and of its relation to cognition. But that is for later. In order to get more familiar with the set of aforementioned tendencies, I will now take a closer look at the writings of Venerable Anālayo and Bhante Gunaratana.

In Anālayo's wonderful commentary on the *Satipaṭṭhāna* Sutta, the tension between the explanatory and intuitive tendencies manifests, I believe, between his exposition of the way that mindful awareness is depicted in the Buddha's discourses, on the one hand, and his own explanation or interpretation of the meaning of these descriptions and similes, on the other.<sup>17</sup> The discourses describe mindfulness as a 'choice-less', 'uninvolved', 'detached', '...alert but receptive and equanimous' awareness. (Anālayo, 2003, p. 60) Compared to our ordinary, *intoxicated* mind, mindful awareness has a *sobering* quality; it remains disenchanted from the phenomenon of which it is aware. As one simile portrays it: just as someone standing on an elevated platform or a tower is able to observe what is going on on the ground below from a place of safe detachment, likewise by establishing mindfulness one erects a platform for oneself from where one can relate to phenomena (in which one is usually so deeply entangled) through a "relaxed and distant manner of observation". (Anālayo, 2003, p. 53) While "*sati* can interact with other, much more active factors of the mind..." it is itself "...an aloof quality of uninvolved, detached observation... [that] does

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<sup>17</sup> I am not fully confident in labeling Anālayo as a 'Quietist'. While I think there is some justification for this, I can also see how someone could argue to the contrary and, in fact, many Cognitivists resort to Anālayo's views in support of their own position. In any case, the crucial issue here is not to decide which particular person belongs in which camp but to understand the general views in virtue of which the two camps differ.

not interfere”. (Anālayo, 2003, p. 58) Another simile compares mindfulness to the surgeon’s probe; just as the latter gathers information for the ensuing operation, so mindfulness gives the practitioner “...a clear overview of the situation” and “...keeps the streams of the world in check, so that the faculty of wisdom can cut them off”. (Anālayo, 2003, p. 55) This detached receptivity of *sati*, Anālayo (2003, p. 58) writes, “...enables one to step back from the situation at hand and thereby to become an unbiased observer of one’s subjective involvement and of the entire situation. This detached distance allows for a more objective perspective, a characteristic exhibited in the above-mentioned simile of climbing a tower”.

Of themselves these descriptions and similes, I believe, do not force the move of identifying mindfulness with attention. Nevertheless, in his attempt to ‘explain’ in more familiar terms what the discourses are really getting at, Anālayo (2003, p. 59) makes precisely that move: “[*s*]*ati* can be understood as a further development of attention, thereby adding clarity and depth to the usually much too short fraction of time occupied by bare attention in the perceptual process”. For Anālayo, the detached and uninvolved awareness that is not entangled in things but stands back in order to let them be what they are is in the end nothing but a kind of attention. Is this move justified? And if mindfulness is identified with attention, will we be able to make sense of its cognitive dimension? Can a form of attention, no matter how we conceive it, perform the function of providing an ‘objective overview’ of the entire situation, a situation of which attention itself is a part? Before and in order to tackle these important questions, I first wish to consider how the intuitive and the explanatory tendencies play out in the writings of Bhante Gunaratana.

According to Gunaratana (2002, p. 82), mindfulness is a “...flowing, soft-focused moment of pure awareness...that is interlocked with the rest of reality, not separated from it”, it is “...that flashing split second just as you focus your eyes on the thing...before you objectify it, clamp down on it mentally and segregate it from the rest of existence”. “[W]hen

this Mindfulness is prolonged by using proper techniques”, Gunaratana (ibid., p. 83) continues “...you find that this experience is profound and it changes your entire view of the universe”. Mindfulness is “an impartial watchfulness”, “present time awareness...[that] stays forever in the present, surging perpetually on the crest of the ongoing wave of passing time” (ibid.), “a non-egoistic alertness [that] takes place without reference to self” (ibid. 84), it is a “goal-less awareness”, “an awareness of change...[that] is watching things as they are changing. It is seeing the birth, growth, maturity of all phenomena”, a “...wakeful experience of life, an alert participation in the ongoing process of living” that has a distinct “... flavour—a light, clear, energetic flavour. Conscious thought is heavy by comparison, ponderous and picky” (ibid).

Having given these wonderful descriptions (which I think are in harmony with the way that mindfulness is characterised in the Pali discourses) and having awakened in us the sense of wonder, Gunaratana goes on to identify this mindful awareness with ‘bare attention’: “Mindfulness is bare attention; and bare attention is noticing things exactly as they are without distortion” (ibid. p. 86). Once again, the question pushes itself to the surface: *is this identification justified? Is mindfulness really nothing but a kind of attention?*

For now, I wish to put these questions aside in order to take a closer look at the other aspect of the Quietist’s view: that mindfulness means the absence of all cognitive activity. At first sight, it seems difficult to deny that this is exactly what Gunaratana and, judging from the passages quoted above, Quietists in general believe. Consider this passage:

Mindfulness registers experiences, but it does not compare them. It does not label them or categorize them. It just observes everything as if it was occurring for the first time. It is not analysis which is based on reflection or memory. It is, rather, the direct and immediate experiencing of whatever is happening, without the medium of thought. It comes before thought in the perceptual process (ibid. p. 83).



Cognitivists tend to interpret this and similar passages as saying something like this: that mindfulness is incompatible with any kind of cognition; that the one rules out the other. In the case of Gunaratana at least, this is certainly not the intention. Consider his description of mindfulness as involving "...a very deep sort of knowing", which is "...lost as soon as you focus your mind and objectify the object into a thing" (ibid. p. 82). Far from excluding the very idea of cognition from mindfulness, Gunaratana (ibid. p.83) characterises mindfulness as a "mirror-thought" (ibid.). And in giving his view on the *recollective* meaning of 'sati', he seems to echo the finding of the previous chapter according to which here 'recollection' primarily means a *tuning-in* to the inner intelligibility of the phenomenon. This, according to Gunaratana, "...it is not memory in the sense of ideas and pictures from the past, but rather clear, direct, wordless knowing of what is and what is not, of what is correct and what is not..." (ibid. p. 87). To nurture this kind of knowing, which "does not think [about phenomena but] sees them directly, without the intervening medium of conscious thought" (ibid. p. 86) it is necessary to let go of our *ordinary explicit* comparing, labeling, categorising and so on. To lucidly-know is to "see things as they are" and this faculty "...alone has the power to reveal the deepest level of reality available to human observation" and it "...operates on so fine a level that one actually sees directly those realities which are at best theoretical constructs to the conscious thought process" (ibid.).

Gunaratana's objective here is clearly not to say that mindfulness excludes all cognising but to rule out a certain way of conceiving what 'cognising' may mean in this context. I believe more generally that in denying that mindfulness involves judgments and thinking the Quietists are only trying to stress the point that mindfulness excludes what may be called 'instrumental' cognising, a kind of cognising that is inextricably bound up with our projects and which is in their service. And this is correct. For *tuning-out* of all projects

implies a distancing from instrumental thinking too. But as one is released from the shackles of instrumental thinking, one is also *tuning-out* to an implicit *knowing* or *understanding* of things as they are. But one must not infer from this that mindfulness excludes all *explicit* cognition.

What must be kept in mind here (and I will return to this point again) is that establishing mindfulness *transforms* the form of explicit cognitive activity itself. What was previously instrumental thinking now takes the form of *mindful* reflection. Mindful reflection (or *vipassanā*) is what allows *clear comprehension* (the implicit understanding that *tuning-in* has disclosed) to enter explicit awareness. But the reader must wait until Part II (Chapter II, Section iv.) for a phenomenological description of the process where *clear comprehension* becomes *mindful reflection*. The important point to keep in mind here is that when the Quietists deny that mindfulness is explicitly and thematically cognitive, they need not be interpreted as denying that mindfulness excludes every kind of cognition. If it sometimes sounds as though they are trying to say this, this can be interpreted as stemming from their urgency to communicate the idea that mindfulness excludes instrumental thinking; in order to become mindful it is necessary to let go of the kind of thinking that is bound up to our projects and desires. But, as the saying goes, it is important to not throw out the baby with the bathwater.

For the purposes of the following discussion, when I label someone as a ‘Quietist’, I do so solely on the basis of the way that they explicitly *explain* mindfulness: as bare attention that excludes *all* cognising. It is this way of explaining mindfulness that the Cognitivists have a problem with, as we are about to see.

## ii. THE COGNITIVISTS

The Cognitivists reject the idea that mindfulness is identical with bare attention while

affirming that it includes (or that it does not exclude) a certain kind of cognitive activity. While the Cognitivists universally reject the move of wedging the *is* of identity between *mindfulness* and *bare attention*, all agree that there is some kind of a relation between the two (although different authors understand the nature of this relation in different ways). Bodhi (2011), for example, believes that bare attention is a kind of mindfulness. According to Bodhi (ibid.), bare attention is the kind of mindfulness involved in *ānāpānasati* or mindfulness of breathing. But, according to Bodhi (ibid.), the more complex and powerful forms of mindfulness (such as the forms that are brought into play in the later stages of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* practice) demand that the practitioner go beyond the practice of bare attention by bringing into play certain kinds of cognitive processes. By contrast, Georges B. Dreyfus (2011) holds the view that a certain kind of cognitive activity is *necessary* for mindfulness. For Dreyfus, not only is mindfulness not identical with bare attention, the latter is not even a kind of mindfulness. Nevertheless even for Dreyfus, bare attention (which he describes as “...a therapeutically helpful quietness” (ibid.)) has a role to play in the ‘practical instructions’ on how to establish mindfulness. I will return to this point a little later. For Dreyfus, too, there is as an essential relation between mindfulness and attention (although not bare attention); mindfulness is dependent on and arises as a kind of a modification of the attentive process. In other words, in his understanding, mindfulness is nothing but a higher-order cognitive modification of attention. I will now consider Dreyfus’s views in more detail.

The focus here will be on an article titled ‘*Is mindfulness present-centred and non-judgmental? A discussion of the cognitive dimensions of mindfulness*’ (2001). In this piece Dreyfus seeks, in his own words, “...a better conceptualisation of mindfulness so as to retrieve its cognitive implications, which are in danger of being lost in the rush to equate mindfulness with bare attention”. Towards this end, Dreyfus points out that in *the Questions*

of *Kind Milinda* (an important Buddhist text) mindfulness is described as that which makes possible the *distinguishing* and *discriminating* of phenomena, and in particular of *wholesome* from *unwholesome* mental qualities. From this Dreyfus argues that “[t]his understanding of mindfulness is quite far from the idea of bare attention, for if mindfulness is to distinguish wholesome from unwholesome states, it must be explicitly cognitive and evaluative, in contrast with the idea of mindfulness as nonjudgmental acceptance of whatever arises within the stream of consciousness”. The argument here seems to go something like this:

(1) Mindfulness has a necessary cognitive dimension.

(2—*Implicit Assumption*) If X has a cognitive dimension then X must be “explicitly cognitive and evaluative”, in the sense of involving such processes as judgments, evaluations, working memory and so on.

(3) Bare attention is characterised as the absence of all explicit cognition. This is the Quietist view.

Therefore,

(C) Bare attention is not mindfulness (or at least it is not the kind of mindfulness that is portrayed in certain key Buddhist texts).

Note that the earlier distinction between implicit and explicit cognising gives us some reasons to doubt the truth of (2). Could not mindfulness be cognitive, not in the sense of involving *explicit* cognitive activity but rather in the sense that it involves an implicit, pre-thematic kind of understanding or cognition? Is this not precisely what the study of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (and *sampajāna* in particular) in the previous chapter leads us to believe? At this point, I do not wish to pursue these critical suggestions any further. I will rest content

with having raised these questions. Let us now return to the exposition of Dreyfus's views.

How, according to Dreyfus, does mindfulness accomplish this feat of differentiating phenomena? What, in other words, does the cognitive dimension of mindfulness amount to? The answer is found in the mind's *retentive* function, which enables it to "...hold its object and thus allows for sustained attention regardless of whether the object of attention is present or not". According to this view, mindfulness is the process of *retaining* or *holding* the object in the grasp of attention for longer than it would usually be held there, thereby modifying the ordinary way that attention works (constantly dropping its object and quickly picking up another). It is relatively straightforward to get a feeling of what sustained attention means here. But it is less clear what Dreyfus is getting at when he describes this retentive function as not depending on "whether the object of attention is present or not". For, one wonders, does not the object need to be *present* in order for it to be retained in attention in the way being suggested?

Dreyfus is here resorting to the idea that mindfulness can be of both the past and the present as an argument against the Quietist contention that mindfulness is necessarily present-centered. For Dreyfus the recollective dimension of mindfulness is incompatible with the claim that mindfulness is necessarily present-centered. At first, it is not difficult to see why he would think this. But this is only self-evident if 'recollection' is here given the meaning of bringing to mind some *past* event. And, indeed, this is one sense in which 'sati' means *memory* or *recollection* (but, as discussed in the previous chapter, this is no ordinary memory. It is *mindful memory*: the form that memory takes within the state of being mindful). But it is neither the only nor the most important sense. Mindful memory itself presupposes that one has *tuned-in* to the phenomenon; that one has *remembered* its intrinsic intelligibility which is always *present* but which is also usually hidden or *forgotten* underneath its instrumental meaning. If 'sati' is given the sense of *tuning-in* then, contrary to

Dreyfus, not only is there no conflict between the recollective dimension of *sati* and the Quietist's conception of mindfulness as being present-centered, but also the two descriptions are in fact complementary.

In his critique of the Quietists, Dreyfus works with yet another sense in which 'sati' may mean *memory*, a sense that differs from both *mindful memory* and *tuning-in*. According to Dreyfus, *sati* is closely related to "...the retentive ability that allows the mind to hold the object in the ken of the attention as well as remember it later". The retentive ability is a "...way of holding information..." that ordinary attention, rather carelessly, allows to slip out of its grip. This retention of information "...is crucially connected to working memory, the ability of the mind to retain and make sense of received information". And, for Dreyfus, it is this retentive function that makes possible both the mindfulness of a present and of a past content. How does Dreyfus propose to explain mindfulness in terms of the retentive function? He says that his intention is not to equate "the retentive ability of consciousness, working memory and mindfulness" but to show that there is a close connection between these phenomena. Granting for the time being that such a connection exists, the question remains: what then is mindfulness itself? How precisely does it connect up with and differ from working memory? To answer these questions, we must take a closer look at Dreyfus's understanding of what attention is.

Dreyfus derives his views of attention from the *Abhidhamma* school of Buddhism, according to which attention (*manasikāra*) designates the "...automatic ability of the mind to turn towards the object and select it". In the ordinary, non-mindful ways of being, attention turns the mind (and body) towards something, say a person walking past, holds onto this object for a few moments, quickly release it, reorients the mind and grabs onto something else. *Ordinary* attention is constantly "losing its object", is unable to remain faithful to anything for too long: a promiscuous thing! Mindfulness, according to Dreyfus, is

a kind of modification that “...strengthens and enhances...the mind’s ability to keep the object in the ken of attention without losing it”. To put it otherwise: mindfulness helps ordinary, adolescent attention (which cannot keep still but is always throwing itself into something new) mature by teaching it the art of patience; to give each thing the time it deserves without being swept away by every temptation that comes its way. And how does mindfulness do this? By drawing on “...the top-down ability of the mind to retain and bind information so that the present moment of experience can be integrated within the temporal flow of experience”. In conclusion, for Dreyfus, mindfulness “... is then not the present-centered nonjudgmental awareness of an object” as the Quietists are interpreted as affirming, “...but the paying close attention to an object leading to the retention of the data so as to make sense of the information delivered by our cognitive apparatus.”

The reader may suppose that this extension of attention (through the retention of information delivered from the cognitive apparatus) is Dreyfus’s way of accounting for *clear comprehension* (*sampajāna*). But that is not his view. Dreyfus calls this retentively modified attention ‘mindfulness proper’. But he distinguishes mindfulness proper from that which he calls ‘wise mindfulness’: an even higher-order mental process that adds to mindfulness proper further discursive elements. And, according to Dreyfus, this wise mindfulness is *clear comprehension*. This shows that Dreyfus subscribes to what I in the last chapter called the ‘subsequent interpretation’ of the claim that *sati* and *sampajāna* occur *in-close-proximity*. For, in Dreyfus’s view, *sati* first opens up the field of experience by extending the normal attentive process (which already calls for a kind of cognising that is not *clear comprehension*), while *sampajāna* enters the picture later, explicitly subsuming this information under categories. I have already criticised this way of understanding the relation between *sati* and *sampajāna* in the previous chapter and I do not wish to repeat those criticisms here. But let me say that that which Dreyfus describes as ‘*sampajāna*’ seems to

me much closer to what I called *mindful reflection* (which is a description, not of *sampajāna*, but of *vipassanā* or the practice of insight). But, again, I want to resist getting too critical at this point, where the primary objective is to understand Dreyfus's own views.

In denying that mindfulness is bare attention, Dreyfus is not trying to deny the existence of bare attention altogether. In fact, he thinks that bare attention, understood as the practice of "...disengaging from the usual patterns of discursivity and reactivity through which we usually function" plays an important role in the development or cultivation of mindfulness; bare attention is useful as a 'practical instruction' on how to cultivate mindfulness. According to this view, bare attention, while real enough, is "... not an end in itself but a skillful means that allows the weakening of pre-potent responses so as to allow of more adequate attitudes". Bodhi (2011), too, understands bare attention as "...a type of awareness intrinsically devoid of discrimination, evaluation, and judgment", and while useful as a "...procedural directive for cultivating mindfulness..." fails as a "...valid *theoretical* description of mindfulness applicable to all its modalities".<sup>18</sup> What are we to make of this idea that bare attention, while not valid as a 'theoretical description', is useful in terms of the 'practical instructions' on how to cultivate mindfulness?

I think that there is an important element of truth in this idea. But to see it clearly, it is necessary to draw a distinction between the practical instructions on how to cultivate mindfulness, on the one hand, and the experience of cultivating mindfulness itself, on the other. To give an analogy, if you have trouble sleeping, your doctor may give you practical instructions on how to fall asleep, but those instructions are not the experience of falling asleep that you may or may not go through after receiving the instructions. When in the last chapter I defined the practice of cultivating mindfulness as the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-*

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<sup>18</sup> Note that this conflicts with Bodhi's other claim, discussed above, that bare attention is a *kind* of mindfulness.



*in* I was not giving practical instructions (I am not very good at that at all), but rather a theoretical description of the process of cultivating mindfulness. To apply this to the case at hand, I think that the Quietists' description of mindfulness as bare attention contains an important insight into what the experience of cultivating mindfulness is like. In fact, I believe that the Quietists description of bare attention overlaps in certain respects with the idea of *tuning-out*, as I will now briefly try to show.

*Tuning-out* is preceded by *thematization*, the process where the instrumental meaning that one is usually pursuing through 'external' actions manifests as the content of mental actions (such as thoughts, judgments, memories and so on). *Thematization* is commonly accompanied by instrumental thinking, where one sorts out (through distinguishing, contrasting, comparing etc.,) means in light of our ends or projects. Instrumental thinking usually continues when one sits down to meditate: one continues to reflect on how to achieve this, and how to prevent that. In other words, despite stilling the body (in the case of sitting meditation) one continues to be absorbed in one's project, albeit 'mentally'. When the Quietists describe mindfulness as an absence of thinking, I suggest that they are best interpreted as saying that cultivating mindfulness involves preventing oneself from responding to the solicitation of instrumental meaning and the engagement in the associated instrumental thinking. While I do not believe that the two phenomena are identical, there is obviously a close connection between *distancing* oneself from instrumental thinking and the practice of *tuning-out* of one's projects. This will become clearer later.

I will conclude this exposition of Dreyfus's views with the question: if bare attention is a good description of the practice of cultivating mindfulness, and not of the state of mindfulness itself, why then does he describe it as a "non-evaluative form of mindfulness"? A similar question can be directed at Bodhi (2011) who described bare attention as a "useful procedural directive for cultivating mindfulness" while he also describes it as a form of

mindfulness (a form that is at play in the simple observance of breathing). To call bare attention a kind of mindfulness, in this context, is a little like calling falling asleep a kind of sleep. But I will let the matter rest there.

For the purpose of becoming more familiar with the Cognitivist standpoint, I would now like to go through an article co-authored by Jake H. Davis and Evan Thompson, titled *Developing Attention and Decreasing Affective Bias: Towards a Cross-Cultural Cognitive Science of Mindfulness* (2015). This article has two major aims: (1) to develop a precise definition of mindfulness, and to work out how mindfulness relates to such phenomena as attention, working memory and consciousness, and (2) to make sense of the Buddhist claim that mindfulness and wisdom are co-joined.

The attempt to deal with the above issues is undertaken on the background of a particular model that divides the mind into two kinds of awareness or consciousness. (1) Creature consciousness: the overall awareness that there is something it is like to be a particular creature. (2) State consciousness: the awareness of particular contents, such as that there is a computer in front of me, or that the neighbours are talking loudly. State consciousness is further divided into phenomenal and access consciousness. For a state to be phenomenally conscious is for there to be something that it is like for the subject to experience that state ‘from the inside’. Access consciousness designates the mental contents that may not be available to the subject (in that sense, there is nothing *it is like* to have them) but which nevertheless influence the subject’s speech and behaviour.<sup>19</sup>

The difference between creature and state consciousness overlaps with the difference between two kinds of attention: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down attention is voluntary and it involves something called a ‘control set’, a kind of plan that specifies *where*, to what aspect of experience, attention is to be directed. This function of directing attention to a

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<sup>19</sup> For further discussion refer to Bayne (2007)

particular area of experience calls into action both a *conceptual representation* of the area in question, and *working memory*—which retains the conceptual representation in awareness, thereby guiding attention to its target. Top-down attention can therefore be described as being biased towards a certain region of experience and as biased against the other regions. By contrast, bottom-up attention designates the “basic alerting function of the mind” and it is ‘stimulus driven’; here, it is not a conceptual plan that guides attention to its target but rather some environmental stimulus which enters into the mind from the ‘outside’, such as the loud banging that has just snatched my attention away from the writing and redirected it at my neighbour’s house.

In order to make a bridge from this Western model of the mind to the one we find in the classical, Pali Buddhism, the authors propose that phenomenal consciousness can be identified with *viññāṇa*, a notion that encompasses the five external senses and the mental sense (which included such phenomena as thoughts, memories and so on). Access consciousness, the authors propose, corresponds to *saññā*, a term that is commonly translated as ‘perception’ but which is here, rightly I think, taken as referring “...to some kind of knowledge or knowing which is done in an associative, connective, linking way”. Bottom-up attention (which the authors interpret as corresponding to the *Abhidhamma* notion of *manasikāra*) is described as modulating the content of *viññāṇa*, which in turn makes this content available for *saññā*. In this way, *viññāṇa* has predictable effects on *saññā* (and on working memory in particular). Let us leave aside the issue of whether this way of understanding these Buddhist notions is satisfactory and focus on how the authors use this model in order to develop a description of mindfulness, and of how mindfulness makes wisdom possible.

Something that is not stated clearly enough in the article is that the authors are working with two kinds of meditation practices, termed “open awareness” and “focused

attention”. Elsewhere one of the authors, Evan Thompson (2014, p. 51), described the difference in the following way:

...[t]hese terms, although derived from traditional Buddhist meditative vocabulary, were recently coined by scientists and contemplative scholars in order to delineate the specific kinds of mental processes involved in various Buddhist and non-Buddhist meditation practices, ranging from Vipassanā, to Yoga to Zen.

According to the authors, ‘focused attention’ practices can be made sense of in terms of a dynamic interaction between top-down attention, working memory, and conceptual representations. In this kind of meditation, “...working memory plays a role in specifying how attention is to be directed” and it does that by retaining a conceptual representation of the target area. The authors interpret the practice of ‘mental labeling’ (a crucial feature of certain meditative techniques, as in the Mahasi Sayadaw Vipassanā tradition, and which involves the practitioner repeatedly noting the name of the target area, e.g. “breathing”, “breathing”), “...not as a phenomenological analysis of experience, or as a metaphysical analysis of the nature of reality, but rather as holding in working memory a mental representation that functions to direct top-down attention in ways that can have transformative effects”. ‘Focused attention’ meditation therefore appears to be the same kind of practice that Dreyfus was trying to describe in his paper, and the two accounts are in fact complementary. In contrast to focused attention, open awareness practices aim to “...counteract biases of attention by broadening the awareness of incoming stimuli to include aspects that attention would otherwise have been biased away from and...by making our habitual reactions themselves more conscious”. In short, open awareness meditation works by (1) *suspending* our innate biases (stemming from emotion, expectation and so on.) to prefer certain stimuli over others, frees bottom-up attention and leads to the increase in

the capacity to (2) “...consciously experience more of the internal and external stimuli reaching the sense organs”.

To summarise the difference between the two kind of practices, as they are understood in the article being discussed: while focused attention *narrows* the area within which attention operates to a small region of experience, open awareness *expands* the range of attention to encompass the entire region of experience. To describe the difference in yet another way, we could say that while focused attention practices strengthen the grip of top-down attention, enabling it to hold onto its object for longer, open awareness practice “...makes you better at quickly picking up a sensory object and then quickly letting go of it, so that you’re ready for the next one”.

On first glance, it seems that the practices are mutually exclusive; broadening seems to exclude narrowing, and conversely. It could be that I misunderstood what they were trying to say, but it seems to me that the authors are unclear and undecided on this point. Evidence for both (that narrowing compliments broadening and that it excludes it) can be found in the article. On the one hand, the authors write that “...developing focused attention, for instance, on the breath or mental states, may help to cultivate a more general alertness to a range of stimuli across perceptual modalities, thereby increasing the scope of the basal phenomenal consciousness” But, on the other hand, they write that top-down orienting “...may actually get in the way of being conscious of stimuli that are outside the narrow area of selected focus”.

This difference between open awareness and focused attention meditation is closely related to, if not identical with, the difference between what the Buddhist texts call *sati* and *samādhi*, ‘mindfulness’ and ‘concentration’. In broad agreement with Davis and Thompson (2015), Anālayo (2003, p. 63) describes the difference in the following way: “[w]hile concentration corresponds to an enhancement of the selective function of the mind, by way

of restricting the breadth of attention, *sati* on its own represents an enhancement of the recollective function, by the way of expanding the breadth of attention”. Anālayo (ibid.) goes on to note that “[t]his difference, however, does not imply that the two are incompatible, since during absorption attainment both are present. “But...” he adds “...during absorption *sati* becomes mainly presence of the mind, when it to some extent loses its natural breadth owing to the strong focusing power of concentration”.

I agree with the general tendency here to think of mindfulness as expanding the scope of awareness and of concentration as *narrowing* or *restricting* it. But I am not convinced that *expanding* and *narrowing* are primarily attentive functions. That is one issue. Moreover, to state that *expansion* is compatible with *narrowing* (for that is what happens in certain meditative states) is neither to give a description of this ‘hybrid’ state nor is it to explain (in experiential terms) how it is possible. And how can mindfulness both ‘lose its natural breath’ and nevertheless remain in what it is? Does that mean that expanding the breath of attention does not belong to the essence of mindfulness? And how do mindfulness and concentration co-operate in the context of the Buddhist path and in particular in the context of developing insight and wisdom? To answer these questions calls for a careful phenomenological study of these phenomena and their interrelations, and that is the major aim of this work. But that is for later. It is now time to steer the discussion back towards the article that we have been discussing.

We have now seen how the authors deal with the first aim of the paper: to give a definition of mindfulness and its relation to such phenomena as attention, working memory and so on. It is now time to consider how they employ this definition of mindfulness in order to address the second major aim: to make sense of the claim that ‘mindfulness and wisdom are conjoined’.

The first thing to note here is that when the authors discuss mindfulness in relation to

wisdom, by ‘mindfulness’ they seem to mean ‘open awareness’ (the decrease in affective bias and the expansion of attention that allows more stimuli to be experienced). According to the article, mindfulness can lead to: an increase in emotional understanding of oneself and others, an improvement in the ability to correct certain cognitive distortions (such as the belief that pursuing sense pleasures will lead to lasting happiness), a decrease in the tendency to prefer certain aspects of a situation at the expense of others and to a decrease in ‘belief biases’ that may arise from such a tendency. All these benefits result from the fact that, according to the authors, mindfulness increases attentive alertness, which increases the amount of information available for encoding in working memory, which in turn passes this information on to higher cognitive functions where “...identification, recall, deliberation and reporting take place”, which is presumably where insight and wisdom arise.

There are at least two major issues here. The first has to do with the precise meaning of the term ‘stimuli’ and its cognates. The authors repeatedly describe mindfulness as increasing the amount of incoming ‘stimuli’ by decreasing affective biases. But nowhere is the meaning of this crucial term defined. ‘Stimuli’ sometimes seems to be used synonymously with ‘interoceptive and somatosensory stimuli from the body’, at other times it means ‘internal and external stimuli’. Here the term ‘stimuli’ seems to be used in the empirical, scientific sense to designate the electromagnetic radiation that falls on our sense organs. But the term is also taken as referring to ‘one’s own and another’s emotional information’, such as macro facial expressions, and in the authors’ discussion of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, it seems to stand for four foundations of mindfulness: the body, feelings, mind and *dharmas*. But it is not at all clear that these different ways of understanding the meaning of ‘stimuli’ are compatible. But if mindfulness opens the mind up to more ‘stimuli’, as the authors claim, this issue is crucial for making sense of mindfulness itself. The second and closely related issue is that it is not at all clear how exposure to more

‘stimuli’ is meant to lead to the kind of knowledge that, according to the teachings of the Pali Canon, mindfulness is meant to open up.

Without an increase in the ability to process the incoming information (to categorise and associate it with other information and to draw the appropriate implications) is there not a danger that the increase of the ‘incoming stimuli’ would lead to more and not less confusion? An increase in the quantity of facts that one is acquainted with does not lead, by itself at least, to knowledge and wisdom. What is crucial is the ability to see the meaning in virtue of which these facts group into distinct categories and to be able to ‘pluck out’ these meanings. Consider, for example, an instance of the kind of knowledge that the practice of mindfulness and wisdom is meant to yield: the knowledge that feeling (*vedāna*) originates or arises in dependence on contact (*phassa*) (Anālayo, 2003, p. 204 fn 13.). To have this kind of insight one must, amongst other things, be able to distinguish the phenomenon of feeling from other phenomena with which it may be confused (such as the bodily materiality (*rūpa*) to which feeling is so tightly bound up in ordinary experience). Moreover I believe that, at least in so far as the teachings of the Pali Canon are concerned, here it is a matter of having an insight into general relations: that Feeling *as such* is different from Materiality *as such*. Even if it is allowed that mindfulness increases our sensibility to the quantity and intensity of our experiences (say of feelings) it is not clear how this leads to the right kind of insight (e.g. into the general and necessary law that feeling necessarily arises in dependence on contact). What is required is an account of how mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajāna*) disclose the general structures and laws that bind phenomena together, structures and laws that *mindful reflection* (*vipassanā*) can then bring into explicit awareness. Perhaps cultivating mindfulness has other effects on the mind, such as decreasing ‘attentional blink’ and increasing our general sensitivity, as the authors argue on the basis of empirical evidence. But that does not appear to be the primary function of



mindfulness in the context of the Buddha's teachings (at least as those teachings are presented in the Pali Canon and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in particular). Its primary role therein is to disclose reality in such a way as to make a particular kind of insight possible. To develop an account of mindfulness along these lines, and to show how it leads to this kind of insight, is a major task of this work.

In order to push forwards, it is now time to draw some general lessons from our engagement with the contemporary literature. Despite all their differences, the Quietists and the Cognitivists can be said to share the presupposition that mindfulness can be accounted for as the *presence* or *absence* of such familiar experiences as attention, working memory, judgment, including their various combinations and higher-order modifications. What the contemporary literature fails to do, across the board, is to distinguish mindfulness itself from (a) the practice of cultivating mindfulness and (b) the effects that establishing mindfulness has on the 'stream of consciousness' (on such transient conscious episodes as memory, thinking and attention). The tendency is especially strong to identify mindfulness with the attentional changes that it brings about (whether this means that attention is 'bare' or that it is cognitively loaded in a certain manner). But I believe that, in an important sense, mindfulness is more like the state of being awake or being in a mood than any kind of a modification of short lived conscious experiences (such as attention and judgment).<sup>20</sup> To

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<sup>20</sup> In describing mindfulness as being like a mood, my intention is not to say that mindfulness is entirely passive. It is true that one characteristic of moods is that they can 'overcome' us and that when they do that we stand passively before them in the sense of being able to do nothing but fall into the mood. And if the first chapter showed anything it is that mindfulness can manifest in this way too; that it can overcome us passively and spontaneously. But moods can be described as being 'active' in the sense that they can open up a realm of possibilities that one can respond to and engage. Consider, for example, an intellectually productive mood and the kind of activity that it makes possible. When I describe mindfulness as being like a mood, I am primarily drawing the reader's attention to (a) the fact that mindfulness is a kind of state into which one can 'enter' and

begin building a case for this, I will now present some reasons that speak in favour of not identifying mindfulness and attention.

### *iii. MINDFULNESS IS NOT ATTENTION*

The question of the relationship between mindful or lucid awareness and attention is an extremely difficult one to get a handle on, yet alone to answer. I recall that when I first started reflecting on these matters, I took it for granted that whatever else we may end up saying about mindfulness, surely what is in question here is a special way of paying attention. Therefore I understand the natural temptation to conceive of the phenomenon in this way. But as my reflection deepened over the years, it gradually became clear that, while there is an important connection between mindfulness and attention, the two are not identical. Nor is mindfulness a special mode, a higher-order modification of attention. This, I think, is a special case of a more general truth: *that mindfulness or lucid awareness cannot be identified with and thereby reduced to any aspect of the psycho-physical complex*. What makes it so tempting to identify mindful awareness with some aspect of the psycho-physical complex is (in part at least) the fact that establishing mindfulness has the effect of transforming the psycho-physical complex in a specific way, with the transformation of attention being a particularly obvious instance. Put otherwise, establishing mindfulness transforms ordinary attention into *mindful* attention which (together with other phenomena such as *mindful memory* and *mindful reflection*) makes up the ‘pattern’ of mindfulness: the particular form that the stream of consciousness takes in a mind where mindfulness is

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in which one can remain for an extended period of time and (b) that this state opens up certain possibilities that one does not ‘see’ at all from the more ordinary states of mind. Also, to ‘respond’ to the possibilities that mindfulness has opened up is to be *active* in a certain (and very special) sense. Hopefully all this will become clearer as the discussion progresses. I would like to thank Brett Allen for encouraging me to be clearer on this point.

established—I will have more to say about this below. But this tendency to overlook the difference between mindfulness and its effects on the stream of consciousness is not the only factor at work behind the natural urge to identify mindfulness with attention. Another reason stems from a reasoning process that unfolds in something like the following way:

“Mindfulness is nothing entirely foreign; the seeds of mindfulness are always already here in ordinary life, albeit in a dormant form. To cultivate mindfulness is to nurture and develop these seeds.” “But...” the stream of thought continues, “...what are these seeds of mindfulness if not attention: that basic alerting function that allows the mind to turn towards and thereby to simply note the presence of something, a function that precedes and makes possible all higher order cognitive activity (such as evaluation, judgment, categorisation and so on)?”

In this way mindfulness comes to be thought of as some kind of a development or modification of attention, whether this modification involves keeping all higher-order cognition at bay (as per the Quietists) or bringing a certain kind of cognitive process into play (as per the Cognitivists). I agree that mindfulness is nothing entirely alien to our experience; it is a dimension of our being that is always there, albeit usually in a forgotten, implicit way. A part of the reason for writing the first chapter was to show precisely this. And, moreover, I am inclined to agree, or at least I can see no good reasons to reject the idea, that attention is an omnipresent feature of human experience. But it does not follow from this that mindfulness is nothing but attention or a modality of it. For it could be that attention is not the only omnipresent but implicit dimension of our experience that can, broadly speaking, be described as a stance of bare, undistorted receptivity to the wider reality. If something else can also be characterised in this way then perhaps this ‘something else’, and not attention, is what, in the right conditions, develops into mindfulness. But what might this something else be?

To begin answering this question, I would like the reader to consider what takes place when one becomes mindful of breathing. Amongst other things, what happens can be described as the discovery of the breath's 'natural rhythm'; the way it has of moving and transforming in and of itself. And the breath is not the only phenomenon that exhibits this rhythm. For another example, this time from the 'outside world', recall the passage from *War and Peace*, where Andrei is struck in the midst of battle, begins falling to the ground and as he does so he is struck again, this time by the *natural, serene movement* of the clouds gliding across the lofty sky above. In both cases, that which is disclosed in these moments does not strike one as something entirely foreign; the discovery of the natural rhythm comes with the sense that it was always there underneath the instrumental meaning that things acquire in the light of our projects. Recall Andrei's astonishment that he was ignorant of something so close and familiar: "how was it I did not see that lofty sky before?" And his gratitude for uncovering (*tuning-in*) to this usually forgotten dimension: "And how happy I am to have found it at last!" *Can this natural rhythm be identified with attention (any kind of attention)?*

As to how we answer this question, a lot will depend on what we mean by 'attention'. If we take the term as it is usually taken in the contemporary literature (and especially in the Buddhist literature) as designating the process of orienting consciousness towards an object, then there are good reasons to think that the two cannot be identified. For one, to find the natural rhythm is to (temporarily at least) stop orienting ourselves towards this or that object. It is a mode of being where we allow ourselves to flow along with phenomena or, better, we actually become the effortless flow of phenomena. This transformation away from being preoccupied with objects (which presupposes that we are absorbed in our projects) and towards a letting go into the way that the phenomena are unfolding in and of themselves, calls for a shift in awareness. This is a shift away from the grasping and clinging that

characterises the normal way of life (which underlies our awareness of objects) to an *open* or *lucid* awareness, which simply steps back, allowing phenomena to unfold in accordance with their nature. The attribute ‘open’ is especially appropriate here, for the awareness in question is *open* to what the phenomenon ‘wants’ to do, it is open to the possibilities of the phenomenon itself, and this openness is what makes the phenomenon *vividly* present. As all phenomena are ‘trying’ to unfold in their own way, this open awareness is an omnipresent feature of experience. But usually it tends to not be explicitly experienced because it is covered up by our tendency to push the phenomena towards a particular direction, towards *our* possibilities. Could it not be that it is this open or lucid awareness, and the natural rhythm that it brings into view, and not attention to objects, that we are trying to *tune-in* to when we practice cultivating mindfulness? Could mindfulness not be the state wherein we step into this natural rhythm and allow it, for once, to take center stage? I do not wish to pretend that these few remarks have settled the issue. But they do open up the possibility of seeing things in this way.

Something else that speaks in favour of not identifying mindfulness and attention, has to do with the fact that the former takes us to a perspective where we can have an ‘objective overview’ of the situation. Now, a part of that situation is our own psycho-physical self which corresponds to what the Pali texts refer to as the five aggregates affected by clinging (*upādānakkhandā*).<sup>21</sup> In order to bring the five aggregates into view it is necessary to take a

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<sup>21</sup> The five aggregates are: materiality (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedāna*), fabrications (*sankhāra*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and perception (*saññā*). What reason is there for the idea that this group of aggregates corresponds to the psycho-physical self? It is clear, I think, that the last four aggregates designate experiential or psychical factors, while the physical or bodily dimension of our being would fall under *rūpa*. But that the body is *rūpa* does not imply that *rūpa* is body. And in fact, in the Pali texts, *rūpa* stands for the four primary elements (earth, water, fire and wind) and the secondary materiality that is built upon these. And this seems to suggest that there is more to *rūpa* than the human body; the category also includes the ‘external’ material world. Does

standpoint that is ‘outside’ them. This is a specific application of the general principle: that in order to bring any perspective into view one must step outside of it into a wider perspective. Just as a child does not know itself as a child until it reach adulthood, and a dreamer is not aware of dreaming until she becomes lucid or wakes up, so it could be argued that we do not know and cannot know the five aggregates *as they are* until we step outside of them. Attention itself belongs to the five aggregates.<sup>22</sup> It follows that if mindfulness is

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this not mean that the five aggregates cannot be identified with the psycho-physical self? I believe, although I cannot justify this here, that when the Pali text speaks of *rūpa* as ‘external materiality’ what is meant is the *experience of* the external material world; the ‘external’ world as *it appears to the subject* (in Husserlian terminology, ‘*rūpa*’ in this sense is a *noematic* notion). I believe that Gethin (1986) is making this point in the following passages:

Rūpa is typically defined as the four elements earth, water, fire and wind, and rūpa dependent upon (upādāya) them. What is clear, both from the *nikāyas*’ *elaboration* of this by reference to parts of the human body, and from the list of twenty seven items of rūpa distinguished in the *Dhammasaṅgani*, is the extent to which the early Buddhist account of rūpa focuses on the physical world as experienced by a sentient being—the terms of reference are decidedly body-endowed-with-consciousness...

...the lack of attention to inanimate *rūpa* [in the Pali texts] further illustrates the way in which the analysis of *rūpa* centres around the sentient being. This orientation is, of course, relevant to the *khandha* analysis as a whole.

That the ‘five aggregates (affected by clinging)’ corresponds to the psycho-physical self finds support in *sutta 21* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, where Venerable Sāriputa explains that the ordinary (unenlightened) person believes the five aggregates to *be* self (and, therefore, in the experience of an ordinary person the self *is* the five aggregates).

<sup>22</sup> As far as I know, attention (*manasikāra*) is not explicitly discussed in the Pali discourses. For it is certainly not recognized explicitly as one of the five aggregates. But (as with all the other mental qualities not explicitly listed under the five aggregates) attention is believed to fall under the formation (*saṅkhāra*) aggregate, as

attention then we could not bring the five aggregates into view and open up the possibility of knowing them as they are. Since we can, mindfulness cannot be attention (for essentially the same reasons, mindfulness cannot be identified with anything else within the five aggregates). Mindfulness is ‘outside’ the five aggregates.<sup>23</sup> Do we find any support for this idea in the Buddhist texts? I think that we do.

I will begin with the question: in the Buddha’s teaching, is *anything* outside the five aggregates? Yes: *clinging* or *grasping* (*upādāna*). I say this because the *arahant*, a person who has eradicated all clinging and realised *Nibbana* still ‘has’ the five aggregates (while still alive).<sup>24</sup> This seems to imply that *clinging* is ‘outside’ the five aggregates.<sup>25</sup> Someone may respond to this by saying that, while it is true that *clinging* is absent in the *arahant*, it does not follow that it is outside the five aggregates. For *clinging* could still be a particular aspect of the five aggregates, an aspect that is eliminated in the *arahant*. But if that was true, Gethin (1986) writes “...all those mental factors that are considered to be specifically skillful (*kusala*) or unskillful (*akusala*) fall within the domain of the *samkhārakkhandas*”. In any case, I take it as intuitively obvious that attention, in the sense of the function that directs consciousness towards an object, must be an aspect of the psycho-physical being.

<sup>23</sup> Of course, mindful awareness is not ‘outside’ of the five aggregates in the sense that, say, the sun is. Here one has to go beyond the usual (and naïve) way of thinking of the ‘inside/outside’ opposition. But this is not something I can go into at this point. The key point here is because mindfulness cannot be identified with any of the five aggregates it is outside of them.

<sup>24</sup> That an arahant is a person without clinging is stated in *sutta 22.110* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*: “when...a bhikkhu is liberated by non-clinging, then he is called a bhikkhu who is an arahant...”. That the arahant nevertheless continues to ‘have’ the five aggregates is implied in the following passage of *sutta 22.122* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, where Venerable Sāriputa says: “a bhikkhu who is an arahant should carefully attend to these five aggregates subject to clinging...”

<sup>25</sup> But it could still be true that *clinging* is dependent on and that it could not exist without the five aggregates. According to Gethin (1986), this is the view of the Nikāyas: “...although *upādāna* is not the same as the five *upādānakkhandas* [five aggregates affected by clinging] there is no *upādāna* apart from them...”

would not the *suttas* describe the *arahant* as a person who is missing *some* of the five aggregates, as one with an incomplete set of the five aggregates? But that is not the description that we find. Rather in the *arahant* the five aggregates, which remain intact, have been freed of something that is outside of them. But all this does is give us some reason to think that there are certain phenomena in the Buddha's teachings (other than *Nibbana* of course) that are outside the five aggregates. But this does not show that mindfulness is itself outside the five aggregates. To make a convincing case for that, further evidence is called for.

In certain Pali discourses, mindfulness is associated with "...a broad and even a "boundless" state of mind" (Anālayo, 2003, p. 49). Moreover Anālayo (ibid) notes that *sutta* 150 of the *Sutta Nipāta* "...refers to the practice of radiating *metta* [loving kindness] in all directions as a form of *sati*, so here too *sati* represents an "immeasurable" state of mind". *Sutta* 83 of the *Majjhima Nikāya* describes the kind of awareness that is to be nurtured in the practice of loving kindness (and which is here being associated with mindfulness) as "abundant, exalted, immeasurable" and as being able to encompass the "whole world". These descriptions suggest that mindful awareness allows one to transcend the *subjective* standpoint and *know* the whole situation (indeed the whole world) *objectively*. But it is difficult to see how mindfulness could open up this standpoint if it was an aspect of (and therefore constrained to) one's psycho-physical self (such as attention)—which is itself but an aspect of the wider situation that mindfulness enables one to *know*. This is the 'epistemological problem'. But the identification of mindfulness and attention also gives rise to the following descriptive or phenomenological issue.

Even if we supposed that mindful awareness belongs to the five aggregates, descriptively speaking what would it be? Presumably either one of the six kind of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) or attention (*manasikarā*). But nowhere in the Buddhist texts, as far



as I know at least, are these phenomena described with such adjectives as ‘immeasurable’ and ‘boundless’, as mindful awareness is. Giving further support to this line of thought, Bodhi (2006) writes that *lucid awareness* cannot be identified with either *manasikarā* or *viññāṇa*:

...[w]hen I use the word “awareness” or “attention” to render upatthāna, as representing sati in this role... this awareness is quite different from ordinary consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and this attention is different from *manasikāra*, the mental factor that performs the function of adverting to an object or selecting features of the objective field for closer focus.

But while Bodhi claims that lucid awareness is neither consciousness nor (ordinary) attention, his view also seems to be that this kind of awareness arises, somehow, through a modification of these phenomena. Recall his earlier description of lucid awareness as being a kind of reflective act, which would make it a kind of mental consciousness. And in the above passage he describes it as ‘a kind of awareness’ and ‘a kind of attention’. But how could a modification of attention or consciousness, even in conjunction with corresponding modifications of working memory, yield a *sui generis* kind of awareness, a ‘boundless’ lucid awareness? This is the phenomenological problem that arises when mindfulness is identified with something within the five aggregates.

The strongest evidence that I have been able to find so far in the discourses for the idea that mindful awareness is outside the five aggregates is found in sutta 22.89 of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. The sutta portrays a situation where Venerable Khemaka is “...sick, afflicted, gravely ill”. Hearing of his predicament some elder monks (through an intermediary who keeps on going back and forth between the two parties in a rather comical manner) question Khemaka about which of his five aggregates he regards as “I am”. Khemaka responds in this way: “...[a]mongst these five aggregates affected by clinging, I do not regard anything as

self or as belonging to self”. “If the Venerable Khemaka does not regard anything amongst these five aggregates subject to clinging as self” the elders respond, “...then he is an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed.” Khemaka replies:

‘I am’ has not yet vanished in me in relation to these five aggregates subject to clinging, but I do not regard [anything amongst them] as “This I am”.

The implication here is that while nothing in Khemaka’s five aggregates is currently serving as the basis for the notion “I am”, something is. What is this base that is outside the five aggregates and to which the sense of “I am” continues to cling? While Khemaka does not explicitly address the question, his answer can be inferred from the simile that he does give:

Suppose, friends, a cloth has become soiled and stained, and its owners give it to a laundryman. The laundryman would scour it evenly with cleaning salt, lye, or cowdung, and rinse it in clean water. Even though the cloth would become pure and clean, it would still retain the residual smell of cleaning salt, lye or cowdung that has not yet vanished. The laundryman would then give it back to the owners. The owners would put it in a sweet-scented casket, and the residual smell of cleaning salt, lye and cowdung that had not yet vanished would vanish.

I interpret this simile in the following way. The soiled and stained cloth stands for the five aggregates afflicted with the notion “I am”. Through Buddhist practice it is possible to “cleanse” the five aggregates of this notion. And what is used for such cleansing if not mindfulness (in conjunction with the other factors of the path)? And it is to this mindful awareness (which is outside the five aggregates), the residual smell, that the notion “I am” continues to cling. It therefore follows that mindful awareness is outside the five aggregates.

It follows that mindfulness is not attention.

#### iv. MINDFULNESS AND SITUATEDNESS

I think that we now have good, albeit not conclusive reasons to think that mindfulness cannot be identified with attention (nor, for that matter, with any aspect of the psycho-physical complex). While a complete description of mindfulness will need to take into account ‘what goes on in the subject’, that will be neither the whole nor the most important part of the story. This, I hope, will become clearer as this work proceeds.

Up to this point the division of the contemporary literature into two opposing camps (the Quietists and the Cognitivists) has served us well. But it is now time to face the fact that this way of splitting the field is a (useful) simplification and that there are thinkers who hold views that do not fit neatly into either of the two categories. For example, Evan Thompson (2017), the co-author of an article discussed above, while remaining faithful to the core of the Cognitivist standpoint, points out a different, and what I believe is ultimately a much more satisfactory way of thinking about mindfulness. Thompson continues to consider mindfulness as “a kind of attentional (cognitive unison) practice”. But in order to understand this special kind of cognitive practice, he now claims, it is necessary to interpret it on the model of the so-called ‘4-E cognitive science’. According to the 4-E approach, cognition is necessarily *embodied*, *embedded*, *extended* and *enactive*. I understand the 4Es to stand for four complementary ways of dividing up the wider situation within which (according to 4-E theorists) all cognitive activities take place and from where they acquire their content. This background context or situation is an outcome of a complex interaction involving the lived or instrumental body, the physical and cultural worlds, including symbolic devices and technologies, all of which together *enact* a world of meaning in which we find ourselves and within which and from within where all cognising (including the kind that is involved in

mindfulness) takes place. Abstracting away from the specifics of Thompson's account, about which I will have a bit more to say shortly, his proposal can be summarised as follows: *in order to understand mindfulness, it is necessary to take into account the whole situation, the human being's relation to the world*. The implication is that mindfulness cannot be exhaustively accounted for by what goes on in the 'head', in the brain or in the individual subject. What is necessary, according to Thompson, is to make intelligible how the wider situation and the human being's relation to it determines what goes on in the subject. I agree with the spirit of this approach. And in this work I hope to develop a description of mindfulness along roughly these lines.

I cannot, however, agree with the specifics of Thompson's proposal. What I find especially troubling is the idea that *all* cognitive activity, and in particular the kind of cognition that constitutes mindfulness, is determined by one's cultural background and embodied skills. I was quite surprised to find that Bodhi (2011) holds a similar view:

As I see it, virtually any intentional act is necessarily subject to a vast set of determinants, internal and external, that govern the way it functions. It occurs *embodied* in a particular person with a unique biography and personality, and it occurs *embedded* in a particular context—historical, social and cultural—that gives it a specific orientation on which its very identity depends... I do not believe one can ever leave behind all determinants and achieve a state of absolute openness, vacuity, and indeterminacy.

This goes directly against the account of mindfulness that I will be developing in this work, which will try to show that becoming mindful involves *tuning-out* of all personal and cultural factors (which can be understood in terms of 'our possibilities' or 'projects') in order to reach the state of being *tuned-in*, a state of 'absolute openness' to the way that things are in themselves. As we have seen, one of the key functions of mindfulness (within

the context of the Buddhist path as set out in the Pali discourses) is that it opens up the way to the knowledge or understanding of things as they are. But I believe that in order to understand things *as they are* (to see them objectively) calls for a kind of *de-contextualisation*.<sup>26</sup> Here, temporarily at least, the practitioner achieves a state of being *tuned-out* of all human contexts and meaning that are imposed on the phenomenon (including one's cultural background and repertoire of embodied skills).<sup>27</sup> This is an expanded understanding of what it means to become 'free of desires and discontent in regards to the world'.

But this is not to say that I entirely reject the idea that one's cultural background has an important role to play in the cultivation of mindfulness. I think that it does. But it is essential to understand this in the right way. Here I will only make two brief points. Firstly, without being integrated into a particular culture, one that carries knowledge about how to

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<sup>26</sup> The kind of de-contextualisation that mindfulness brings about should not be mistaken for the kind that Heidegger (1967) discusses in the context of his critique of the theoretical, scientific attitude. In the theoretical kind of de-contextualisation, one abstracts away from the concrete lived context (which for Heidegger is practical in nature and is inextricably bound up with our projects) in order to achieve a kind of context-free knowledge. According to Heidegger, this scientific attitude is a distortion of the original way of finding oneself in the world—a distortion that may have certain benefits, and may even reveal a new dimension of things, but which can never capture the original way that reality manifests to us. Indeed, for Heidegger, the theoretical, scientific attitude cannot disclose the original and primordial way that reality is in-itself. In contrast, the kind of de-contextualisation that I am claiming is at work in mindfulness, far from removing us from the concrete situation, uncovers a deeper context, a meaningful interaction between things themselves, that underlies and makes possible our projects, the cultural world and also the instrumental body. Unfortunately, in the current work, I will not be able to give this theme the attention it deserves.

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, I believe (although I will not be able to develop this line of thought in this work) that mindfulness reveals a distance from the body and hence there is the recognition that the awareness of the body is not itself embodied.

cultivate mindfulness, it is very unlikely that one would ever uncover this human potential, which is there, *qua* potential, independently of the culture that awakens it into life (although the Buddha, as “the path finder”, is himself an example that that is not impossible but only improbable). Second, as already discussed, even once mindfulness has been established it is necessary to resorts to *mindful memory* in order to recollect the knowledge recorded in the *suttas* (which is a kind of cultural knowledge) not in order to introduce meaning into experience that would otherwise be meaningless, but for the purpose of guiding the practitioner along the right path once mindfulness has disclosed the intrinsic meaning of the phenomenon. It is not a comfortable feeling to disagree with individuals whom I hold in such a high regard, such as Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi and Evan Thompson. Therefore, I must take extra care in developing my position, which I will do in Part II.

Putting aside our disagreements, let me repeat that I agree with Thompson on the general idea that in order to understand mindfulness it is necessary to take the wider context or situation into account. More specifically, I believe, becoming mindful involves an overall *shift in the way that we relate to the world* (but to understand the full significance of this claim, it is necessary to understand the meaning that the term ‘world’ carries here, a theme that will be taken up again later). And when this shift takes place, regardless of whether it overtakes the person passively or whether it is cultivated intentionally, it brings about certain changes in the psycho-physical structure, and in particular in the workings of attention. But these changes in attention are only effects of establishing mindfulness; they cannot be identified with it. In order to begin building a convincing case for this, I will now consider a more familiar example of a phenomenon that exhibits a similar structure.

You are walking along a familiar forest trail, completely relaxed, taking in the natural surroundings at your leisure. While in this state of mind, your attention quite naturally floats from one thing to another. All of a sudden, your ears begin to ring. Your companion is

screaming: “Snake! Snake!” You are teleported into the state of *fear*. In becoming frightened, your attention is no longer capable of gently strolling as it did in the earlier, relaxed state of mind. Now it naturally and passively *fixates*, like metal on a magnet, on certain aspects of the situation, perhaps on the path where you expect the snake to show up, or, if you have caught a glimpse of it, on the snake itself! It is not attention alone that has altered; working memory, thoughts, judgments, recollection of the past and know-how—“do not make any sudden movements”, “stay calm” etc.—all now take a specific form, the form of *fear*. But it would be a mistake to identify these changes with fear itself. I would now like to draw three general lessons from this example that will greatly help us in our phenomenological study of mindfulness.

(1) In entering the state of fear, what was previously ‘leisurely attention’ becomes *fixated*. But this transformation of attention is a *passive* modification; it is not something one has to cultivate intentionally. It is sufficient to become afraid (to enter the state of fear) the attentional changes (and the other corresponding changes in the stream of consciousness) take care of themselves. *Is the same true of mindfulness? Is it possible that the changes of attention that have so often been observed and described as mindfulness itself are only the effects of becoming mindful, of establishing the mindful way of being in the world?*

(2) We can, if we like, take fixated attention to be an aspect of the fear itself. But fixated attention certainly cannot be identified with fear. Even if we succeeded in giving an exhaustive description of fixated attention, that alone would not guarantee that we would also have an exhaustive description of fear. This is because other states of mind besides fear are also associated with fixated attention, including perhaps mindfulness itself! This raises the question: how, then, does one describe fear itself, if not by focusing on the changes it brings about in attention and the psycho-physical structure in general? I believe that an important part of such a task, and I will return to this again in the next section, involves

describing the kind of possibilities that fear opens up. To enter the mode of fear is to experience the possibility of the *threatening*, a possibility that only appears in fear and in terms of which fear is to be defined.<sup>28</sup> *Can mindfulness be described in an analogous manner? Does mindfulness open up a unique kind of possibility? What kind of a possibility could this be?*

(3) Some philosophers such as Sartre (2003b), have tried to show that emotions (such as fear) are ways of responding to the demands of a situation. (After all, while I may respond to the scream of “Snake, Snake!” with fear, Steve Irvin would probably have greeted the same sound with a state of excitement and adventure!) *Is it possible that becoming mindful, too, is a particular way of responding to the situation (a reply that we give to a particular question that reality asks of us)?* If so, what kind of a response is it? This is an extremely important question, one that could have serious implications for our understanding of what it means to practice *tuning-out-tuning-in* and what it means to be mindful. While I cannot at this point give the theme the attention and care it deserves, I cannot leave it either without making some observations. A common tendency in the contemporary literature (that I am familiar with) is to treat the practice of cultivating mindfulness as a kind of attention *training*. But what if the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in* is a response to reality that involves not more but *less* control? What if this is the practice of learning to *trust* reality; of allowing it to unfold in accordance with its own ‘will’, instead of always attempting to direct it towards our own ends or projects? Moreover, it is only within certain ways of relating to the world that attention will appear as *able-to-be-controlled* or *trained*. It will not appear in that way, for example, within the state of intense fear or terror. Nor, I would argue, anxiety (the state that is associated with *tuning-out* of our projects and which often precedes the

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<sup>28</sup> For the classical descriptions of fear along these lines see: Heidegger (1967, p. 179) and Sartre (2003a, pp. 29-30).



establishment of mindfulness). One characteristic of anxiety is that it removes all practical meanings and projects.<sup>29</sup> With the removal of this practical significance, the very possibility of controlling phenomenon also disappears, for nothing can now appear with the instrumental meaning *to-be-controlled*. What is left for one to do from this state is let go or *tune-in* to the flow of reality itself; to trust reality to unfold in accordance with its own nature. At this point, I must leave these important issues alone. But I will return to them in Part II.

## v. MINDFULNESS AS THE FEELING OF BEING TUNED-IN

In order to push forward, it will be helpful at this point to explicitly distinguish ‘short-term’ or ‘transient’ episodes of consciousness, on the one hand, and ‘longer-term’, ‘global’ attitudes or states of mind, on the other.<sup>30</sup> Attention exemplifies the former: at one time, there is an attending to the screen, then to something happening in the room, then again to something on the screen and so on. In this way, individual instances of attention are constantly coming in and going out of being. While these events can, and usually do, form a higher-order attentional ‘state’, it is nevertheless experientially obvious that this ‘state’ is founded on a continuum of transient episodes of attention. Something similar, I believe, is true of thinking, imagining, perceiving and so on. I will use the expression ‘the stream of consciousness’ to designate the total form constituted through the constant arising and falling away of such transient events. States of mind, by contrast, *endure* in a way that transient episodes do not, ‘colouring’ the overall sense of how one finds oneself in the

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<sup>29</sup> See: Heidegger (1967, p. 228).

<sup>30</sup> Thompson (2014, p. p.63) touches on this distinction when he writes of the need “...to distinguish [the] global and more slowly changing background aspects of consciousness from more rapidly changing episodes of sensory and cognitive awareness”.

world. When one enters the state of fear, for example, one remains ‘in’ the fearful attitude or perspective for some time. Fear is not experienced as being made up of transient and distinct episodes of fear (at least not in the way that the attentional ‘state’ is). But ‘attitude’ or ‘state of mind’ is not a homogenous category. Think for example of the difference between the state of fear and that of being awake; while both endure in a way that short-term conscious episodes do not, clearly it is a question here of what are in other respects very different phenomena. The next thing to note is that entering into or establishing an attitude has the effect of transforming the stream of consciousness in such a way that the transient conscious experiences take on a particular form, which ‘reflect’ the underlying attitude. These forms make up what I will call the ‘pattern’ of the attitude in question. *Fixated* attention, for example, belongs to the pattern of fear, but it does not belong to the pattern of the serene and leisurely mood in which I was before the snake appeared on the path.

With this distinction in hand, I now propose that mindfulness should itself be understood as a specific kind of attitude or state of mind: becoming mindful is much more like entering a mood or being awake than a modification of attention. *Mindful attention*, *mindful memory* and *mindful reflection* help make up the *pattern* of mindfulness—the unique form that the stream of consciousness assumes within the mindful attitude. What kind of an attitude is mindfulness? Here I would like to develop the possibility that mindfulness is an example of that which Matthew Ratcliffe (2008) has called ‘feeling of being’ or ‘existential feeling’ (terms that will be used interchangeably in the following). Mindfulness, I propose, can be understood as the *feeling of being tuned-in*. The first step to further developing this suggestion involves answering the question: *what, generally speaking, are feelings of being?*

In speaking of ‘feeling’ in this context, Ratcliffe (2005) has something different in mind than a mere bodily state (a local disturbance that does not refer to anything outside

itself and the part of the body in which it occurs—a common way of thinking about feelings, both in philosophy and ordinary life). While Ratcliffe (ibid.) grants a bodily dimension to existential feelings (indeed he believes that bodily localization is essential to the phenomenon) feelings of being are simultaneously and necessarily also *of* or *about* something outside themselves, and the part of the body in which they are localized. In other words, feelings of being are intentional, in the sense of being *of* or *about* something. What are they *of* or *about*? Feelings of being, Ratcliffe (ibid) writes, “...are not directed at specific objects or situations but are background orientations through which experience as a whole is structured”, encompassing “the world as a whole” and are ways of “finding oneself in the world”. Feelings of being must be distinguished from emotions that are “...directed towards specific objects, events or situations...” and examples of which include “...fear, anger, happiness, disgust, sadness, grief, guilt, jealousy, joy and envy” (ibid.). The next question is: *how do feelings of being determine the way of finding oneself in the world?*

To answer this question, Ratcliffe (ibid.) resorts to the idea that there is a sense of possibility—an experience of what is and what is not possible. In fact, according to Ratcliffe (ibid.), the experiential world itself is just this ‘space of possibilities’. This allows him to say that existential feelings as “[ways] of finding oneself in a world are presupposed spaces of experiential possibility, which shape the various ways that things can be experienced”. The ‘world’ as the space of possibilities can undergo changes. And these changes involve the *closing* and *opening* of different kinds of possibilities. A shift in possibility space is at the same time a shift in existential feeling (in the way that one finds oneself in the world). This, together with the proposal that mindfulness is the feeling of being *tuned-in*, therefore forces certain questions and tasks onto us, including:

(1) *How does establishing mindfulness, the feeling of being tuned-in, alter the possibility space? What kind of possibility does mindfulness open up or disclose? What kind*

*of possibility does it close up?* In general, the task of delineating possibility kinds is not a straightforward one, as Ratcliffe (2012) acknowledges: “...there is the formidable task of charting the kinds of possibility that experience incorporates, exploring variations in the structure of that possibility space...” and that “...an analysis of the kinds of possibility that experience incorporates ... is a very substantial undertaking, which would generate difficult questions regarding the criteria and methods we employ to distinguish different kinds of possibility, how we might distinguish a good account of the phenomenological possibility space from a bad one, and whether there is a uniquely appropriate or correct account.” This sets up a major objective of Part II: to isolate and describe the unique kind of possibility that mindfulness opens up (and closes) and to work out the place and function of this kind of possibility in the overall structure of possibility space (our experience of the world). This brings up the issue of:

(2) *The depth of existential feelings.* Ratcliffe (2012) draws an important distinction between the *founding role* and the *revelatory capacity* of existential feelings. In Martin Heidegger’s (1967) account of moods (*stimmung*) and their ontological basis attunement (*befindlichkeit*) both characteristics play a role in determining *depth*. Ratcliffe (2012), however, who is developing and reacting to Heidegger’s account, cannot see what bearing the *revelatory capacity* of an existential feeling has on its *depth*. In fact, Ratcliffe (ibid.) rejects the idea that revelatory capacity has anything to do with depth. Instead, he proposes that the founding role alone should be used to determine the depth of an existential feeling. Before evaluating Ratcliffe’s positions, and his critique of Heidegger on this point, it is necessary to first understand what the terms ‘founding role’ and ‘revelatory capacity’ stand for.

If the kind of possibility disclosed by existential feeling A is presupposed by the kind of possibility disclosed by existential feeling B then we say that B is *founded* on A, that A is

*deeper* than B. In other words, the very intelligibility of B presupposes A: "...a deeper kind of [existential feeling] is presupposed by the intelligibility of a shallower kind or, alternatively, renders the shallower kind unintelligible" and "...we need not settle for just two levels of depth. Suppose that y constitutes a space of possibilities presupposed by x and that y itself presupposes a space of possibilities constituted by z" (Ratcliffe, 2013), a situation where we would say that y is deeper than x while z is deeper than y. An example will help illustrate these formal definitions.

Consider Heidegger's claim, to which Ratcliffe (ibid.) himself resorts, that *fear* is founded on *anxiety*. *Fear*, according to this account, discloses the possibility of the *threatening*, which involves the sense that I am an entity in the midst of the world, one whose life is in danger in the face of some other entity (which is also in the midst of the world). It is for myself as an entity in the world that I fear *for*. But, according to Heidegger, I could not experience myself as an entity in the world unless I was already related to my own possibilities or projects. And *anxiety* is this awareness of my possibilities. Leaving aside the details of Heidegger's account (and the question of whether he is right about this), the example illustrates how the possibility of encountering anything as threatening is founded on the awareness of our own possibilities. In that sense, *fear* is founded on *anxiety*. *If it could be shown that our possibilities are also founded, and that there is a feeling of being in which these deeper possibilities are disclosed, then while anxiety would be deeper than fear, this other state of mind would be even deeper still. Could mindfulness be just such a feeling of being?*

In addition to serving as foundations for other existential feelings, certain existential feelings can be philosophically illuminating. This is their 'revelatory capacity'. Anxiety can again be used as an example: "Heidegger [...] suggests that anxiety is philosophically illuminating, as it makes conspicuous the ordinarily presupposed structure of Being-in-the-

world” (ibid.) But, as I already said, Ratcliffe (ibid.) cannot see what this revelatory capacity has to do with the depth of existential feelings (or the ‘ground’ status of a mood, which amount to the same thing):

...it is not clear why the capacity to facilitate any kind of insight should make something a ground mood. Enabling Being-in-the-world is not the same as revealing Being-in-the-world. Surely there could be equally fundamental moods that are characterised precisely by their tendency to obscure rather than enlighten.

Ratcliffe (ibid.) proposes that *founding role* alone “...rather than its capacity to illuminate philosophically... is relevant to [the] ‘ground mood’ status.” I disagree with Ratcliffe on this point.

What Ratcliffe overlooks, in my view, is the difference between *founding* relations that hold between feelings of being, on the one hand, and those that obtain between different regions of possibility space, on the other. What I am here referring to as different regions of possibility space, overlaps with that which Heidegger (1967) calls *modes* or *ways* of Being. For Heidegger, as I understand him, different kinds of possibilities are constitutive of different modes of being. For example, practical possibilities (the usability, serviceability, conduciveness of equipment and so on.) constitute the mode of being that Heidegger calls *ready-at-hand*, which is the way of being of tools or equipment. Our possibilities or projects (such as the possibility of enjoying a cup of coffee, going out for a walk or becoming a philosopher) constitute the mode of being of entities that we ourselves are (*Dasein*): *being-in-the-world*. For Heidegger, the ready-at-hand is *founded* on being-in-the-world. To say that is to say something about the ontological structure of reality itself. This ontological structure should be distinguished from the ‘experiences’ or ‘comportments’ through which it is disclosed. These comportments are *modes* of being-in-the-world and exhibit their own

founding relations, which are distinct from but not unrelated to the founding relations of the reality that they disclose. On this background, it should be fairly straightforward to show why the revelatory capacity of an existential feeling is an important factor in determining its depth.

To understand what makes *anxiety* a ground mood, it is not sufficient to say, as Ratcliffe does, that it discloses being-in-the-world. The crucial point, which Heidegger clearly saw, is that being-in-the-world as a mode of being is the *foundation* for other modes of being, such as the ready-at-hand and the present-at-hand. Therefore, to become aware of being-in-the-world as such, is to become aware of the *depth* structure of reality itself (which does not imply that this structure has been articulated philosophically). This is what makes *anxiety* into a ground mood: it discloses a foundational mode of being; in becoming anxious the very depth of reality itself manifests. Speaking more generally, we can say that existential feeling A is deeper than existential feeling B if A reveals a more fundamental mode of being than B, if it penetrated deeper into reality than B. And to disclose a deeper level of reality means to shed light on the ontological structure of the shallower levels. And for a level of reality to be obscured is simply for its ontological foundation *not* to have been disclosed.

*But was Heidegger right in describing being-in-the-world as the foundational mode of being? Correlatively, was he right that anxiety is the deepest mood or attunement? If being-in-the-world is Heidegger's description of the transcendental perspective, as I think it is, then the same question can also be asked in the following way: is the transcendental perspective the most fundamental perspective? What if there is a different perspective that the transcendental presupposes as its ontological foundation? And what if mindfulness is the feeling of being tuned-in to this more fundamental perspective, and its unique possibility structure? Establishing mindfulness would then open up the possibility of making the*

transcendental perspective intelligible by revealing its ontological source. Part II will attempt to show that this is all in fact so.

(3) *Feelings of being alter and determine the structure of the stream of consciousness.*

According to Ratcliffe (2005), existential feelings “[f]unction as presupposed contexts for all intellectual and practical activity and determine how objects themselves appear”. In other words, not only do feeling of being determine the form of experience but also of the entities or objects that we encounter in the world: “if one’s sense of the world is tainted by a ‘feeling of unreality’, this will affect how all objects of perception appear. They are distant, removed, not quite ‘there’” (ibid.). This is related to the point made above that becoming mindful alters the stream of consciousness in a particular way, endowing the elements of this stream with a particular form, the *pattern* of mindfulness. In other words, establishing the feeling of being *tuned-in* transforms ordinary attention into *mindful* attention and ordinary reflection or thinking into *mindful* reflection. But this does not answer the question: *how* does establishing mindfulness alter these functions? *How* does attention take up and express the possibility structure that the feeling of being *tuned-in* discloses? *How* does *mindful* reflection bring this possibility structure into the light of explicit awareness? Part II will attempt to deal with these and other similar questions by developing a phenomenological description of mindfulness and related phenomena.



# PART II

## A Phenomenology of Mindfulness

## OVERVIEW

Part II aims to refine the pre-phenomenological sketch developed in Part I by bringing mindfulness, and related phenomena, into view from the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology.

**Chapter I** sets the stage through an exposition of three key Husserlian notions: the natural and the transcendental perspectives and the phenomenological *epoché* (the procedure that leads the phenomenologist from the former to the latter). This chapter offers an interpretation according to which the natural and transcendental perspectives are different modes or configurations of the *transcendental horizon*, which I call the ‘crystallised’ and the ‘de-crystallised’ modes respectively. ‘De-crystallisation’ refers to the event where the transcendental horizon *passively* reconfigures from the crystallised to the de-crystallised mode. On this basis, the *epoché* is defined as the project of *intentionally cultivating* the possibility of de-crystallisation (or of preventing crystallisation). It is then argued that de-crystallisation (and consequently the practice of the *epoché*) presupposes the existence of a kind of possibility that Husserl does not explicitly discuss. I call it ‘thingly possibility’.

Given this background, **Chapter II** begins by arguing that thingly possibilities come into view from a perspective that does not feature explicitly in Husserl’s phenomenology: *the open perspective*. This allows *tuning-in-tuning-out* to be defined as the practice of *tuning-out* of the transcendental horizon and *tuning-in* to the open horizon (the horizon filled in by thingly possibilities). Mindfulness is then defined as *the feeling of being tuned-in to the open horizon*. This chapter also offers a complementary definition of concentration as a modification of the feeling of being *tuned-in* where the open horizon is *narrowed* in a certain manner. The chapter ends by describing two other kinds of mindfulness and concentration.

**Chapter III** addressed two questions: (1) what is *mindful reflection* (*vipassanā*) and how does it relate to, and arise from within, mindfulness? (2) What is the phenomenological

nature of the kind of effort (*ātāpi*) that is constitutive of *tuning-out-tuning-in*? In order to address these question, close attention is paid to the experience of two individuals who are actually (or so I claim) engaging in the practice of *tuning-in-tuning-out*: Edmund Husserl himself and Acariya Maha Boowa (the great meditation master from the Thai Forest tradition of Buddhism). *Mindful reflection* is described as an insight practice that involves contrasting and differentiating the different ways that phenomena bring their (thingly) possibilities into being. The effort that is constitutive of *tuning-in-tuning-out* is the effort required in order to *transform* one's very mode of being (a transformation where the human subject (temporarily at least) *becomes* the phenomenon).

## CHAPTER I:

### *The Husserlian Background*

The overarching ambition of Husserl's philosophical project, at least from the *Ideas I*, can be understood as an attempt to make sense of two *attitudes* or *perspectives* (these terms will be used interchangeably here) that we can take on reality, by thinking through their interrelation and philosophical significance. Husserl called these the 'natural' and the 'transcendental' attitudes, and he invested a significant amount of his energy in trying to explicate the method that would lead the phenomenologist from the former to the latter. This method is the *phenomenological epoché*. If the epoché brings about a perspectival shift, from the natural to the transcendental perspective, then, in the context of the current project, the question naturally arises: what is the relation between this shift and the one that can be brought about through the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*? And what, if anything, can the practice of the *epoché* teach us about mindfulness, the feeling of being *tuned-in*? In order to address these (and other similar) questions, firstly it is necessary to get a firm grip on the aforementioned Husserlian themes. This is the task of the current chapter.

Section (i) outlines Husserl's account of intentionality. Section (ii) describes some of the main characteristics of the natural perspective. Section (iii) is a similar exploration of the transcendental perspective. Section (iv) focuses on the idea of the *transcendental horizon*, a horizon filled in by 'our' possibilities. According to the interpretation developed here, the natural and transcendental perspectives are different modes or configurations of the transcendental horizon, the 'crystallised' and 'de-crystallised' modes. Section (v) gives an account of the phenomenological *epoché* as the practice of nurturing the possibility of de-crystallisation (or of preventing the possibility of crystallisation from coming into being). This allows the question to be asked: what kind of possibility is at work in de-

crystallisation? The answer calls for the recognition of a different kind of possibility from ‘our’ possibilities and I call this different kind of possibility ‘thingly’ possibility. By articulating the idea of thingly possibility, the discussion takes the first major step towards a phenomenological account of mindfulness, and related phenomena.

## i. INTENTIONALITY

‘Intentionality’ (a notion that Husserl adopted from his mentor Franz Brentano) designates that quality of consciousness in virtue of which it is *of* or *about* something.<sup>31</sup> For Husserl, intentionality is not an extrinsic relation that arises when consciousness and its object come into proximity. Rather, intentionality is *intrinsic* to consciousness; it belongs to its essence (it is to consciousness what three angles are to a triangle).<sup>32</sup> There are many different *ways* of being conscious of something (Husserl, 2000 Investigation V, §10). When I

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<sup>31</sup> Brentano’s (1874, p. 92) well known description of intentionality reads: “Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle ages call the intentional (or mental) inexistence of the object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.”

<sup>32</sup> As Husserl (2000, Investigation V, §21) writes: “This ‘reference to an object’ belongs peculiarly and intrinsically to an act-experience and the experiences manifesting it are by definition intentional experiences or acts.” To be more precise, Husserl does not believe that every kind of experience is *intrinsically* intentional. For *hyletic* data or *sensations* (which we will consider in a bit more detail below) are not (Husserl, 1970b Investigation V, §10). Nevertheless, according to Husserl, *hyletic data* can only exist as *moments* of *intrinsically* intentional experiences. In this sense all experience is encompassed and characterised by intentionality, as Husserl (1982) says: “...intentionality...is also like a universal medium which ultimately bears in itself all mental processes, even those which are not themselves characterized as intensive.”

think about the cup of coffee, I am relating to it in one way; and when I perceive it, I am relating to it in another way. Another important and related point is that, for Husserl, every phenomenon has its own way of being *original given*; there is a *sui generis* kind of intentional experience in which numbers, values, other subjects, the lifeworld etc., appear originally, and, so to speak, in person—in contrast to being merely *emptily* presented, in absence. This is closely related to what Husserl (1982) calls the ‘principle of all principles’:

...that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originarily (so to speak, in its “personal” actuality) offered to us in “intuition” is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.

The idea here is that whatever presents itself in this original way (with whatever characteristics and structures) is to be affirmed and accepted as such (but *only* as such). The task of phenomenology, as envisioned by Husserl, was to describe this ‘correlation’ between consciousness and the experienced world.<sup>33</sup> Husserl’s understanding of intentionality evolved and changed in many ways throughout his long and productive philosophical life.<sup>34</sup> Here, I will work with a view of intentionality that Husserl held around the time of *Ideas I* (which is arguably the view that he held on to throughout his life). According to this view, in

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<sup>33</sup> As Husserl (1970a, p. 166) writes: “The first breakthrough of this universal a priori of correlation between experienced object and manners of givenness (which occurred during work on my Logical Investigations around 1898) affected me so deeply that my whole subsequent life-work has been dominated by the task of systematically elaborating on this a priori of correlation”.

<sup>34</sup> I will leave it to more competent scholars to work out the evolution of Husserl’s thought on this topic. For a general and in-depth overview of Husserl’s philosophy (which is not restricted to the theme of intentionality) I recommend: de Boer (1978).

every kind of intentional relation it is necessary to distinguish the *noetic* and the *noematic moments*, with the *noetic moment* being further subdivided into two dimensions: the *hyletic data* and the *apprehending forms* or *noesis* (Husserl, 1982).

In order to bring the *noesis* into view, consider one of the most celebrated case studies in phenomenology: the phenomenon of ‘double sensation’.<sup>35</sup> Put your hands together and take note of the touch sensation. If you stay with the experience and pay close attention, you should notice that this sensation sometimes appears with the meaning “left hand touching the right”, which from time to time spontaneously switches to the sense “the left hand being touched by the right”. At one time, the right hand is the *object*, at another the *subject*, of experience. Since, for all intents and purposes, the touch sensation stays constant, we could say that what has altered here is the way that this sensation is *apprehended* (*aufgefasst*). In the terminology of *Ideas I*, it is the *noesis* that has changed (Husserl, 1982). The *noesis* is neither the object that appears (say, the right hand touching the left), nor the material that undergoes and supports the interpretation (the actual feeling or sensation of touch). It is a distinct *moment* of intentionality that *apprehends* the sensation in a particular way so as to yield the objective sense. Let us take another example. In the duck/rabbit illusion, we see the ‘same’ figure switch from a representation of a rabbit to that of a duck and then back again quickly. Here, the same material on the paper is at one time interpreted as being a representation of a duck and at another time of a rabbit. Again, when the switch takes place, what alters is the *noesis* (the manner in which the material on the page is *apprehended*). In both examples, the alteration was not an alteration in the *kind* of *noesis*, but of instances of the same kind (in the first example, in both cases we are dealing with a tactile apprehension, and in the second with an imaginative one). For an example where a change of kind does

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<sup>35</sup> See: Husserl (1989, p. 155). Moran (2010) offers an insightful overview of how the phenomenon of double sensation (and related themes) is treated by some of the key figures in the phenomenological tradition.

takes place, consider the case where I go from *apprehending* what I see on the page of this book as meaning something to *apprehending* it as ink marks on paper. While the material remains constant, the *apprehension* alters from, what Husserl calls a ‘meaning intention’, to a visual perception (two different kinds of *noesis*). Husserl discovered and described many different kinds of *noesis*. The following discussion will focus on a very special kind: *the straightforward synthesis* that underlies the natural perspective and which constitutes the sense of there being an all-encompassing ‘world’.

In the case of ‘double sensation’ (as stated above) the feeling of touch (the sheer materiality) stays the same while the apprehension varies. But in the experience of touch itself it is necessary to distinguish the surface of the object being touched (which is something persistent and enduring) from the manifold of constantly changing touch sensations through which the object’s surface appears and which is given as being located in the touching hand. In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl called the latter dimension of experience ‘sensations’ and in the *Ideas* he speaks of it as ‘hyletic data’ (Husserl, 1982). With the possible exception of the *epoché*, no other idea of Husserl’s has been attacked as viciously (especially by other phenomenologists) as the idea of the *hyletic data*.<sup>36</sup> But it is also true that no other idea of his has been as misunderstood. In my opinion, the *hyletic data* is one of the most important ideas of Husserlian phenomenology (one whose true significance even Husserl himself was not able to truly appreciate). Unfortunately, in this work I will not be able defend this claim (but I will have something to say about it in the conclusion).<sup>37</sup> For the present purposes, a brief illustration will suffice.

Consider the black surface of this coffee cup in my hand. Not only do we speak of this colour as persisting over time, as being a uniform property of the object (this is prior to any

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<sup>36</sup> See: Smith (1977)

<sup>37</sup> For a defense of ‘hyletic’ or ‘material’ phenomenology, see: Henry (2008).



theory that would expel the colour from the world into the mind or the brain), it is also difficult to deny that, on a certain level of experience, that is precisely how it appears. When we pay close attention, however, we see that this uniform and persistent colour appears *through* a multitude of constantly changing colour sensations, which exhibit a richness that is simply impossible to capture in words. This *hyletic* dimension is in a constant state of flux; it is never the same from moment to moment, and it is through this constant flux that the uniform colour of the object becomes constituted. Something analogous is true of feeling. Consider, for example, a pain in the foot. Once again, on one level of description, we experience this as a solid, uniform phenomenon, one that is located in the foot, which arose at a certain time, which endures and eventually ceases. But, when we pay close attention to the actual experience of this pain, what we find is a continuum of pain sensations, which are changing so rapidly that it is impossible to keep track, or to describe them in detail. Colour and pain are only two examples of *hyletic data*, there are many more.

As *noetic* moments, the *hyle* and *noesis* are “really inherent” parts of the intentional experience. By apprehending the *hyletic data*, the *noesis* constitutes the *noema*. The *noema* is not actually contained in the experience but is, in some sense, “outside” of it—although this ‘outside’ is still ‘inside’ in the relevant sense (Husserl, 1982, p. 205). The question regarding the true nature of the noema is one of the most discussed in the secondary Husserlian literature.<sup>38</sup> One key debate has to do with the question of the relation between the *noema* and the *intentional object*. As I see it, the intentional object is that which appears as identical through a continuum of changing *noemas*, while ‘noema’ designates the way that the object appears in a particular intentional experience. In other words, while the object is distinct from the *noemas* that ‘make it up’, it is not *independent* or *self-sufficient* in relation

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<sup>38</sup> For an overview of the different ways of interpreting the *noema*, and the wider philosophical implications of these interpretations, see: Zahavi (2004)

to them. Let me try and illustrate. I think about the coffee cup, I lift it in my hand, look at it, write about it and so on. The cup is the intentional object of all these acts; it persists through all of them as something self-identical. To see what the *noema* is, consider this particular act of perceiving the cup, and abstract from all other ways that the cup may appear, including in a future moment of this perception. What remains when you do that is simply the cup as it appears in this act of perceiving. Even if it turns out that the cup does not ‘actually’ exist (perhaps I am hallucinating), the ‘*noematic* cup’ (the cup as it appears in this perception) stays what it is.

This very brief overview of Husserl’s doctrine of intentionality sets the stage for the following section, the task of which is to describe a very special kind of intentionality that Husserl calls the natural ‘attitude’ or ‘perspective’.

## ii. THE NATURAL PERSPECTIVE

For the purpose of illustrating the phenomenological character of the natural perspective (and of its relation to and difference from the transcendental) I find it helpful to compare it to the dreaming perspective, and the various possibilities that dreaming offers. In this chapter and in the remainder of this work, I will use the example of dreaming as a heuristic device in order to shed light on these phenomena. In using the analogy, I am not trying to say that there is some kind of a deep correspondence between, say, the natural and the dreaming perspectives (nor am I saying that there is not). I am only resorting to the example of dreaming for the purpose of illustrating certain ideas (the truth of which does not depend on the suitability, or otherwise, of the analogy being used to illustrate them).

In an ordinary dream the mind identifies itself with something within the dream—the *self*—which it opposes to everything else in the dream—the *not-self*. And it *apprehends* both the self and the non-self as being situated in dream *world*—the all-encompassing context in

which dream events take place. None of this is known explicitly (indeed it cannot be) while one is going about one's dreamy business. The threefold differentiation of self, non-self and world, form a kind of background upon which the more familiar kinds of dream experiences take place, experiences related to particular dream objects or events (such as the running away from that strange creature, talking with someone and so on). Suppose that you now become *lucid*; you become conscious of the dream while continuing to 'dream'. The significance of the lucid perspective in the current context is that it brings the natural dreaming perspective into view, allowing it to be objectified in a certain way. While it may not happen that, in becoming lucid, you automatically disassociate from your dream character—you may continue to feel that there is a special part of the dream that you can control and that is, in some sense, more *you* than other things—it becomes (or *can* become) clear that the mind has a much more important role to play in the constitution of the dream world (and the objects that populate it) than appears from that natural dreaming perspective—where the mind apprehends itself as being nothing more than one dream object amongst others. Here 'mind' does not refer to the mind of the dream character (that part of the dream that is apprehended as self) but to the mind that is dreaming the dream. According to Husserl, as I understand him, something analogous is going on in ordinary, *natural* waking life also. In the *natural perspective*, too, the mind identifies itself as being a particular object in the world, the 'psycho-physical self', and it identifies everything else in that *world* as *not self*.<sup>39</sup> This subject-object dichotomy is the basic characteristic of the natural perspective. But, as we will see later, for Husserl there is something comparable to lucidity here too, which allows us to take a step back from the natural perspective in order to objectify it and reflect on its structure.

It is necessary to keep apart two possible interpretations of 'the natural perspective'.

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<sup>39</sup> For the original description of the natural attitude see: (Husserl, 1982).

On the one hand, this term can be taken as designating ordinary life *before* it has been brought into view as such: the situation of being absorbed in and fascinated by the world. On the other hand, the expression can be used to designate ordinary life when it has been brought into view. When Husserl uses the term he has the second sense in mind. In other words, merely in virtue of talking about ordinary life as the ‘natural perspective’, one has taken a step back from it and is no longer immersed in it. To put it in terms that will become clearer later, the ‘natural perspective’ is itself a transcendental concept.<sup>40</sup> This difference between the *absorbed-in* ordinary life and the natural perspective allows me to briefly touch upon another important theme.

According to Husserl, unlike other human endeavours (such as the positive sciences, and the everyday, practical engagement with the world), philosophy necessitates a (radical) break with (absorbed-in) ordinary life. According to this view, philosophy only begins when ordinary life is seen *as* the natural perspective, as Zahavi (2019) writes in a recent article:

Husserl often contrasts philosophy proper with the work done by the positive sciences. The latter are so absorbed in their investigation of the natural (or social/cultural) world that they do not pause to reflect upon their own presuppositions and conditions of possibility. They all operate on the basis of a natural (and necessary) naivety, namely the tacit belief in the existence of a mind-independent reality. This realist assumption is so fundamental and deeply rooted that it is not only accepted by the positive sciences, it also permeates our daily pre-theoretical life, for which reason Husserl calls it the ‘natural attitude’. Regardless of how natural the attitude might be, simply to take it for granted is philosophically unacceptable. If philosophy is supposed to amount to a radical form of critical elucidation, it cannot simply presuppose our natural realism. Rather than continuing to live in the natural attitude, it must engage in a reflective move that will allow it to explore the epistemic and metaphysical presuppositions of the latter.

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<sup>40</sup> Fink (1933) makes this point.

In response to this line of thought, I would like to raise some questions (which I will not pursue at this point). Is this reflective move, which brings ordinary life into view as the natural perspective, to be identified with philosophy or is it only one kind of a philosophical endeavour? What are we to say about the possibility of (instead of stepping back from being absorbed in the world) becoming even more absorbed in it, albeit in a special way? Perhaps it isn't a problem of too much absorption, but too little of it? Perhaps in order to understand the things themselves (which first announce themselves in ordinary life) what is called for is not a stepping back from them to their appearances—to what they are for *us*—but a kind of stepping *into* them? It could be argued that to practice *tuning-in-tuning-out* is precisely to practice becoming absorbed or *tuned-in* to things in this way. And, having become *tuned-in*, perhaps the possibility of a new kind of reflective practice will become open to us, a kind of practice that opens the thing up from the inside, revealing its true nature. Could this, too, not serve as a basis for a kind of philosophy? And is it not a different avenue towards questioning 'natural realism' which, according to this position, is naïve because it is not absorbed enough? If not, why not? Leaving these questions for later, it is now time to return to the theme of the natural perspective.

In speaking of the 'natural perspective', it is necessary to distinguish the overall, global awareness of being in a world (which includes the sense that I am different from the other things that are to be found in it) from the short-lived *experiences* of the various things that are encountered within the world (such as coffee cups, other people, tools and indeed our psycho-physical selves). For the following purposes, 'the natural perspective' will be used exclusively to refer to the global sense of being in the world with its subject-object structure. 'Mundane' experiences will refer to the experiences of particular objects encountered in the world (this perception of the coffee cup as being an actual thing in the world is an example of a mundane experience). What is the relation between the natural

perspective and mundane experiences?

At first glance, there appears to be a tension in Husserl's work on this question. On the one hand, he wants to say that the natural perspective is not just another experience, it is not just another intentional act, but that it is rather the stable ground upon which any such experience appears and which is therefore presupposed by any such experience.<sup>41</sup> But, on the other hand, he also wants to say that the natural perspective is itself *founded* on experiences and that it is a synthesis that binds experience together in a certain way, thereby implying that the natural perspective is itself a higher order, *founded* intentional experience.<sup>42</sup>

The apparent conflict dissolves, or at least partially dissolves, if we keep in mind the following two-fold ambiguity of the term 'intentional experience'. According to the first sense, the term designates *mundane* experiences: the form that experiences assume within the natural perspective. Clearly, since *mundane* experiences presuppose the natural perspective, and could not exist without it as a basis, the latter cannot itself be dependent on, and arise from them. According to the second sense, however, 'intentional experience' designates the form that experiences take within a different perspective, a perspective that is more basic or fundamental than the natural perspective. This is the 'transcendental perspective' and it will be the theme of the following section. Taking the idea for granted for

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<sup>41</sup> "The general positing, by virtue of which there is not just any continual apprehensional consciousness of the real surrounding world, but a consciousness of it as a *factually existing* "actuality", naturally does *not consist of a particular act*, perchance an articulated judgment of existence. It is, after all, something that lasts continuously throughout the whole duration of the attitude, i.e., throughout natural waking life" (Husserl, 1982).

<sup>42</sup> In the *Crisis*, Husserl (1970, p. 146) describes the natural attitude as a "...constant process, synthetically connected as it incessantly flows on, [that] brings about the coherent consciousness of the straightforward "being" in the world".

now, allows us to speak of intentional experiences in this second sense as *transcendental* (intentional) experiences. If we take the expression in this sense then no conflict arises when we say that the natural perspective is *founded* on experiences. According to this understanding, the natural perspective is a particular form that arises on the ground of transcendental experiences, which has the effect of transforming transcendental into mundane experiences. For the sake of illustration, we can compare this to a melody and the tones that make it up. Just as the individual tones can exist without giving rise to the melody, so, let us assume, transcendental experiences can exist without giving rise to the natural perspective. When the tones are *synthesised* together in a particular way, however, the melody comes to be, and with the coming to be of the melody, the underlying tones are themselves modified in a certain manner. Analogously, when transcendental experiences are *synthesised* in such a way that the natural perspective comes into being, these experiences are no longer simply what they were before, but acquire new layers of meaning and become *mundane* experiences. Having conceived of the natural perspective as a kind of intentional experience, it is now possible to raise the question of its *noetic* and *noematic moments*. I will begin with the *noetic* dimension.<sup>43</sup>

I believe that Husserl's description of the natural attitude is an extension of his earlier study of 'straightforward synthesis' in the *Logical Investigations*, the kind of synthesis at work in the perception of individual, *actual* objects that we encounter within the world (Husserl, 1970b, Investigation VI, §47). Later on in this work, I will have an opportunity to study this synthesis in more detail (see: Part II, Chapter III, Section i.). But for the present purposes a brief overview of some of its characteristics will suffice. In the perception of an

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<sup>43</sup> The reader may wonder about the *hyletic* dimension of the natural attitude. Didn't I say above that, for Husserl, every act contains a *hyletic* dimension? The natural attitude satisfies this requirement in virtue of the fact that it 'inherits' its *hyletic* content from the experiences on which it is founded and which it synthesizes. In the remainder of this discussion, however, I will not discuss the *hyletic* dimension of the natural attitude.

actual object (such as this coffee cup) the straightforward synthesis ensures that a continuum of partial and momentary percepts are put together in such a way as to yield a higher-order perceptual experience, in which the object appears ‘in one blow’ as something unified, undivided and actual. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of partial percepts. The first kind are constitutive of every phase of the straightforward perception: this straightforward perception of the cup is made up of many partial intentions that are responsible for the implicit sense that I have of the cup as having a multitude of parts. Some of these partial percepts are *filled*, such as those that present the parts of the object that are now facing me. Others are *empty*; they refer to the parts of the object that I cannot see, such as the side of the object that is facing the wall. Taking into account the temporal dimension, the straightforward perception is continually flowing: I perceive the cup, I grasp it, tap on it, hearing how it sounds and so on. While constant change is going on, nevertheless, through this flux the uniform and stable object somehow manages to appear. Here the partial percepts *fuse* together so as to yield a single, overarching perception of something uniform, stable and enduring. The *straightforward* synthesis or *synthesis-by-fusion* (terms that I will use interchangeably from now on) is not an *active* process in the sense of being something that one does intentionally and sporadically. It is rather always going on, as long as we are in the natural perspective, and in that sense it is *passive* (but it is active in another, extended sense—for it ‘constructs’ the sense of there being a stable and persistent object).

Straightforward synthesis is nothing mysterious. It is just that we usually do not nurture the right kind of stance from which it can be brought into view. Let us change that. Direct your attention to something in your environment, it may be a coffee cup or a book, or a person standing on the other side of the room. Pay close attention at the way that the object is changing; in one moment, it is showing you one side, then another; now it is close, now it is far away. Correlatively, your experience of the object is also always changing. Strictly



speaking nothing is ever the same. But *through* this flux and within it, something uniform does manifest and persist: the cup of coffee, or the person. Both the changing and the enduring aspects are discernible qualities of experience, and neither should be dismissed as less real (although this does not stop us from asking about the *founding* relations of these phenomena). ‘Synthesis-by-fusion’ names the process that is responsible for bringing into being a uniform and persistent something through the constant flux of change.<sup>44</sup>

I believe that Husserl derived the idea of the natural attitude by extending this analysis of straightforward perception of individual objects to our experience of the world as a whole. But what I think is actually going on here is that Husserl’s initial investigation of straightforward perception was in fact an investigation of ‘mundane’ perception, which is but one form that perception can take. And what makes a perception mundane is that it occurs on the background of the natural perspective—the all-encompassing synthesis-by-fusion. To put it differently, the *synthesis-by-fusion* that Husserl discerned as an intrinsic moment of perception is something like a reflection of the underlying *universal synthesis-by-fusion* which defines the natural perspective. According to this suggestion, *synthesis-by-fusion* is not an intrinsic quality of perception; perception need not construct actual objects. It only takes on that role when it occurs within the natural perspective (in earlier terms: mundane perception helps make up the *pattern* of the natural attitude). And because the descriptions of the *Logical Investigations* were undertaken from within the natural perspective, what Husserl’s was trying to describe there is not perception as such but mundane perception.<sup>45</sup> I would now like to take a closer look at how the universal *synthesis-*

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<sup>44</sup> The ‘adumbration’ of the object through its aspects (which are equally objective) should not be confused with the adumbration of the objective through the *hyle*.

<sup>45</sup> As Moran (2000, p. 125) writes: “Husserl came to suspect that his attempt to study the essential features of consciousness in the *Logical Investigations* still harboured certain naturalistic presuppositions about consciousness...”

*by-fusion* is reflected in mundane perception.

There are two directions that the perceptual exploration of the coffee cup can take. It is possible to travel *inside* the cup, as we do when we focus on its handle, investigate the material that it is made of and so on. Here the cup persists as the background context while the *synthesis-by-fusion* continues its work inside it: its parts, and their parts, become constituted as objects in their own right, in exactly the same way that the cup was earlier. Here the cup is the *actuality* upon which everything else that we encounter as we explore inside it appears; everything is seen as *within* and as a *part* of the actual cup. This is its *inner horizon*. But we can also travel in the other direction, from the cup to the table, from the table to the room, from the room to the house and so on. When we do that, the object becomes straightforwardly integrated into a larger and larger context (something analogous is going on in the temporal direction but I will leave the illustration of this in the hands of the reader). This is the *outer horizon*. Now, even if we do not follow the horizon inwards or outwards in this way: even if we do not give rise to an actual experience of, say, the other side of the cup, there is nevertheless an implicit sense that these horizons are there—that the cup has parts, and that it too is a part of a wider environment, however vague and indeterminate this sense may be. These inner and outer horizons are already *sketched out* (and must be sketched out, whenever we glance upon anything) and it is on the basis of this sketch that the drama of ordinary life plays out. It will not take us long to realise that there are no limits to this sketching out, the horizon is *infinite*. As Husserl (1982) puts it “any actual experience points beyond itself to possible experiences which, in turn, point to new possible experiences and so *ad infinitum*”. I could in principle travel inside the cup forever, without ever hitting a limit, and the same holds in the outer direction. Note that to speak of ‘infinity’ and ‘foreverness’ here is to speak of certain experiential qualities. According to Husserl, it is this infinite horizon that we are really referring to (phenomenologically

speaking) when we speak about a ‘world’ or the ‘lifeworld’ (the *noematic* correlate of the universal synthesis-by-fusion).

To notice the lifeworld as a descriptive feature of our experience—it is necessary to not look away from objects that we find within the world (not even to collections of them mistakenly thinking that the world is some kind of an aggregate of individual things).<sup>46</sup> The world is an integral structure of the actual object. In order to notice it, instead of looking away from the object, it is necessary to look into it in a certain way. To perceive this cup, for example, is to perceive it as something within-the-world. The world is already present in the very structure of the cup as the infinite horizon, that we can—and indeed must—enter as long as we remain in the natural perspective; but we can never reach the end of it. Differently put, when we reflect on what it means to be an actual object, we realise that the sense of an object or entity is inseparable from the sense of *world*. While the entity and the lifeworld are deeply interconnected, they are nevertheless different phenomena; they exist in different ways, a point that Husserl (1970a, p. 143) makes when he writes that “the world...does not exist as an entity, as an object, but exists with such uniqueness that the plural makes no sense when applied to it. Every plural and every singular drawn from it, presupposes the world horizon”.

The following analogy may help direct the reader’s mind to the lifeworld’s unique phenomenological presence.<sup>47</sup> If you focus on the tip of a candle flame and hold your attention there you will soon notice, in the ‘corner of your eye’, a reddish ring appear around the flame. And the more intensely you focus on the flame, the more strongly does the ring assert itself in the fringe of your awareness. But if you try to focus on the ring directly—to

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<sup>46</sup> Husserl may have at certain points in his philosophical career held the view that the world is an aggregate of individual objects. But he eventually articulated a much more satisfactory description, one that we are now working with. For a good discussion of this, see: Overgaard (2004, chapter IV.)

<sup>47</sup> I would like to thank my friend Zakaria Garmsiri for this analogy.

make it into an object of your attention—it will vanish without a trace. The lifeworld can be compared to the ring, while the entity within-the-world can be compared to the flame; the more we engage the entity, the stronger we feel the presence of the world—the all-encompassing context, in the background. But if you try and grasp the world directly—in an attempt to make it an explicit object of attention, to experience it just as another entity—it will slip through your fingers like sand. To do justice to the lifeworld as a phenomenon, it is necessary to respect its *tendency-to-hide* as a positive, constitutive feature. By its very nature, the world is a *shy* phenomenon.

A key idea that will accompany us through the rest of this discussion will be that every perspective has a unique possibility structure. In the natural perspective, *actuality* has an ontological priority over *possibilities*. From this perspective, all possibilities appear as possibilities of something actual, ultimately the lifeworld—the all-encompassing actuality. From here on, I will call these kinds of possibilities—which always presuppose something actual and which are only possibilities of some actual thing—‘potentialities’. Every object within the world has its range of potentialities. This cup, for example, is an actuality that has the potential of holding coffee, of breaking if dropped on the floor, of being stored in the cupboard and so on.

Another question that I will briefly touch upon now is: what form does awareness take in the natural perspective? In the natural perspective, as we have seen, the lifeworld is differentiated into two basic regions of *self* and *not self* (the region of not-self is further subdivided in various ways, which I will not go into here). The ‘self’ here designates the ‘psycho-physical subject’, the ‘character’, or simply the ‘person’ (terms that I will use interchangeably). The psycho-physical subject is an object within the world that ‘we’ *identify* with in the natural perspective: just as in the dream the dreaming consciousness identifies itself with one part of the dream—the dream character. Like all other worldly

actualities, the psycho-physical subject has its own range of potentialities. For example, my psycho-physical self has the potential of, say, writing a philosophical paper but does not have the potentiality of playing the piano or running one hundred meters in under ten seconds.<sup>48</sup>

Most human beings live their entire life from within the natural perspective, and will die without ever having suspected that there is anything beyond—that a shift in perspective is possible. According to Husserl (1982), a shift is indeed possible: to bring it about, it is necessary to *suspend* or *neutralise* the universal synthesis-by-fusion that runs through all our experiences, binding them into a straightforward experience of the lifeworld. Husserl developed a method for doing this and called it the *phenomenological epoché* (ibid.). After the successful use of the *epoché*, one becomes sober from one's drunkenness in the world, and comes to see that, underneath the natural perspective there exists a different perspective—the *transcendental perspective*. The *epoché* will be taken up as an explicit theme in section (iv). For now its possibility will be taken for granted. The next task will be to bring forth some of the key characteristics of the transcendental perspective that the *epoché* is claimed to disclose.

### iii. THE TRANSCENDENTAL PERSPECTIVE

In the midst of a dream: I am aware of myself as being a particular dream character—living with and struggling against, other things that I find within the dream world. When I either become *lucid* or remember the dream later on, however, I *can* become aware of myself in an entirely new way. This is the awareness that the whole dream world—including

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<sup>48</sup> Of course, I can learn to play the piano. But as this possibility is not at this time a possibility of my character, it is not a potentiality (potentialities are the possibilities that 'really' pertain to my character). More needs to be said about this but this is not the place to do that. I am grateful to Brett Allen for raising this issue with me.

the object that I identify as myself—is manifesting or appearing to my dreaming consciousness. The ‘place’ now in question is obviously not just another part of the dream; it is something else altogether. A shift in perspective has taken place.

According to what is arguably the key idea of Husserlian phenomenology—the natural perspective is subject to a similar shift. After the *epoché*, I come to the realisation that the lifeworld—and everything within it, including my psycho-physical self—is an appearance to ‘my’ consciousness. I become aware of myself as the ‘dative’ of manifestation.<sup>49</sup> As a phenomenologists, I go from objects that I straightforwardly encounter in the world (the *what*) to the appearances that make those objects possible (the *how*) (Zahavi, 2017, p. 57).<sup>50</sup> For you to get a taste of the shift, try holding the thought “*All of this, including, this thing here that I identify with myself, is appearing to my consciousness*”; but please do not allow

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<sup>49</sup> According to Overgaard (2004, p. 45), Thomas Prufer was probably the first to coin the expression ‘dative of manifestation’.

<sup>50</sup> There are different interpretations of the philosophical significance of the transcendental perspective. According to the metaphysical interpretation: the transcendental perspective is a whole new dimension of being, a dimension that was never completely absent—indeed it could not be—but which was previously covered up and hidden. But it is also possible to put aside all metaphysical interpretations, and understand the shift as a purely epistemological or methodological procedure. According to this interpretation, the transcendental perspective is a condition of possibility for knowing or having a representation of the world; here all metaphysical questions are ‘bracketed’ and the phenomenologists is only concerned to decipher the structure of that without which there would be no world *for us*. Both interpretations have been defended in the secondary literature (Zahavi, 2017, Chapter 3). While I am drawn towards the metaphysical interpretation, I do not think (as Husserl arguably thought and as he is certainly often represented as having thought) that the metaphysical interpretation necessarily leads to transcendental idealism (if that view is interpreted as implying that transcendental consciousness is a necessary and sufficient condition of the existence of the world). For it could be that while the transcendental perspective is necessary, it is not sufficient to account for the being of the world. For the following purposes, this issue can be left aside. I would like to thank Peter Poellner for encouraging me to think about this.

yourself to be satisfied too easily that you have successfully undergone the shift in perspective, or that you have truly understood it. Just think of how radical the difference is between being absorbed in the dream world, on the one hand, and then becoming lucid in the dream, on the other. Why should the shift from the natural to the transcendental perspective be any less radical? Indeed, should we not expect it to be even more radical?

*What form does awareness take in the transcendental perspective?* I believe that transcendental awareness can be described as a *creative* or *free* self-awareness. While Husserl himself does not focus on this aspect of the transcendental as intensely as some of his existentialist successors (and especially Jean Paul-Sartre), nevertheless I believe that the root of the existentialist's account of freedom can be found in Husserl's thought.<sup>51</sup> While I cannot here give the topic the attention that it deserves, the idea that transcendental awareness is free or creative in a very special sense follows from Husserl's description of appearances—which are dependent on our possibilities, as which will be discussed shortly. To illustrate the sense in which transcendental consciousness is free, it will help to consider the dream analogy again. From the ordinary, dreaming perspective, the creativity of the dreaming self is limited by the potentialities of its character: what I apprehend this object that I identify as myself as being capable of. But in coming to the realisation that “this is all a dream” (becoming lucid) I can become aware of myself as creative in an entirely new way. I can now come to an understanding that the whole dream world—including my dream

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<sup>51</sup> Edie (1984) writes that Husserl's account of...

... transcendental which enables me to take even myself as an object, is the most fundamental root of the later existentialist conception of freedom, a conception which was orchestrated by Jean-Paul Sartre both in his *The Transcendence of the ego* and in *Being and Nothingness*.

On a similar theme, see: MacDonald (2001).

character—is ‘produced’ by my dreaming consciousness. Or, at the very least, I now understand that my consciousness has much more of a say in how the dream appears—about the structure of the dream world—compared to the natural dreaming perspective. In becoming lucid, I am no longer bound up with my situation and the ‘potentialities’ of my dream character (at least not in the way that I was previously). I am now free to break down and recreate the entire dream world in an entirely new way.<sup>52</sup> (Note, though, that even transcendental freedom or creativity is not absolute; it is limited by such factors as my history and knowledge, by my ‘facticity’—I could not, for example, create the dream worlds that Albert Einstein could. But it is important to keep in mind that such limitations are not identical to the limits of my dream character.)

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<sup>52</sup> A lot more work needs to be done in order to understand the precise meaning of the kind of freedom that the lucid—and the transcendental—perspective opens up. It is not the case (commonly at least) that in virtue of entering the lucid (or transcendental) perspective one suddenly acquires the ability to create the dream world in any way that one likes. In an important sense, the dream world continues to resist my projects and I continue to be at the mercy of its happenings (but not in the way that I am when I identify myself with the dream character). The minimal point that I am trying to make here is the following. In entering the lucid perspective I *can* (if I reflect in the right way) come to the understanding that what I previously took to be ‘external’ objects (with more or less determinate properties that do not depend on what I think and believe about them) are in fact—at least to a large extent—dependent on my (dreaming) consciousness. From the natural dreaming perspective, I believe (implicitly) that the only way to change the ‘external’ dream things is by modifying them mediately through my dream body. The lucid perspective opens up the possibility of understanding that I can alter the dream world by simply changing the beliefs that I hold and the projects that I pursue (if for example I acquire the beliefs and projects of an astronomer, then the way that extraterrestrial phenomena appear in my dreams will also alter). Something analogous is true of the transcendental perspective. For the classical description of transcendental freedom along roughly these lines, see: Sartre (2003a, Part Four, Chapter One, Section I.) I would like to thank Brett Allen for raising this issue. Let me also note that transcendental freedom must not be identified with the kind of freedom that mindfulness opens up. But this is not a theme that I will explicitly address in this work.



Above I spoke about the essential role that the dreaming mind has in the constitution of the dream world. This was meant to serve as an analogy for the essential role that the transcendental consciousness plays in the constitution of the lifeworld and the objects that populate it. What does this constitution of objects by transcendental consciousness amount to? This coffee cup will serve as an example for our explorations.

From the natural perspective: the cup is an object that has its place in the lifeworld, e.g. it is now on the table, and later, when I have finished drinking from it, it will continue its existence in the cupboard. As a worldly actuality the cup has its own unique range of potentialities (e.g. it can store coffee, it can break and so on). From the transcendental perspective the cup is not *given* in this way. After the shift, the actual cup is ‘replaced’ by something that can be described as a *cup manifestation* or *appearance*. The cup is now only what it *appears* to be *in* and *for* (transcendental) consciousness. After the shift, we are no longer concerned with *what* the cup is but with *how* it appears. In order to illustrate this difference: contrast how you relate to a cup in the context of an ordinary dream, on the one hand, with how it appears in a lucid dream, on the other. With the onset of lucidity, let us assume, the cup did not vanish into some kind of dream ether. It continues to be there. But there has been a radical shift in its very *sense* or *meaning*. For example, while lucid, when you are no longer dreaming of the cup, the sense that it continues to exist somewhere else in the dream (such as in some dream cupboard that is not currently appearing) is *not* a part of your experience—for you know that there is nothing more to the dream world other than what is appearing to your (lucid) awareness. From the lucid perspective, for the “cup to exist in the cupboard” is for you to sense the possibility of giving rise to a continuum of experiences; it is to have the sense that I can “...walk, then reach, then open the cupboard and retrieve the cup”. “To retrieve the cup from the cupboard” means to set into motion a series of experiences that, through their synthetic interconnection, constitute the sense that

the cup was somewhere beforehand, and that you are now holding it in your hand. Everything now becomes a matter of (transcendental) experiences, and syntheses of experiences, that *constitute* the sense that things endure even when they are not being experienced. Something analogous, according to Husserl, is going on in the shift from the natural to the transcendental perspective; we go from objects (broadly understood) to the appearances that, in their synthetic connections, make them possible. What we need here are two ways of speaking, which will help us clarify the occasions when we are making references to (transcendental) appearances and (actual or natural) objects. In referring to appearances I will resort to double quotation marks (as I have already been doing): “I turn the cup in my hand”. “I place it back down on the table”. “I look up at the sky”.

Here we see that—even from the transcendental perspective—change is constantly taking place. The shift has not done away with the stream of consciousness; appearances continue to flow and to follow one another. But the meaning of ‘experience’ has now been radically altered; what were previously ‘mundane experiences’ have now become ‘transcendental experiences’. At first, this may strike you as trivial: “If before and after the shift of perspective” you may wonder, “...we are left with the stream of consciousness, then is this so called ‘shift of perspective’ so much ado about nothing?” But what appears as a trivial difference is in fact of central philosophical importance, as Husserl (1964, p. 32) writes: “we have here one of those seemingly trivial nuances that make a decisive difference between right and wrong paths to philosophy”. To help further alleviate the discomfort, recall briefly what was already said above. The mundane stream of consciousness contains the transcendental stream within itself (although the latter is covered up in the context of ordinary life). From the other direction, the transcendental stream takes on the mundane form with the onset of the natural attitude—the universal *synthesis-by-fusion* that binds the transcendental experience together in a certain way. This makes it unsurprising that, after

suspending the operation of this synthesis through the *epoché*, what we have left is (in some sense) the ‘same’ thing as before. For what remains is the very crux of the mundane stream—an integral part from which certain layers have been ‘removed’ or put out of operation.

The time has now come to consider the *possibility* structure of the transcendental perspective. This brings us to the idea of the *transcendental horizon*, an idea that will play a crucial role in the remainder of this work.

#### iv. TRANSCEDENAL HORIZON: THE HORIZON OF OUR POSSIBILITIES

To illustrate what the transcendental horizon is, let us go back to the “coffee cup”—an appearance that is structured by the sense that *I can* “hold it in my hand”, “fill it up with coffee”, “put it back down on the table”, “articulate it into parts” and so on. In other words, the appearance ‘carries’ with it a *horizon* of possible intentional experiences, experiences that are not now actual but which are given as *able-to-be-actualised*. Here it is crucial to distinguish the transcendental horizon itself from the intentional possibilities that *fill it* and the latter from the actual intentional experience that is now occurring in the (transcendental) stream of consciousness. To illustrate, consider the *actual* experience of “seeing this cup”. This is not itself an intentional possibility; it is not given as an unactualised possibility in the horizon of the appearance (as is the experience of “picking the cup up”): it is an actual intentional experience in which the cup is given. While actual intentional experiences must be distinguished from both the transcendental horizon and the intentional possibilities that fill it, actual experiences are *founded* on the transcendental horizon (and the intentional possibilities that fill it) and could not exist without it (the converse is probably true too). In other words, whenever there is an actual experience of something there is at the same time a

horizon of intentional possibilities.<sup>53</sup>

The transcendental horizon is filled in by different *kinds* of intentional possibilities, examples of which include: the possibility of perceiving, judging, remembering and so on. As suggested by the notion “I can”, for Husserl intentional possibilities are practical possibilities. As has been noted in the secondary literature, however, the sense in which this is so is not altogether clear. And some, like J.M. Mohanty (1999), have resisted the suggestion. Mohanty (ibid. p. 165) writes: “...there is something dissatisfying in subsuming all acts that generate possibilities under the concept of practical possibility”. The difficulty, as Mohanty sees it, arises from the fact that what we usually mean by ‘practical’ is closely tied to kinaesthetic sensations and possibilities of movement. But it is not clear that such intentional possibilities as imagining, reasoning, doing phenomenological analysis and so on, are bound up with kinaesthesia and movement in a way that would warrant speaking of them as ‘practical’ in the strict sense of the term. Mohanty (ibid.) continues: “...there would appear to be higher forms of “I can”-consciousness which are not tied up to corporeality in the manner that kinaesthesia is”. Mohanty (ibid.) goes on to suggest that perhaps we could resolve this issue by introducing the idea of “theoretical” as opposed to pure practice, but in my opinion he ends the discussion without a satisfactory account of what makes intentional possibilities practical. In the same spirit, Andrea Zhok (2016) speaks of the *I can* as “...a

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<sup>53</sup> That Husserl would probably approve of these distinctions (which, as far as I know, he does not explicitly draw) finds support in the following statements. Husserl (1970, p. 159) writes that “[i]mplied in the particular perception of the thing is a whole “horizon” of non-active and yet co-functioning manners of appearance and syntheses of validity”, that “...[t]he individual thing in perception has meaning only through an open horizon of “possible perceptions” insofar as what is actually perceived “points” to a systematic multiplicity of all possible perceptual exhibiting belonging to it harmoniously...” (ibid.), and that “[t]he total multiplicity of manners of givenness, however, is a horizon of possible realizable processes, as opposed to the actual process, and as such it belongs to each experience, or rather to the intention which is operative within it” (ibid. p. 167).

dimension of powers and therefore of possibilities which is hard to consider “practical”, if we take what is practical to depend on will and valuation.” In what sense, if at all, then, are intentional possibilities practical? Zhok (ibid.), I believe, points in the direction of the right answer when he writes that “...practical possibility is essentially tied to *motivations*, and in this sense it is itself a motivated possibility”.

As I see it, what makes intentional possibilities practical is that they are founded on another kind of possibility, which I have been calling ‘projects’. Examples of projects include the possibility of enjoying a cup of coffee, repairing the house, becoming a philosopher and so on. My view is that there is a layer of the transcendental horizon that is filled in by projects—a layer presupposed by the layer filled in by intentional possibilities—and this layer of projects determines the structure of intentional possibilities themselves.<sup>54</sup> This means that the appearance of something as a “coffee cup” is not only structured by the feeling that I can “lift it”, “turn it around”, “fill it” and so on—all of which are intentional possibilities. Projects (such as the having this writing done) play an essential role in determining the structure of this appearance; and it is in light of projects that appearances have an instrumental dimension (for example, the “cup of coffee” is given as *to-be-drunk-from*). It is this bond with projects, I propose, that makes intentional possibilities ‘practical possibilities’. For the following purposes, ‘our possibilities’ will be used as an umbrella term to encompass both intentional possibilities and projects. The crucial point here is: that the transcendental horizon is filled in by our possibilities (projects and intentional possibilities). It is now time to ask: how are we aware of our possibilities?

Note, first, that this is not the same question as: *how are we aware of the transcendental horizon as such* (the structure that is filled in by our possibilities)? Leaving

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<sup>54</sup> I also believe that the converse is true: that projects are founded on intentional possibilities. In other words, intentional possibilities and projects are *co-founded*. But I cannot go into the details here.

that aside for now, the above question splits up into two questions. *How are we aware of intentional possibilities? How are we aware of projects?* Husserl's answer to the first question is that we are aware of intentional possibilities through the feeling or consciousness of "*I can*". I believe that this 'feeling' is at the same time an understanding. Intentional possibilities are not felt in some general and indeterminate way. The awareness of these possibilities involves an implicit understanding of the *differences* between the kinds of intentional possibilities that fill in the transcendental horizon: of the experiences that I can, and cannot, actualise. Moreover, the understanding now in question cannot be just another element of the transcendental stream; it is not something that comes and goes sporadically. This is because every actual experience (as discussed above) is founded on the transcendental horizon, and therefore on the understanding that discloses the transcendental horizon. The next question is: is the understanding that discloses intentional possibilities the same understanding that discloses projects?

While I cannot go into the details here, I do not think that it is. I believe (again under the influence of Heidegger) that projects are understood in a distinct way. I will call this understanding 'projective understanding'. If the feeling that discloses intentional possibility can be described as "*I can*", then we could describe the feeling that discloses our projects as the feeling of "*I am*"—I say this under the influence of the view that in some sense a person (the transcendental self and also the psycho-physical self) can be defined by their projects.<sup>55</sup> This opens up the important task of working out the precise nature of the dynamic relationship between the projective understanding and the understanding of intentional possibilities, between the "*I am*" and the "*I can*"—the two inseparable dimensions of the transcendental horizon. But that task will not be undertaken here. For our purposes, the crucial point is that the transcendental horizon—which is filled in by our possibilities—is

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<sup>55</sup> See: Sartre (2003a, Part IV, Chapter Two, Section I.)

‘disclosed’ or ‘constituted’ in a certain kind of understanding that does not occur sporadically within it but which is its essential and omnipresent structure. The next crucial point is that the natural and transcendental perspectives are particular *modes* or *configurations* of the transcendental horizon.

Husserl (1970a, p. 176) writes that “...objective world-life is only a particular mode of the transcendental life which forever constitutes the world...”, a mode where one “...lives in “infatuation”, so to speak, with the poles of unity without being aware of the constituting multiplicities belonging essentially to them...” I interpret this in the following way (which may or may not accord with Husserl’s true intentions). The natural perspective (which is what Husserl is speaking about here under the title ‘objective world-life’) is a mode of the transcendental horizon—a mode where the intentional possibilities *crystallise* and thereby take the form of the lifeworld and the objects that populate it. In this ‘crystallised mode’, the transcendental horizon (and the possibilities that fill it) is itself lost or forgotten in the process of constituting the world. In choosing this expression, I had in mind the image of water crystallising into ice, of something fluid and flexible becoming solid and rigid. Analogously, here the *fluid* transcendental horizon—a characteristic that reflects its creative quality—crystallises into the rigid world of determinate objects.<sup>56</sup> And, I believe, it is only

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<sup>56</sup> It could be argued that in order to pursue the realization of our projects it is necessary to apprehend them as something foreign and external to ourselves. And this is exactly the form that they take when the transcendental horizon crystallises into the ‘external’ objects and the lifeworld. Lusthaus (2003, pp. 3-4) makes a similar point in the following way: “Ironically, in order that our projected images and ideas become graspable and appropriable, we have to dispossess them, i.e., disown and disavow them as our own projections. If we recognized them as already ours, pursuing them further would be redundant. Only by pretending that they are not ours, can we appropriate them. We use all the means and strategies at our cognitive disposal such as language, sensation, reason, belief, willful ignorance, hedonistic tone to maintain this pretense.”

when the transcendental horizon crystallises in this way that the previously discussed *synthesis-by-fusion* comes to be; it is only now that transcendental experiences are synthesized into mundane experience of actual objectivities.<sup>57</sup> But the transcendental horizon also contains the possibility of *de-crystallising*—an event where the transcendental horizon (and the possibilities that fill it) comes into view as such, and where the rigid world is disclosed as being *founded* on something quite different and much more fluid. The image here is of ice melting into water, of something solid becoming fluid and flexible. For the transcendental horizon to be in the *de-crystallised* mode is for one to be standing in the transcendental perspective.

This brings up another crucial difference. Recall the earlier distinction between the absorbed-in ordinary life and the natural perspective (the objectification of that life). A similar distinction must now be drawn between the absorbed-in transcendental perspective (the absorption in phenomena *as constituted*), on the one hand, and the objectified transcendental perspective, on the other hand. To speak of the ‘transcendental perspective’ is already to distance oneself from it. As to the perspective that allows the transcendental perspective to come into view—that will be discussed in the next chapter. For now, when I speak of the ‘transcendental perspective’, what I have in mind is the absorbed-in transcendental perspective.

Crystallisation and de-crystallisation are possibly quite rare and unfamiliar events. But analogous structures are at work in more localised and familiar experiences, such as illusions, which we can consider for the sake of illustration. Consider the experience where a piece of rope appears as a snake. When the illusion is exposed, and we reflect on what was

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<sup>57</sup> This implies that the synthesis-by-fusion is not the basic characteristics of the natural perspective, for it itself is founded on the phenomenon of crystallization. A lot more work is required to elucidate the phenomenological nature of the relation between the crystallised transcendental horizon and synthesis-by-fusion. But that is a task for another day.



involved in the earlier experience of the snake, we can become conscious of the role that our possibilities play in constituting the snake appearance. Reflecting back, it becomes clear that the appearance of this *something* as a snake involved a whole range of intentional possibilities: of walking around it in a very particular, measured way, or else of stopping dead in my tracks, that if I stamp my feet on the ground that it will slither away and so on. And it also involved the experience of certain projects, such as the project of saving my life and keeping myself out of danger. In reflecting back like this, I become aware of the essential role that such possibilities play in constituting the snake appearance. However, before I become aware of the illusory nature of the experience, I do not experience all this. Rather, in ordinary, absorbed experience, the horizon of possibilities can be described as *crystallising* into the snake that I see right there, with its actual frightening teeth, and its actual and intimidating way of occupying actual worldly space. According to the above interpretation of Husserl's view, in an analogous manner the transcendental horizon crystallises into this all-encompassing world, including all the objects that appear within it. This is the natural perspective. But the transcendental horizon contains the possibility of de-crystallising—where the horizon becomes visible in its function of constituting the lifeworld. This is the transcendental perspective. To nurture the possibility of de-crystallisation is to practice the phenomenological *epoché*, as I will now explain in more detail.

## V. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EPOCHÉ

I will now formulate what will probably strike many as an idiosyncratic definition of the phenomenological *epoché*. The *epoché*, according to the interpretation now to be developed, can be understood in two complementary ways, depending on the mode in which the transcendental horizon happens to be in. If it is de-crystallised, then the *epoché* can be

understood as the project of preventing crystallization. If the transcendental horizon is in the crystallised mode then the *epoché* is the project of realizing de-crystallisation. *What does the epoché, thus understood, presuppose? What are its conditions of possibility?* To approach these questions, I would like to begin with a dilemma: *what could possibly motivate such a strange practice as this?*

Eugene Fink (1933), who may have been the first to note this dilemma, wrote that as long as one remains in the natural perspective one will find no reason to practice the *epoché*. Sartre (2004b, p. 102) comments on this as follows: “In fact, this natural attitude is perfectly coherent. There one will find none of those contradictions which, according to Plato, lead the philosopher to effect a philosophical conversion. Thus, the *epoché* appears in the phenomenology of Husserl as a miracle.” Arguably, however, the issue in question is treated most thoroughly in Lenkowski’s (1978) excellent article, ‘*What Is Husserl’s Epoché: The Problem of The Beginning of Philosophy in the Husserlian Context*’.

For Lenkowski, the issue takes on the form of the following dilemma. On the one hand, the *epoché* puts the absoluteness of the world into question. In my terms: by bringing about de-crystallisation, the *epoché* shows the world to be *founded* on the transcendental horizon. The purpose of the *epoché* is neither to annihilate nor to doubt the existence of the world, but to disclose its *founded* character: to show it as something abstract and dependent, a moment in a larger whole and not, as it initially pretends to be—*self-sufficient*. Anything that we might encounter within-the-world presupposes the belief in the absoluteness of the world. It is as if every worldly object exclaims, “the world is absolutely real!” But, at the same time, for something to motivate the *epoché* it would have to also say “the world is not absolutely real” or at least it would have to push us in that direction. But what could possibly speak in such a contradictory way? According to the first horn of the dilemma, then, there appears to be a radical discontinuity between the *epoché* and all intra-worldly,

mundane events.

But, on the other hand, if nothing within-the-world is able to serve as a motive for the *epoché*, then its very possibility becomes a mystery: how could we ever come to suspend our belief in the absoluteness of the world, if nothing that shows up in the natural perspective moves us in that direction? The *epoché* must have a motive, otherwise its very possibility turns into an enigma, but this motive cannot stem from any mundane, intra-worldly phenomenon. This brings up another puzzle. That which motivates the *epoché* must already have put the world into question; the motivating event must already have de-crystallised the transcendental horizon, for only then could it serve as a motive at all. But, if the transcendental horizon is de-crystallised prior to the execution of the *epoché*, what purpose would the *epoché* serve? It would seem the work we need the *epoché* to do has already been done.

This is how Lenkowski escapes the dilemma. Yes, the motivating event must have already brought about de-crystallisation and put the absoluteness of the world in question. But this is, precisely, an *event*, a passive *occurrence* that happens to us. Something arises interrupting the familiar flow of the world, revealing its groundless and dependent nature. We fall into a kind of perplexity: “Falling into perplexity involves the slipping away of the totality of what is accepted and taken for granted for everyday understanding” (Lenkowski, 1978). It is as if the solidity and rigidity of things is swept away by something outside of us, by an alien force. We can speak of this event as a *passive* de-crystallisation. Because we never encounter the world except through some particular entity within-the-world, passive de-crystallisation will always be experienced as the de-crystallisation of *something*; something which loses its familiar character and strikes us as strange, unfamiliar and groundless. It may be the root of a chestnut tree, as it was for the protagonist in Sartre’s (1964) *Nausea*, that suddenly sheds the human meaning that we have imposed upon it and

strikes us as something alien and unfathomable. But, at the same time, de-crystallisation is never constrained to a particular entity—for then it would be more like an illusion—but rather through that entity the absoluteness of the world itself is put into question. Correlatively, *passive* crystallisation designates the return of familiarity, to a way of life where we once again gain a foothold in things.

This brings us back to the other issue: if de-crystallisation is an event that precedes and motivates the *epoché*, then what is the purpose of the *epoché*? This is my way of phrasing the question that Lenkowski (1978) answers by saying that it is only by the means of “...such an act of will, such an act of self-generated effort, that this return of familiarity can be prevented”. The insight here (which I take to be a good one) is that the *epoché* is the practice of *intentionality* and *actively* preventing crystallisation: “...once having fallen out of the world—we tend to be pulled back into our prior understanding, our familiarity” (ibid.). The *epoché* is the project of resisting this tendency of the world to pull us back in. Here we find a “...constant tension between the power of what is taken for granted in the natural perspective (the power of “common sense”) and the opposite attitude of the “disinterested spectator”, which is “...extremely difficult to carry out in a radical way...” (ibid). Having occurred, it is impossible to know how long the de-crystallised state will last; the phenomenon is beyond our control—it is a part of nature (broadly understood).

From one angle, then, the *epoché* is the *project* of preventing crystallisation. But it can also be conceived as the project of realising de-crystallisation, which may have the same outcome as preventing crystallisation—i.e. of keeping us anchored in the transcendental perspective—but which is nevertheless qualitatively different. It does not seem to me that these are exclusive descriptions: the *epoché* is both, depending on the state that the transcendental horizon is in (if it is crystallised, then the *epoché* is the project of realising the de-crystallised state, if it is already de-crystallised, then it is the project of preventing

crystallisation).

In passing, I will note a new dilemma that arises when the *epoché* is conceived in this way. According to the above picture, the *epoché* is a projection of a certain kind of context onto the transcendental horizon, a context wherein this horizon is pushed towards de-crystallisation, or away from crystallisation. But is not such a context precisely a *world*, in the phenomenological sense that we have been discussing? If so then in what sense, if at all, have we escaped the world and the natural perspective through the *epoché*? I will let these questions rest for the time being.

In the next section, I begin drawing out the elements of the above discussion that will allow us to construct a bridge that will take us from the *epoché* (and the other Husserlian ideas that we have been discussing) towards a phenomenology of mindfulness and related phenomena.

## vi. THE OPEN HORIZON: THE HORIZON OF THINGLY POSSIBILITIES

I will begin with the observation that crystallisation and de-crystallisation are *intrinsic possibilities* of the transcendental horizon. Just as sight and only sight has the possibility of disclosing colour, so (arguably) it is the transcendental horizon and only it that has the possibility of crystallising and of de-crystallising.<sup>58</sup> The crucial question is: *what kind of a possibility is in question here?*

Crystallisations and de-crystallisation are not intentional experiences. They are modes of that which is presupposed by all intentional experiences—the transcendental horizon. It follows that they are not intentional possibilities either; unlike intentional possibilities,

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<sup>58</sup> It is not obvious that only the transcendental horizon possesses the possibility of crystallisation and de-crystallisation. For it could be that these are possibilities of all horizons (and not just the transcendental). I must leave this question alone for now. For the present purposes, this does not matter very much.

crystallization and de-crystallisation do not *fill* the transcendental horizon but are its *possible* modes. Are they perhaps projects? Crystallisation and de-crystallisation can take the form of projects (as they do in the practice of the *epoché*). But in order for these possibilities to be ‘projected’, they must have been disclosed first. The farmer must first come to understand that the tree has the possibility of giving fruit, before nurturing this possibility by bringing it into actuality faster than nature would have done if she were left to herself. Likewise, in order to nurture the possibilities offered by the transcendental horizon, these possibilities must have first been discovered or disclosed in some way. And the event of *passive* de-crystallisation is an occasion for such a discovery to be made. The question now becomes: *what kind of a possibility is at work in the event of passive de-crystallisation?*

In order to address this question, it will help to first consider a different phenomenon that exhibits a similar structure. Consider the relationship between a straightforward perception and a categorial intuition. According to Husserl’s analysis (which I will consider in some depth in Part II, Chapter III, Section i.), a categorial intuition is both *founded* on and *originates* from a straightforward perception. Before I explicitly see that *this cup is black*, I must first (straightforwardly) see the cup. This means that when a categorial intuition comes into being as an actual experience, it does so in virtue of having *unfolded-from* a straightforward perception. The crucial question here is: what is the possibility structure of this ‘unfolding’—I am speaking this way for a reason, which will become clear in due course? Is the categorial intuition an intentional possibility of the straightforward perception? In one sense it is; for I sense the straightforward perception as something that I can articulate into parts (which means that I sense the possibility of categorial intuition in its transcendental horizon). But to say that the “straightforward perception contains the categorial intuition as an intrinsic possibility” is not to say, “that it is something that I can articulate into parts”. The straightforward perception can develop into a categorial intuition;

it *offers* that possibility. The *possibility* of becoming a categorial intuition is *intrinsic* to the straightforward perception; it is a straightforward perception and not, say, a feeling or a rock, that *can* become a categorial intuition. The same cannot be said about the cup; while the categorial intuition is also given in the horizon of the cup as an intentional possibility, the cup does *not* offer the possibility of a categorial intuition in the way that the straightforward perception does. Here we can say: the straightforward perception has a horizon of its own (in contrast to the horizon that we impose upon it), and this horizon is filled in by its own possibilities—of which the possibility of becoming a categorial intuition is an example. For reasons to be given later, I will call this horizon the ‘open horizon’ and the possibilities that fill it ‘thingly possibilities’.

Applying this understanding to the topic at hand, we can say that crystallisation and de-crystallisation are thingly possibilities of the transcendental horizon. One of the key questions that we have been pursuing is: what conditions the possibility of the *epoché*? What kind of possibility does the *epoché* presuppose? The answer can now be given: the *epoché* presupposes thingly possibilities. It does so because it is the practice of nurturing the thingly possibilities of the transcendental horizon itself, possibilities that must be disclosed before such a practice can take place. What is true of straightforward perception and the transcendental horizon is true more generally. Phenomena have their own way of unfolding towards the future, their own rhythm and patterns of becoming. The future states, or the future phenomena that these phenomena become, are outlined in the phenomena themselves as their *thingly possibilities*. This naturally opens up the further question: *from what perspectives do thingly possibility come into view?* To answer this question is to take a crucial step towards a phenomenological account of mindfulness. Before turning to that task, which we will do in the next chapter, I will conclude this chapter with the following remarks.

As thingly possibilities, crystallisation and de-crystallisation are ‘natural’ phenomena that come in and out of existence in their own time, in accordance with their own rhythm. Now, if the transcendental horizon is crystallised, and a desire or project arises to alter it to the de-crystallised mode, a kind of a tension will arise from this mismatch between how things actually are and how we desire them to be. The desire to remain in the transcendental perspective and the aversion towards falling back into the natural (into the mundane and the familiar) can even manifest as a kind of emotional block. I think that this stems from the fear of unclarity and uncertainty; it is the intellectual mind panicking at losing the perspective that promised ultimate philosophical clarity. I am pretty sure that Husserl suffered from it.<sup>59</sup> I empathise with him. As a practicing phenomenologist, I deeply feel the appeal of the kind of clarity on offer in phenomenological practice, and the sheer wonder that arises when we discover a deep richness in something that up to then looked so simple and mundane (something that we usually take for granted). But to repeat a simple fact of life: nature has its own ‘desires’, its own rhythm and its own time for bringing its possibilities into being; and when it closes up—when the transcendental horizon crystallises—a longing may arise for the state of clarity; a longing for the de-crystallised state.

I don’t know about others, but this caused me no small degree of distress in a period when I was intensively engaging in phenomenological work. For example, I can remember reading Sartre’s magnificent descriptions of the *Look* in *Being and Nothingness*, and marveling at the phenomenon of intersubjectivity. Something that I of course experienced all the time but which I mistook for something relatively simple and straightforward, and therefore never gave it much attention, but which, while following Sartre’s description,

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<sup>59</sup> One of Husserl’s diary entries reads: “I have been thoroughly tormented from lack of clarity and from doubt that wavers back and forth...Only one need absorbs me: I must win clarity, else I cannot live, I cannot bear life unless I can believe that I shall achieve it.” Quoted by Spiegelberg (1965, pp. 81-82).



appeared as something deeply complex, a true source of wonder! Reading Husserl had a similar effect. As did my own attempts to describe aspects of my own experience.<sup>60</sup> In these moments I had the wonderful, awe inspiring feeling that I would never see the world in the same way again—that I had finally found a way of escaping from that dreaded thing called ‘the mundane’. But the feeling never lasted. Not long after I put down the phenomenological text, or walked away from my own investigations, the world and others returned in all their familiarity and mundaneness. All I would need to do was walk down the street and there I was again, absorbed in the world, experiencing people and others in the way I always did. When that happened, I was forced (if I was able to muster the willpower after the betrayal) to execute the descriptions again, to try and rediscover the mystery and depth in the ordinary.

This aversion to the mundane—which I carry at the bottom of my heart—is rooted in the feeling that I developed when I was a child: when being ‘integrated’ into the world of adult concerns, and hence pulled out of the wonders of childhood (the never-ending mysteries that I found in the forest, underneath the giant oak trees, or in the silent presence of the animals, such as squirrels and wild boars, that surrounded and kept an eye out on us). We (my friends and I) tirelessly explored that forest from morning to night. Then I would return to the warmth of my grandmother’s house (where the smell of freshly baked bread would saturate the atmosphere). And I would be greeted with warmth and love, oblivious to all the painful human emotions that were in fact simmering under the surface in our family; also in the general social atmosphere of Yugoslavia at the time. That, soon, war would break out in Yugoslavia, and that I would, because of my mixed cultural background, suffer an alienation from my neighbours—in fact from those very same friends with whom in earlier years I called the forest “home”—is not insignificant. Perhaps it is the reason I felt the line

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<sup>60</sup> For an example, see: Copelj (2016)

between childhood and adolescence and then adulthood so strongly. Whatever the reasons are, I have always looked at my life as being divided into the mystery and wonder of childhood, on the one hand, and the misery and wretchedness of later life, on the other. I always had a deep longing in me, a restlessness even, to return to something beautiful and mysterious, which I always opposed to the mundane and familiar. When I discovered phenomenology (I had the feeling even earlier when I discovered philosophy, I especially recall a class on Descartes's *Meditations* by a wonderful teacher Aubrey Townsend) I thought that I had finally found the key to that door. But, alas, it was not to be. While phenomenology (understood as involving the practice of the *epoché*) does point the way to something like what I was looking for, and while I certainly did get glimpses of it, as phenomenologists, we must come to recognise the impermanence of the kind of clarity that is on offer here. Just as we awaken from the natural to the transcendental perspective, so we must allow ourselves to go back to sleep—when the rhythm of the things themselves so dictates. Only then will we be able to make the next step in the right direction. Perhaps this is the deep truth behind Merleau-Ponty's (2002, p. xxvii) profound statement that “[t]he most important lesson of the reduction is the impossibility of complete reduction”.

Is this where the story ends? That we must give up our craving to live from the transcendental perspective. That we must allow ourselves to be thrown about—from naivety to clarity and back again, when Nature so wills it? Or do we perhaps, in the spirit of Merleau-Ponty, accept the dialectic and try to find a kind of harmony in this ceaseless back and forth? In a sense, I agree with Merleau-Ponty, that we must find a common ground between the natural and the transcendental perspectives, without falling into the wrongheaded project of trying to reduce the one to the other. The task as I see it, is to build a bridge between the transcendental and the natural perspectives (including its offshoot, the natural sciences), without getting stuck in the wrongheaded project of building a tower—

where one of the perspectives is built upon, and thereby reduced, to the other.<sup>61</sup> To put it differently, what we are looking for is a deeper kind of unity that will make sense of the fragmented relation between the two perspectives. However, contrary to Merleau-Ponty and his followers, I do not think that naturalism (broadly construed) and transcendental phenomenology equip us with all the tools necessary for bridge building; the solution is not to simply recognise the validity of both approaches, even though that is called for also. The missing piece of the puzzle, I believe, is to be found in the practice of contemplation. I am open to the idea that this role can be fulfilled by different contemplative traditions, however in this work I am focusing on this practice as described in the original teachings of the Buddha (as found in the Pali Canon).

Having become familiar with some of the main features of Husserlian phenomenology, and having understood them in the way we did, we are now finally in a position to attempt to fill in our initial pre-phenomenological sketch of mindfulness, and related phenomena.

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<sup>61</sup> In formulating the matter in this way I have been influenced by my reading of Piet Hut's wonderful forthcoming book titled '*Everything is Possible: the No-Limits Working Hypothesis*'.

## CHAPTER II:

### *A Phenomenology of Mindfulness, and Related Phenomena*

I proposed at the end of Part I that mindfulness is a feeling of being. Feelings of beings are differentiated by the kinds of possibility that different members of this class open up or disclose (and by those that they close). But back then I lacked the tools with which to approach the natural follow up question: what kind of a possibility does mindfulness—as the feeling of being *tuned-in*—open up? The last chapter brought a new kind of possibility into view: *thingly possibility*. Putting the two together, it can now be said: *mindfulness is the feeling of being tuned-in to thingly possibilities*. With this proposition, the discussion takes a firm step towards a phenomenological account of mindfulness, and related phenomena. In order to take the next, this chapter will begin by raising the question: *from what perspective do thingly possibilities come into view?*

Section (i) tries to show that thingly possibilities come into view from a perspective that does not feature (explicitly at least) in Husserlian phenomenology. I call this perspective the ‘open perspective’. The first section also brings forth certain structures of the open perspective, the most important of which is the *open horizon*: the horizon that is *filled-in* by thingly possibilities. On this basis, section (ii) begins to fill in the pre-phenomenological sketch by refining the initial definition of the practice of cultivating mindfulness: the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*. *Tuning-out* is now understood as the movement of distancing oneself from the transcendental horizon altogether. *Tuning-in* is a positive movement towards the open horizon. This allows section (iii) to define mindfulness as the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open horizon. This account opens the door towards a description of other phenomena that are closely related to mindfulness. Section (iv), articulates a complementary description of concentration as a specific modification of the

feeling of being *tuned-in*, where the open horizon is *narrowed down* in a certain manner. Section (v) sketches a description of a different kind of mindfulness and concentration (forms that are considered ‘unwholesome’ from the Buddhist point of view).

### *i. THE OPEN PERSPECTIVE*

To get the initial glimpse of the open perspective consider the dream again, or, rather, the event of *becoming* lucid. This event has a beginning and an ending point—the dreaming and the lucid perspective, respectively. Putting it that way allows the question to be raised: from what perspective does the event of becoming lucid as a whole appear? The answer cannot be either the dreaming or the lucid perspective for these are only the terminal points of the event. I propose that in order to account for the transition itself, it is necessary to take into account a third perspective: the ‘open perspective’. I am not suggesting that in normal circumstances there is an explicit awareness of the event (*becoming* lucid) or of the open perspective that allows it to take place. In fact, I am inclined to believe that (commonly) there is no such explicit awareness; we are dreaming then we are lucid—the transition is not something that is explicitly noticed. Nevertheless even in such cases, I believe that there is an implicit, unarticulated awareness or understanding (an integral structure of what I will shortly call the ‘open horizon’) that a transition has taken place—an awareness that can be explicated (even if it is usually not). And, in any case, by reflecting on the event after the fact, or on a possible event of this kind (as we are doing now) it is possible to infer that such an awareness and understanding was there—indeed, that it must have been there—even if it was not explicit at the time.

Something analogous, I believe, is true of the transition from the natural to the transcendental perspective—in the event of de-crystallisation (it is also true of crystallisation but the focus here will be on de-crystallisation). Like becoming lucid, de-crystallisation has

a starting and an ending point: the natural and the transcendental perspective, respectively. To put it differently, de-crystallisation is an event where the transcendental horizon reconfigures itself from the crystallised to the de-crystallised mode. This allows the question to be raised here too: from what perspective does the event of de-crystallisation as a whole come into view (again, ‘come into view’ designates the implicit understanding that a transition has taken place)? Again, I suggest, it is the open perspective. In short: the open perspective makes possible the transition from the natural to the transcendental perspective (and from the transcendental to the natural).

While reading the above, the following concern may have crossed the reader’s mind. “Didn’t I say earlier that de-crystallisation is a possibility, a ‘thingly possibility’, of the transcendental horizon? But if that is so, does not this event come into view from the transcendental perspective, the perspective that brings the transcendental horizon itself into view? If so, is it not superfluous to introduce another perspective to account for it?” It is true that de-crystallisation is a transition of the transcendental horizon. And, in that sense, the transcendental horizon conditions the possibility of the transition. But here it is essential to keep apart *what* is brought into view (and the transition of what is brought into view) from the perspective *from* which what is brought into view comes into view. What we have *in view* here is the transcendental horizon as it transitions from the crystallised to the de-crystallised mode (from the natural to the transcendental perspective). But the crucial question is: from *where* are ‘we’ observing the transition? The answer, I propose, is the open perspective.

To expand upon this, recall the difference between the *absorbed-in* transcendental horizon (where everything appears *as* constituted and in the light of our possibilities), on the one hand, and the *objectified* transcendental horizon, on the other hand. Now, it is true that the transcendental horizon itself can come into view *as* constituted—as it does in the

practice of the *epoché*: where the transcendental horizon is ‘pushed’ towards the possibility of de-crystallisation. But, as argued in the last chapter, the *epoché* is *founded* on the event of *passive* de-crystallisation—where the transcendental horizon (in and of itself) brings a possibility into being. In other words, before it can appear as constituted, the transcendental horizon must first be disclosed or ‘objectified’—it must first be brought into view in light of its own possibilities. And what allows it to be brought into view in this way is the open perspective.

This implies that the phenomenological descriptions of the transcendental horizon (in contrast to the descriptions of appearances that come into view from the transcendental perspective) require of the phenomenologist to take a stand in the open perspective. This means that (in describing the transcendental horizon) Husserl himself must have been *tapping-in* to the open perspective. This will become clearer in the next chapter—where I will try to show that Husserl’s phenomenological investigations in general (and not just the investigations of the transcendental) were undertaken from within open perspective and involved *tuning-in* to thingly possibilities (without Husserl himself being explicitly aware of the fact).

The open perspective allows thingly possibilities to come into view. The transition from the natural to the transcendental perspective, the event of de-crystallisation, is only one instance (arguably a very important instance) of a very general phenomenon. Another is the transition where a straightforward perception (passively) becomes a categorial intuition; here, too, a thingly possibility comes into being, and what allows it to do so is the open perspective. The next task is to bring forth and describe certain key features of the open perspective. The aim here is not an exhaustive treatment but to do only as much phenomenology as is necessary in order to set the foundation for articulating a phenomenology of mindfulness.

Just as ‘our’ possibilities *fill-in* the transcendental horizon, so thingly possibilities *fill-in* the open horizon—a horizon constitutive of the open perspective. The open horizon is a unified, integral structure. But this does not prevent it from being a multifaceted *totality* of which different abstract parts (*moments*) can be discerned and described.<sup>62</sup> The first is a structure that I will call *unfolding-towards*. This is a *categorical structure* that is *filled-in* by futural (thingly) possibilities—the possibilities towards which the phenomenon is unfolding (the future phenomena that the phenomenon will become, in and of itself).<sup>63</sup> And when that futural possibility comes into being, it will do so in virtue of having *unfolded-from* the earlier phenomenon. In the state of affairs where A *unfolds-towards* B and B *unfolds-from* A: A and B are separated in time. But it is also possible that the realisation of a thingly possibility A implies the *simultaneous* realisation of some other thingly possibility B—a situation where A will be said to *unfold-together-with* B. *Unfolding-towards*, *unfolding-from* and *unfolding-together-with* are not the only structural moments of the open horizon, but for

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<sup>62</sup> Here, as elsewhere in this work, when I use such terms as ‘moment’ and ‘foundation’ I do so in the technical sense articulated in Husserl (1970b, Investigation III).

<sup>63</sup> In formulating the matter in this way (i.e. talking about ‘categorical’ structures) I am influenced by the ontological phenomenological approach as practiced by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. But this requires some qualifications. In that text, Heidegger reserves the term ‘categories’ for the structural moments of the modes of being of entities that exist in-the-midst-of-the-world (i.e. the ready-at-hand and the present-at-hand) and ‘existentialia’ for the structural moments of being-in-the-world, the mode of being of entities that we ourselves are and which Heidegger calls ‘Dasein’ (Heidegger, 1967, p. 67). If the open horizon is understood to be a structural element of some mode of being (and it can be understood that way, although I will not speak of it in this manner here), this mode of being is different from the present-at-hand, the ready-at-hand and being-in-the-world (I understand being-in-the-world to be Heidegger’s description of the transcendental perspective). The key point here is that when I use the expression ‘categorical’ I am doing so in a much broader sense than Heidegger; for me it designates the structural moments of *any* mode of being, even though the focus here is on a specific mode.



the present purposes it is unnecessary to enumerate anymore (or to describe these in more detail).

The above description of the open horizon is ‘formal’ in the sense that the demarcated structures pertain to all phenomena—all phenomena *unfold-towards*, *unfold-from* and *unfold-together-with* other phenomena. But depending on the nature of the phenomenon (its *material* content) these structures will be *filled-in* by different thingly possibilities. To take an example, a concrete instance of the formal structure A *unfolds-together-with* B is that physical pain necessarily *unfolds-together-with* bodily materiality. Or, to employ a proposition from the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination: the formal structure A *unfolds-from* B is *filled-in* thus: feeling (*vedāna*) necessarily *unfolds-from* contact (*phassa*). Qualifying these structures with *necessary* illustrates that the coming into being of thingly possibilities is not a random process; there are laws that govern how phenomena unfold. And it is the existence of these laws that make the practice of insight (*vipassanā*)—a practice that mindfulness as the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open horizon opens up—possible. I will have more to say about this later.

With the help of a concrete example, I would now like to draw an even sharper contrast between the transcendental and the open horizon. Take the experience of reading a sentence, and why not *this* one that you are currently reading? When your reading reaches the word *this*, the remaining part of the sentence is sketched out in the transcendental horizon as intentional possibilities. In other words, for this word to appear as it does in the context of reading, means for you to sense certain intentional experiences as *able-to-be-actualised*—possibilities that are constitutive of the act of reading and in which the remainder of the sentence will appear. Moreover, the experience of reading also involves the project of, say, extracting information from this text. For the sake of simplicity, let us say that both the intentional possibilities and the project(s) are sketched out in a structure that

Husserl (1991) calls the ‘protention’. The task now is to show how this *protential* horizon (the futural dimension of the transcendental horizon that is *filled-in* by our possibilities) differs from the *unfolding-towards* structure (the futural dimension of the open horizon that is *filled-in* by thingly possibilities).

Returning to the example, your reading has once again reached the word *this*. But, this time, instead of continuing to read, you *pause* and simply become *open* to the expression as a phenomenon. As you do so, you can come to the awareness that it is characterised by a kind of a dynamic movement. At one time, it shows itself through its meaning dimension. But, as you keep the meaning dimension in view, there will come a moment when something like a *sinking* occurs—a sinking away *from* the meaning *into* the material dimension, where the expression shows itself as black lines surrounded by a white space. These transitions (from the meaning to the material dimension and from the meaning to the material) are (thingly) possibility of the expression itself. Here the meaning dimension can be described as *unfolding-towards* the material dimension and the material dimension as *unfolding-from* the meaning (and conversely).<sup>64</sup>

If you did not already know that the expression offers these possibilities—their coming into being will be accompanied by a feeling of surprise. Generally speaking, this means that *it is possible to be surprised by the coming into being of thingly possibilities*. By contrast, *it is impossible to be surprised by the coming into being of our possibilities*. Allow me to illustrate. In the context of reading, the word ‘this’ is surrounded by a horizon of intentional possibilities. An example of which is the possibility of experiencing the next word in the sentence (in the current example this is the word ‘one’). But even before this experience

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<sup>64</sup> That is one way of describing the situation. But it could also be argued that the two dimensions existing simultaneously—that the material dimension *unfolds-together-with* the meaning dimension. For the following purposes, I will assume the earlier description to be the right one.

comes into being, its possibility is *recognised* as one's own (this is the feeling of "I *can* read"). As this possibility comes into being, it is (usually implicitly) *re-cognized* as one's own possibility. And this moment of *re-cognising* is incompatible with the possibility of being surprised.<sup>65</sup> This is one way of differentiating the *unfolding-towards* structure of the open horizon and the 'protentional' dimension of the transcendental.

The difference will become even clearer if we consider the situation where I intentionally push the expression towards a particular possibility (say, the possibility of showing itself in its material dimension—as marks on paper). Here the thingly possibility takes the form of a project (of realising a state wherein the expression will show itself in its material dimension). And when the material dimension does show itself, it will do so with the sense of having *fulfilled* this project. But when the material dimension shows itself as a realisation of a thingly possibility, it is not accompanied by this sense of fulfilment. Contrasting these two situations allows the difference between (a) the *unfolding-towards* structure when it is accompanied by a *protentional horizon* and (b) the *unfolding-towards* structure as such to be brought into view. Moreover, before I discovered (which I did by reading Husserl) that the expression has this possibility, I could not have converted it into a project. Nevertheless, that possibility was still there 'in' the expression's *unfolding-towards* structure—it is just that it was not discovered or disclosed. I say this because when I do discover the possibility for the first time, it gives itself with the sense of *having-been-there-before* (in the phenomenon as its possibility). And, as always, we must learn to have faith in

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<sup>65</sup> It is crucial to understand this in the right way. Of course, one can be surprised by the *content* of the actual intentional experience that the possibility becomes. And one can also be surprised by the *realisation* or *fulfilment* of one's possibility (project). But this is something different. The point here is that one cannot be surprised by the fact that this *possibility* is one's own *possibility* (or, at the very least, one cannot be surprised by one's own possibilities in the sense that one can be surprised by *thingly* possibilities). To make all this more precise, further phenomenological investigations are called for.

and trust what the phenomena are saying.

The experience of reading (to return to that example for the moment) itself has its own thingly possibilities, but to bring them into view you must—without ceasing to read—*open up* to the act of reading in the way that you did to the word *this* above. If you do so, your creative, transcendental self-awareness that is constitutive of the act of reading will suddenly find itself in the company of a different kind of awareness, which simply stands back and allows the act of reading to unfold its own possibilities.

I will call the form that awareness takes in the open perspective ‘open awareness’. Open awareness contrasts with both the creative awareness of the transcendental perspective and the psycho-physical self awareness of the natural. Open awareness is also a kind of *knowing* or *understanding*—a ‘thingly’ understanding of phenomenon in their thingly possibilities. Just as the projective understanding discloses projects, so thingly understanding discloses thingly possibilities. But while projective understanding anticipates the projects by *clinging to* and *grasping* at to them, thingly understanding discloses thingly possibilities through a kind of *listening*, a patient awaiting for the phenomenon to become what it is. Moreover, this open awareness and understanding does not set up any sense of *opposition* between itself and the phenomenon that it discloses. Rather, it serves as a kind of *space* that allows the phenomenon to be what it is and to unfold in accordance with its own possibilities.

These (admittedly rough and sketchy descriptions) of the open horizon will suffice for the present purposes. The next task is to use them in order to attempt to refine our pre-phenomenological sketch of mindfulness (which will simultaneously enrich and refine our understanding of the open horizon itself).

## ii. CULTIVATING MINDFULNESS: TUNING-OUT-TUNING-IN

According to the initial sketch, to cultivate mindfulness means to practice *tuning-out of our possibilities* and *tuning-in to the intrinsic intelligibility of the things themselves*, where this practice calls for a specific kind of effort (*ātāpi*). The above critical engagement with Husserlian phenomenology will now allow us to refine this sketch.

*Tuning-out*, I propose, is the practice of distancing oneself from the transcendental horizon altogether. This means that *tuning-out* is something quite different from the practice of the *epoché*, and a brief contrast of the two will help bring *tuning-out* into sharper focus. According to our interpretation, the aim of the *epoché* is to bring about a certain transformation in the transcendental horizon; if it is crystallised, then the objective is de-crystallisation, and if it is already de-crystallised then the aim is to prevent crystallisation. To put it differently, the *epoché* is the practice of *distancing* oneself from the naive absorption in and fascination of the world, a distancing at the end of which the phenomenologist is made aware of the transcendental horizon that constitutes the lifeworld (precisely in its function of constituting it). Like the *epoché*, *tuning-out* can also be described as a practice of distancing. But what one aims to distance oneself from here is the transcendental horizon as such. It does not matter, in so far as the practice of *tuning-out* is concerned, whether the transcendental horizon is crystallised or de-crystallised, whether one is absorbed in the world or has taken a ‘philosophical’ step back from it; *tuning-out* can be practiced from either the natural or the transcendental perspective. This means that a successful execution of the *epoché* is not a pre-condition for the practice of *tuning-out*. But—as *tuning-out* is only a moment of *tuning-out-tuning-in*—the movement of distancing from the transcendental horizon is at the same time a movement of becoming intimate, of *tuning-in* to something. And this something is the open horizon, which is usually covered up or forgotten (in a very

special sense) in our experience. *Tuning-in* is the practice of *remembering* or *recollecting* this forgotten dimension. This still leaves the issue open: what is the relation between the open horizon and the ‘intrinsic intelligibility of the things themselves’ that we are trying to *tune-in* to? I will return to this question below.

To practice *tuning-out-tuning-in* means to constantly be pulled towards the transcendental horizon, and to constantly try to pull oneself into the open. As I listen in to the way that the phenomenon (my meditation object) is bringing its own possibilities into being—to the way that it transforms in and out of itself—there will come a moment when I am pulled back into seeing it once more in light of my possibilities. And when that moment comes, the task is to, gently, become open to the phenomenon once more: to allow it to unfold its possibilities. This situation is comparable to that *meta-stable* place that exists on the boundary between a nightmare and waking life: where one is stuck in the nightmare for a few moments and then, suddenly, one wakes up realising that “it was only a dream”. Before one is able to gain a foothold in the waking perspective, however, one finds oneself drawn into the nightmare once more. But, here, one is not drawn in so far that one loses all contact with the waking perspective; a glimmer of wakefulness remains, and this glimmer serves as an escape route back to the waking state which, upon being reached, again collapses into the nightmare, and so on. In essence, I propose, something like this is going on in the case of the meditator seriously practicing *tuning-out-tuning-in*. For a few moments, the meditator succeeds in *tuning-in* to the open perspective, and during those few wonderful moments the meditator enters the open perspective from where the phenomenon is freed to be what it is and to unfold in accordance with its own (thingly) possibilities. But in the context of the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*, one can only remain in this perspective for few moments before the object ‘withdraws’—throwing the practitioner out of the open into, say, the natural perspective (where the phenomenon just becomes another actuality that is being

observed by someone). At that moment open awareness is lost and the meditator once more becomes the psycho-physical self. This means that the loss or withdrawal of the meditation object is at the same time the *transformation* of the awareness that is (was) observing it (see: Part II, Chapter III, Section iii.).

This peculiar and difficult to understand transformation holds the key to the correct understanding of *ātāpi*: the kind of effort involved in the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*. Ordinarily ‘effort’ designates the energy that is called for in order to bridge the gap between how things actually are and how we desire them to be. Otherwise put, it is the effort required to push the phenomenon towards some possibility of ours. This cannot be *ātāpi* for, as long as phenomena are being pushed in this way, one is standing in the transcendental horizon—while *ātāpi* designates the kind of effort that goes into releasing oneself from the very tendency to push phenomena towards our possibilities. While it is relatively straightforward to see what *ātāpi* is not, it is much more difficult to say what it is in positive terms. In the next chapter, an occasion will open up to take a closer look at this phenomenon.

### iii. MINDFULNESS: THE FEELING OF BEING TUNED-IN TO THE OPEN HORIZON

At some point the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in* yields fruit. That fruit is mindfulness: the feeling of being *tuned-in*. The meditator now effortlessly dwells in the open perspective—the phenomenon has now been freed to be what it is. According to the pre-phenomenological sketch, this state can be seen from two complementary perspectives. ‘Subjectively’, it is the state of *lucid awareness* and *clear comprehension*. ‘Objectively’, it is the *vivid presentation* of the phenomenon’s *intrinsic intelligibility*.

Back in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* chapter, however, it was unclear what ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ meant in this context. It is now possible to be more precise. To enter the open

perspective is to *become* the phenomenon and here the feeling of *opposition* between the observer and the observed collapses. Nevertheless there is still a sense in which it makes sense to differentiate (within the open perspective) between the open or lucid awareness and the vividly presented phenomenon. One reason to say this is that the phenomena are constantly changing (at one time the breath is *vividly present*, at another the clouds drifting across the sky). But open awareness itself does not come and go—at least not in the way that these *vividly presented* phenomena do. It is more accurate to say that open awareness takes the shape of whatever it is that is appearing in it (the traditional metaphor being that of water, which takes the shape of the container that it fills). To put it differently, open awareness is reflected in the phenomenon, as light is in the mirror, and this reflection endows the phenomenon with the quality of being *vividly present*.<sup>66</sup> There is therefore a sense in which open awareness is the subjective and the *vividly presented* phenomenon the objective dimension of the open perspective (although ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ carry very distinct meanings here). Something similar can be said about the other complementary pair: *clear comprehension* and *intrinsic intelligibility*.

Above, *unfolding-towards*, *unfolding-from* and *unfolding-together-with* were given as examples of *formal* categorial structures of the open horizon (‘formal’ because they are constitutive of all *vividly presented* phenomena). In other words, whatever manifests in the open perspective will express these (together with other, similar, categories). These structures, as moments of the open horizon, are disclosed in thingly understanding. And this thingly understanding is nothing but ‘clear comprehension’. Intrinsic intelligibility (the objective dimension of clear comprehension) can be understood as designating the unique

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<sup>66</sup> This analogy is not altogether suitable for, unlike in the example of the mirror, there is no space that separates open awareness from its ‘reflection’ in the phenomenon and in an important sense what appear as two are really the same thing.



range of thingly possibilities that *fill-in* these categories for the particular phenomenon in question (its material content).

To shed more light on this, it will be instructive to reflect on the meaning of ‘*sampajāna*’, the Pali expression that is here being translated as ‘clear comprehension’ and ‘intrinsic intelligibility’. ‘Sam’ means *together-with* and ‘pajanna’ means *knowing*. At this point it will also help to recall that *anupassanā* (the contemplative state of which *sampajāna* is a moment) can be understood as the *close-seeing-of-how-the-phenomena-fit-together*. This implies that to become *tuned-in* to the phenomenon means to come to the understanding of the relations of this phenomenon with other phenomena—of how this phenomenon *fits-together-with* other phenomena. In what sense can this (i.e. that becoming *tuned-in* discloses how phenomena *fit-together*) be said to be so? To answer this question, it will help to begin by considering how phenomena appear from the natural perspective: as isolated, self-sufficient and determinate objects. And from that perspective we also speak of things as though they were really separate from each other. As an example, it may be instructive to consider how, from the natural perspective, we look at or speak about the difference between a perceptual object, say coffee cup, and the sense perception in which it appears. We do so as if these were separate and isolated things, that just happen to enter into some kind of a relation: the coffee cup is one thing, something “out there” in the world, and my perception of it is something else, something happening “in my head”. Suppose that I now *tune-in* to the sense perception—I become mindful of it. When I do that, I can discover that the sense perception *necessarily unfolds-together-with* ‘a sensuous object’. In other words, I can come to an understanding that the possibility of the sensuous object is sketched out in the sense perception itself, and conversely. At that moment, I can gain the knowledge that these phenomena always *go-together*, not as two separate things that happen to be, so to speak, joined at the hip, but in the sense that the ‘one’ phenomenon belongs to the very definition

and internal makeup of the other, that it is sketched out in it as a thingly possibility. But, at this point, this understanding of how phenomena fit together is implicit. In order for it to become explicit, the ‘mere’ feeling of being *tuned-in* must be modified in such a way that the categories of the open horizon (such as *unfolding-towards*) and their contents, are explicitly brought into awareness. And that takes the practitioner from ‘bare’ mindfulness to the practice of insight or *vipassanā*, a theme that will be taken up explicitly in the next chapter (see: Part II. Chapter III, Section iv.).

When one becomes *tuned-in* to open perspective, what happens to the transcendent horizon? Has one lost all connection with it? Or does it remain as an element of one’s experience in some way? To put it differently, in entering the open perspective, has one completely left behind both the natural and transcendental perspectives? For the sake of simplicity, in the following I will focus exclusively on the natural perspective.

Here it is necessary to draw a distinction between (1) ‘tapping-in’ to perspective A while one’s standpoint remains in perspective B, and (2) actually ‘shifting the standpoint’ from A to B. The difference between *tapping-in* and shifting standpoints appears to me to be a very general capacity, one that reappears across many different contexts. For the sake of illustration, it will help to consider a more familiar example first. Consider the following way of differentiating a daydream from an actual dream. The daydream can be conceived as a (mini) dream that occurs *within* the waking perspective. According to this way of looking at things, while one’s *standpoint* remains in the waking perspective, one ‘taps-in’ to the dreaming perspective, which appears as a kind of rupture in the closely woven fabric of wakefulness. And it is possible that, while one remains standing in the waking perspective, for one to become quite absorbed in the daydream—and for one to, in a sense, cease paying attention to the waking reality which, nevertheless, persists in one’s experience as the (back)ground on which one is standing. This situation contrasts with the one where one

enters the dream proper and where one's standpoint shifts from the waking to the dreaming perspective. And if there are such things as 'lucid moments'—not full blown lucid dreams but momentary flashes of lucidity in the dream—they can be conceived as moments of "tapping-in" to the waking from within the dreaming perspective. There is another possibility that must be mentioned and which will have an important role to play in the next chapter. *Tapping-in* to perspective B from within perspective A may be something one does occasionally. But it can also happen that the state of being *tapped-in* to B becomes one's 'default' state. This means that while one has not switched standpoints, the state of being *tapped-in* to B persists in perspective A as something constant and continuous. For example, repeatedly *tapping-in* to the dreaming perspective may turn you into a 'daydreamer', a person who is, in some sense, continuously daydreaming.

Returning to the case at hand, the above forces us to make a distinction between *tapping-in* to the open perspective while our standpoint remains in the natural perspective and the quite different situation where the standpoint actually shifts from the natural to the open perspective. To *tap-in* to the open perspective means for open awareness (to focus on that aspect for now), to appear *within* and as a kind of modification of the psycho-physical or *mundane* awareness. Here open awareness takes the form of a peculiar mental state, something occurring within us. And the psycho-physical self can then use this state to achieve certain worldly ends. Here one remains conscious of and invested in one's worldly pursuits, and one uses the open awareness as a means to realising them (this can take the form of simply relaxing in open awareness, becoming calm and thereby regaining one's energy so that one can engage the world once more). It is also possible to become so absorbed in this 'mental state' of open awareness that one in a way ceases living-in the natural perspective—which nevertheless (like in the example of being absorbed in the daydream) continues to function as one's standpoint.

Mindfulness, I propose, is the feeling of being *tapped-in* to the open perspective from within the natural (or the transcendental) perspective. In other words: *the feeling of being tuned-in is also the feeling of being tapped-in*. This gives some justification for describing mindfulness as a ‘mental state’. Mindfulness should be distinguished from something that we may call ‘continuous mindfulness’ where repeatedly *tapping-in* to the open perspective results in a situation where the feeling of being *tuned-in* and *tapped-in* becomes one’s default state of mind.

In the earlier discussion of ‘becoming free from desires and discontent’, this ‘freedom’ was describes as a *temporary* freedom (see. Part I, Chapter II, Section iii.). Complete and permanent freedom from desires or cravings can be described as the end goal of the Buddhist path; and to establish mindfulness—to have *tapped-in* to the open perspective—is to still be very far away from that goal. The open perspective can be described as being intrinsically free of craving because the open horizon is not filled in by our possibilities (and projects in particular). The freedom from projects is temporary because the state of being *tapped-in* to this open horizon (while intrinsically free of projects) is bound to lapse, like all other mental states. And, moreover, our projects have not been removed by *tapping-in*, they are only asleep in the background, and can awaken at any time. Differently put, to allow the light of open awareness to shine in is not to eradicate all our cravings—or even any of them. These cravings only become temporarily dormant and sink to the background, like mud. The value of mindfulness (in the context of the Buddhist path) is that it allows us to become open to different phenomena, to reveal their inner intelligibility and to begin the process of explicating that intelligibility and thereby nurturing wisdom about the various ways that phenomena fit together. And one thing that we can come to have insight into in this way is the state of affairs that the transcendental horizon is *founded* on the open horizon. But to have such an insight is something much more difficult and rare than becoming proficient at

the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in* and being able to establish the feeling of being *tuned-in* at will.

Imagine a man confined to a dark room all his life, which for him exhausts all that there is. While the room is filled with various kinds of objects, he does not see them clearly; what he knows about them is constrained by what his impoverished vision and sense of touch tell him. One day, this man finds a switch somewhere in the room, and when he presses it, something unknown to him manifests in the room: from one of the walls a beam of light appears and falls onto an object. For the first time, he sees the object as it is. He now sets himself the task of bringing one thing after another into the light in order to decipher its true nature. It never crosses his mind, at this point, that the room is not the ultimate reality, that there is something else beyond it. As it appears to him, he has found a special phenomenon within the room, one that shines upon and within things, bringing their true nature into view. But, one day, the man gets closer to the light and, to his astonishment, the effect of the earlier button press was in fact to puncture a small hole in the wall, from which, he can now see, light is shining in. “The light was no mere thing in the room!” “It is coming from the ‘outside’!” As he spreads the hole further apart, more and more light shines in. Excited, and in what must be a feeling of ecstasy, he now frantically rips away at the walls; with every tool at his disposal he proceeds to smash the room into pieces. When he is done, he finds *himself* standing in the light from which everything, including his room, manifests.

To establish mindfulness—to be *tuned-in* and *tapped-in* to the open perspective—is comparable to understanding the light as just another phenomenon in the room. The room stands for the natural perspective that, at this point, continues to be experienced as the ultimate reality—it is just that something new, something with awe inspiring power, has appeared therein. But if we direct the light of mindfulness on the natural perspective itself, we can come to understand that, in fact, the open perspective is ontologically more

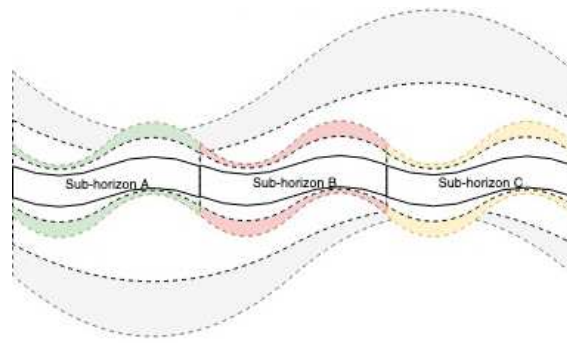
fundamental; that we have an identity that is more real than the psycho-physical identity. Just like the man, after destroying his room to walk on in the infinite light, to take our standpoint in the open perspective and to come to the insight that it is foundational, is to smash the natural perspective we are standing in to bits, to break out and see that perspective for what it truly is: something that arises, persists for a while and passes away. But *we* are now looking from an entirely different place. As to the significance of this realisation for the Buddhist path, this is not the place to comment.

#### iv. CONCENTRATION: NARROWING DOWN OF THE OPEN HORIZON

While the above is far from being an exhaustive phenomenological account of mindfulness, it does set the foundation upon which future descriptions of this kind can build upon. To push forward in that direction, it is now time to attempt a description of a phenomenon that is very closely related to mindfulness. This is concentration (*samādhi*). A brief recap of what we already know about it is now in order (the topic was touched upon in: Part I, Chapter III, Section ii.). Unlike mindfulness, which *expands* the breadth of awareness, concentration *restricts* or *narrows* it in a certain manner. But this does not imply that the phenomena are incompatible; in an important sense the movements of expanding and narrowing must be compatible and complementary, since certain meditative states involve the presence of both. What is concentration? How does it relate to mindfulness? In what sense are these phenomena compatible?

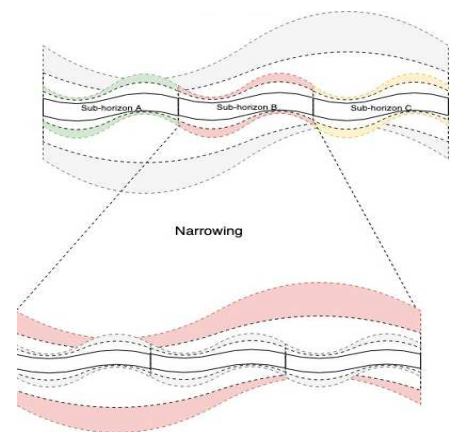
To be mindful is to be *tuned-in* to the open horizon. While always established on a particular object (such as the natural movement of the breath or on the solemn stroll of the clouds across the sky) the feeling of being *tuned-in* is never constrained to a single object alone. While before becoming *tuned-in* ‘the world’ was pushed in the direction of our possibilities (towards what we desire for it to be like or not to be like) it is now given as

*unfolding-towards* its own possibilities—towards future states that are sketched out in the ‘world’ itself. But what at first appears as a homogenous flow, on closer inspection shows itself to be constituted of a multiplicity of sub-flows, as a river made out of many diverse currents. For example, the process of breathing *unfolds-towards* its possibilities in a different manner than pain *unfolds-towards* its but both are constitutive of the general flow that one discovers upon *tuning-in*. I think that it is this disclosure of a multiplicity of flows that Anālayo (2003, p. 63) is pointing at when he describes mindfulness as expanding the breadth of ‘attention’. Allow me to illustrate. Consider the experience of pain. From the natural perspective, pain appears as a more or less rigid and solid actuality that is located somewhere in the actual body (which is itself apprehended as a part of the psycho-physical self). Suppose that you now become mindful of the pain, you *tune-in* to it. At first, this means that you sense the pain as uniformly *unfolding-towards* future moments of pain, which are sketched out in the pain as its own possibility—in contrast to experiencing the pain as unfolding towards a pain free state (a possibility that is imposed on the pain from without). But that which at first appears as a uniform pain is in fact constituted from multiplicity of pain currents, each of which is unfolding in its own unique way (this pain is sharp, this one is dull, this one moves and spread this way, this one that way etc.). This allows the following distinction to be made. Upon *tuning-out* of the transcendental horizon what one *tunes-in* to is the *primary open horizon*. This primary open horizon is constituted by *sub-horizons*; the horizon of all the different phenomena that appear upon becoming *tuned-in*. This is represented in *Figure 1*.



**Figure 1** The primary open horizon and its sub-horizons.

The crucial point here is this one: the primary open horizon offers the (thingly) possibility of being *narrowed* down to one of its sub-horizons. And when this possibility is realized the sub-horizon in question becomes the new (secondary) primary horizon. This new primary horizon is also constituted by a multiplicity of sub-horizons and it too offers the possibility of *narrowing* and so on. *Narrowing* is depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2** Narrowing down of the primary open horizon to one of its sub-horizons

To nurture the possibility of narrowing is to cultivate concentration. This will involve resisting the tendency of the horizon to ‘broaden’ back to the earlier primary horizon. To actually narrow down the primary horizon to one of the sub-horizons, is to establish oneself in a concentrative state (where the degree of concentration will be determined by the extent of the narrowing). This allows a sharp line to be drawn between mindfulness and concentration in the following way. Mindfulness is the state of being *tuned-out* of the transcendental horizon and the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the (primary) open horizon. By bringing the open horizon into view, mindfulness can serve as the foundation for concentration. But, note, concentration need not arise from within the feeling of being



*tuned-in*. In other words, while concentration necessarily *unfolds-from* mindfulness, the converse is not true: mindfulness does *not* necessarily *unfold-towards* concentration. The latter possibility must be actively nurtured from a whole range of other possibilities that mindfulness affords. Concentration, if it should arise, is the state where the (primary) open horizon has been narrowed down to one of its sub-horizons. This allows ‘broadening’ to be defined as the event where the secondary primary horizon reverts back to its sub-horizon status, reestablishing the primary open horizon. In order to be able to use the terms ‘mindfulness’ and ‘concentration’ in this way, however, there is a complication that must be dealt with first.

Recall the notion of ‘*khanika samādhī*’ or ‘momentary concentration’, a kind of concentration mentioned briefly in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* chapter and of which Bodhi (1994, pp. 109-110) offers the following description:

...there is another kind of concentration which does not depend upon restricting the range of awareness. This is called "momentary concentration" (*khanika-samādhī*). To develop momentary concentration the meditator does not deliberately attempt to exclude the multiplicity of phenomena from his field of attention. Instead, he simply directs mindfulness to the changing states of mind and body, noting any phenomenon that presents itself; the task is to maintain a continuous awareness of whatever enters the range of perception, clinging to nothing. As he goes on with his noting, concentration becomes stronger moment after moment until it becomes established one-pointedly on the constantly changing stream of events. Despite the change in the object, the mental unification remains steady, and in time acquires a force capable of suppressing the hindrances to a degree equal to that of access concentration. This fluid, mobile concentration is developed by the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness, taken up along the path of insight; when sufficiently strong it issues in the breakthrough to the last stage of the path, the arising of wisdom.

According to the earlier interpretation (see: Part I, Chapter II, Section iii.), momentary

concentration is a positive description of ‘being free from desires and discontent’ (one of the factors that necessarily accompanies mindfulness in the context of *anupassanā*). This compliments Bodhi’s claim that momentary concentration does not “attempt to exclude the multiplicity of phenomenon”. In other words, momentary concentration is *intrinsic* to mindfulness.<sup>67</sup> But how does this sit with the above claim that mindfulness *can* but need not be developed into concentration? There is indeed a tension here.

On the one hand, momentary concentration is said to be intrinsic to mindfulness. But, on the other hand, it is also asserted that while mindfulness *can*, it need not be developed into concentration. One way of resolving the tension is to deny that momentary concentration is concentration at all. Concentration, as per the above definition, is the narrowing of the open horizon. Momentary concentration, however, does not require such a narrowing; it is intrinsic to ‘bare’ mindfulness: the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open horizon prior to all narrowing. It would follow, then, that momentary concentration is not concentration at all but a different phenomenon altogether. But this is not the only way of resolving the tension, and therefore it is not evident that it is the right way. For ‘narrowing’ could be conceived more broadly as a *universal operation* that is performable on *any* kind of horizon; it is not a possibility unique to the open horizon. This way of looking at things opens up the possibility that the initial movement of *tuning-in*—the movement from the transcendental to the open horizon—is itself a kind of narrowing (although *tuning-in* would also involve more than narrowing). Under this proposal, concentration *per se* could be

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<sup>67</sup> This account is slightly at odds with Bodhi’s description (in the above passage) according to which the practitioner develops momentary concentration by directing ‘mindfulness’ (which would mean that mindfulness does not imply the presence of momentary concentration). As I see it, the need to “[direct] mindfulness to the changing states of mind and body” is a description of *tuning-in-tuning-out*, the practice of cultivating mindfulness. And the point where the “unification of mind remains steady” is the point where *tuning-in-tuning-out* gives way to *both* mindfulness and momentary concentration (which are co-joined).

formally defined as the operation of narrowing down a horizon (where the content or nature of the horizon is left undetermined), while the kinds of concentrative states that involve the narrowing of the open horizon could then be distinguished from the kinds that involve the narrowing of other kinds of horizons. Momentary concentration would then belong to this second category. To decide on which possibility is correct calls for careful and painstaking phenomenological investigations, investigations that cannot be attempted here. For the following purposes, the terms ‘*samādhī*’ and ‘concentration’ will be used to exclusively designate the narrowing down of the open horizon.

#### v. ‘WRONG’ MINDFULNESS AND CONCENTRATION

According to the above account, to cultivate mindfulness is to practice *tuning-out* of the transcendental horizon and *tuning-in* to the open horizon. Mindfulness is the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open horizon, while concentration is the modification where the primary open horizon is narrowed down to one of its sub-horizons. These propositions can be *formalised* in the following way. Cultivating mindfulness is the practice *tuning-out* of A and *tuning-in* to B, mindfulness is the feeling of being *tuned-in* to B, while concentration is the modification where B is narrowed down to one of its sub-horizons. Putting it that way allows the question to be posed: can the variables ‘A’ and ‘B’ be filled otherwise than as above? This is to ask: are there kinds of mindfulness and concentration other than the above? I believe that the answer is affirmative and in this section I will attempt to briefly sketch a description of another form of mindfulness and concentration.

From the Buddhist perspective, the following are ‘wrong’ forms of mindfulness and concentration. ‘Wrong’ in the sense these states do not lead (or do not lead directly) to the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path, which is the end of all suffering. I will have something more to say about this below. Bringing these ‘wrong’ forms into view will enable us, by way

of contrast, to get a more solid grip of the wholesome or ‘right’ forms described above. Now, the key difference between the wrong and right forms of these phenomena is found in the fact that the former can be understood in terms of the transcendental horizon alone; they do not require us to take the open horizon into account at all. But in order to understand the sense in which this is so, it is necessary to expand the earlier description of the transcendental horizon. This is the first task.

The transcendental horizon is *filled in* by our possibilities (a notion that encompasses both intentional possibilities and projects). For the sake of the following discussion, intentional possibilities will be left aside and the focus will be exclusively on projects. Following Heidegger (1967, pp. 116-117) I will refer to that dimension of the transcendental horizon that is *filled-in* by projects as the ‘for-the-sake-of-which’.<sup>68</sup> To illustrate, this laptop is useful *for-the-sake-of* writing this chapter, this window *for-the-sake-of* letting light into the room (allowing me to read these books) and so on. But here it is necessary to make certain further distinctions that Heidegger himself does not make (or at least does not make explicitly and clearly enough).

The first distinction is between *immediate* and *mediated* for-the-sake-of-whichs or projects—I will use these terms interchangeably from now on. An immediate project is a

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<sup>68</sup> Here I should note that the term ‘project’ does not refer to “...a plan that has been thought out...” (Heidegger, 1967, p. 185). As I am using the term, ‘project’ refers to the possibilities towards which we as beings that exist in the mode of being-in-the-world (to speak in Heidegger’s terms for the moment) are always projecting (whether we explicitly plan or not). I completely agree with Heidegger (ibid.) that “...any Dasein has, as Dasein, already projected itself; and as long as it is, it is projecting. As long as it is, Dasein always has understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities”. But what Heidegger overlooked, (at least in *Being and Time*), is the possibility that Dasein can transform its very mode of being, from being-in-the-world to the mode of being that is disclosed when one ‘enters’ what I am here calling the open perspective. After this transformation, *Dasein* (if we can still call it that) no longer projects itself towards its own possibilities.

project that is present directly, without intermediary. A mediated project is present ‘through’ some other, more immediate, project. An illustration will help. Reflecting on my current situation, I find the project of writing this section as an *immediate* for-the-sake-of-which. The project of *finishing* this chapter is *mediated*. The project of finishing this whole work is more mediated still. The relation between these projects is such that the mediated projects appear through the immediate one—a phenomenon that is comparable to the way in which the parts of the house that are not currently visible ‘appear’ through those that are. But the project of writing this section is not the only project in my situation that can be described as ‘immediate’. As I write this section, I sense other projects: of remaining alert to my phone (I am waiting for a friend to respond to a questions that I asked of him) keeping track of what is happening in my immediate environment, taking sips of my coffee and so on. All of these projects are also present *immediately*, without intermediary. That which I will call ‘projective space’ or ‘projective horizon’ is a dimension of the transcendental horizon that encompasses all *immediate* projects, which are its ‘sub-projects’ or ‘sub-horizons’. What is the difference between the *immediate* sub-project of writing this section and the other sub-projects with which it co-exists in the projective horizon? A key difference is that, in my current situation, the project of writing this section is *foregrounded*, while the other sub-projects, such as keeping track of the happenings in my environment, remain in the *background*.

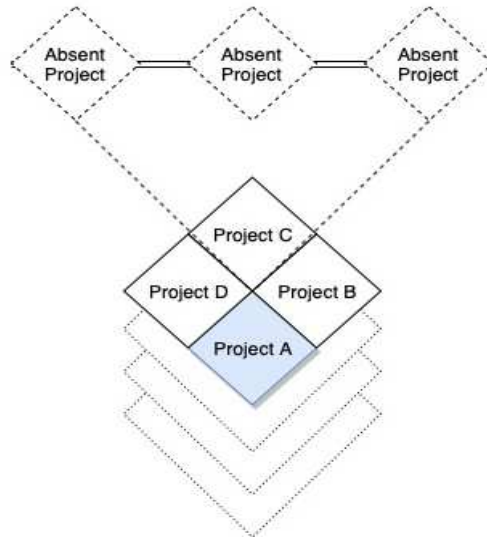
The second crucial distinction is between *present* and *absent* projects. All of the projects that feature in the example just given are *present* or *alive* in my current situation. This is also true of the *mediated* projects (e.g. the project of having this work finished), which are *present* ‘through’ the *immediate* project of writing this section. Present projects must be distinguished from *absent* projects. To begin demarcating the latter phenomenon, it will help to consider some examples. All of the following projects can be described as

absent from my situation: the project of doing a meditation retreat, working at the library (I am currently at home), watching a movie and so on. While these examples give some taste of what absent projects are, it is not at all straightforward to pin down the phenomenon in a more rigorous phenomenological fashion. The best I can do here is sketch a few of its characteristics, leaving a more rigorous treatment for another occasion.

Firstly, absent projects must be distinguished from non-existent ones. There are projects of which I cannot even conceive. For me, these projects are not absent, they are non-existent; they do not feature in my experience at all. By contrast, absent projects appear *as absent*. While I cannot justify this here, I think that absent projects are constituted through acts of imagination and other similar phenomena, which come and go in the stream of consciousness.<sup>69</sup> Absent projects also appear in *isolation* from their projective space—the concrete context in which they would appear if they were actually present. This means that an absent project is a kind of *abstraction*. For example, as I write away at home, the project of working at the library appears before my mind, tempting me to engage it. This image presents only a few details of that possible situation—I'll be sitting at that desk, drinking coffee from this cafe—but most of the other immediate sub-projects that would co-exist with the project of writing at the library (say, remaining alert to when the library closes) do not feature in my current experience at all (except as a kind of an undifferentiated background of the image). This will have to suffice as a description for now. I have tried to represent the above ideas in *Figure 3*.

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<sup>69</sup> Sartre (2004a) argues that imagination is distinctive in that it is the only intentional act that can present something in the mode of *absence*.



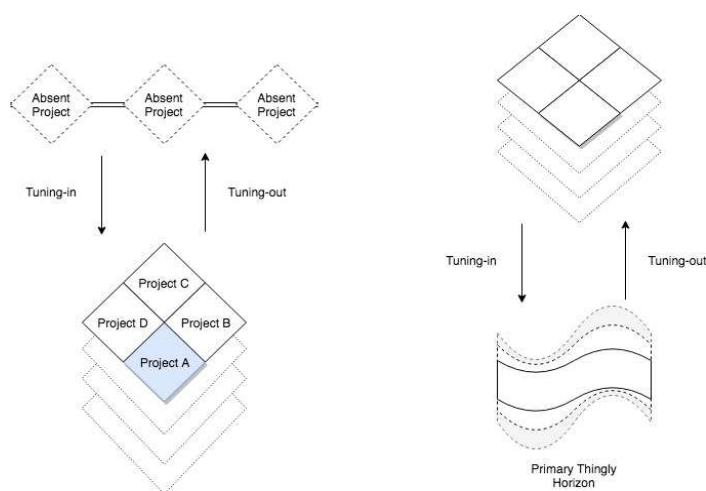
**Figure 3.** The large diamond with solid borders represents the (primary) projective space. The diamonds that make it up (project A, B, C, and D) represent the immediate sub-projects, while the large diamonds with dotted lines represent the mediated projects. The diamonds with dashed lines floating above the big diamond represent flux of absent projects as they enter and leave the mind.

The dynamic interplay between present and absent projects permeates ordinary life. Here one is immersed in some present project for a while but, soon enough, an absent project appears before the mind (through imagination, daydreaming etc.). I am writing when suddenly the possibility crosses my mind: perhaps I should go to the kitchen and get some food. This possibility lights up certain practical possibilities: the work appears as *to-be-left-aside*, the door as *to-be-opened* and so on. But these instrumental possibilities only light up briefly, while the absent project is imaginatively present. Then—with the disappearance of the project—they subside again. I get back to my writing. Soon enough, however, I am pulled away again... But there is a way out of this constant back-and-forth.

When an absent project arises, the habitual response is to become absorbed in it for some time. But this is not the only possibility that the situation offers. Another is to distance oneself or *tune-out* of the absent project: “Now is not the time to think about that!” And how does one *tune-out* of the absent project? One way is by *tuning-in* to a present project. From a different perspective, this kind of *tuning-in* involves immersing oneself in the ‘present’

practical possibilities—the practical meanings constituted by the present projects—and distancing oneself from ‘absent’ practical possibilities that the absent projects introduce into experience. An illustration will help. I am writing this chapter and, for some time, I am completely absorbed in the task. But suddenly a thought crosses my mind about the meditation retreat that I am planning to do after the writing is done, and the temptation is there to open up this thought and to dwell in that distant and absent reality. But instead of going down that path, I *tune-out* of the thought by *tuning-in* to the project of writing—I immersed myself in the solicitation of the keyboard as *to-be-typed-upon*, of the paper as *to-take-notes-on* and so on. But, soon enough, I am pulled away again. As soon as I notice this, I again turn towards the present project, becoming immersed in the possibilities that it opens up.

Because it instantiates the form *tuning-out-tuning-in*, to engage in this practice is to be cultivating a kind of mindfulness. But evidently this is something quite different from the practice of *tuning-out* of the transcendental horizon altogether—including *all* of one’s projects—and *tuning-in* to the open horizon, to the thingy possibilities of the phenomena themselves. *Figure 4* represents this difference.



**Figure 4** This figure contrasts the practice of tuning-out of absent projects and tuning-in to the present projects (left) with tuning-out of the projective (and transcendental) horizon altogether and tuning-in to the open horizon (right).



But just as the other kind of *tuning-out-tuning-in* can yield the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open horizon, so the kind of practice now under discussion can yield a kind of mindfulness—the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the (primary) projective horizon. On establishing this state, no more effort is required to *tune-out* of absent projects, for here such projects have ceased knocking on the door of the mind. One no longer wastes mental energy in planning and thinking about what is absent, which allows one to invest all of one's energy into one's present projects. This is a very exhilarating, happy state of mind, which has other facets also (for example, one is highly alert to when a present project lapses and when it is time to take up another project). But this is not the place for an exhaustive study of this phenomenon. These descriptions suffice to illustrate both what is common and what is different between the feeling of being *tuned-in* to thingly possibilities and the feeling of being *tuned-in* to one's present projects.

It is now time to turn to the question: what kind of mindfulness was the Buddha speaking about when he discoursed on 'sati'? The answer, I propose, is the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open horizon. One reason for saying this is that 'wholesome' mindfulness is necessarily accompanied by the factor of *freedom from desires and discontent*. Without the presence of this factor, mindfulness is not 'right' or 'wholesome' mindfulness, in the Buddhist sense. Now, according to the earlier discussion, freedom from desires and discontent was described as a complete (but temporary) absence of our possibilities (and projects in particular). To put it differently, this is the feeling of being (temporarily) *tuned-out* of all of one's projects. But this factor does not accompany the feeling of being *tuned-in* to one's present projects. That is the first reason for thinking that this is not the kind of mindfulness that features in the teachings of the Buddha. The second reason has to do with the fact that right mindfulness is a condition of possibility for the practice of insight (*vipassanā*)—the practice of seeing things as they are. Seeing things as they are can be

contrasted to the experience of seeing them as instruments, which is how they appear in the light of our projects. But the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the present projects does not remove the instrumental layer from things, which still appear as means towards the end of realising one's (present) projects. And this keeps their intrinsic intelligibility hidden, preventing the arising of true insight (more will be said about this in the next chapter).

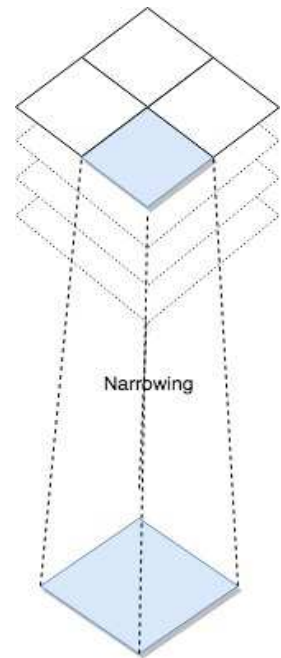
As described earlier, the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open horizon opens up the possibility of narrowing this horizon to one of its sub-horizons—and to nurture that possibility is to nurture concentration. The feeling of being *tuned-in* to the (primary) projective horizon opens up a similar possibility: the possibility of narrowing down this horizon to one of its sub-projects. This, too, is a kind of concentration. In the above analysis of concentration, I did not emphasis enough the difference between the practice of cultivating concentration and the state of concentration itself. I would like to make a few remarks about this now. The need to cultivate concentration arises from the situation where the attempt to narrow down the primary horizon (whatever it may be) to one of its sub-horizons, meets with the counterforce where the sub-horizon automatically and passively *broadens* back into the primary horizon. To cultivate concentration is to resist the movement of *broadening* by cultivating the possibility of *narrowing*. To illustrate, in my current situation, I am aware of a multiplicity of present projects: the work to be written, the project of pushing the noise of the neighbour's children into the background, of sipping tea, keeping track of the music playing in the background and so on. Now, I attempt to narrow down this project-space to the project of writing; I attempt to become entirely absorbed in it. From here two things can happen.

Either broadening wins out and I return to the primary projective horizon and the multiplicity of sub-projects that constitute it, or I succeed in the practice—in which case the primary projective space is *narrowed down* to the sub-project of writing, which becomes the

new primary (secondary) projective horizon. At this point, I enter into a kind of a concentration. This is represented in *Figure 5*.

It is essential to understand this in the right way. This is not a state of where one simply becomes more *attentive* to one of the sub-projects—while the other sub-projects remain present in the background of one’s awareness. While that is possible too, it is not the phenomenon now in question. The narrowing down of the projective space implies the *disappearance* of the other sub-projects entirely from the sphere of awareness. The sub-project in question now saturates the *entire* projective space. To illustrate, suppose that I have succeeded in narrowing down my current projective space to the sub-project of writing. Here I no longer sense such projects as sipping tea, blocking out the outside noise, being alert to the happenings in the environment, *at all*. The whole projective (and transcendental) horizon has become saturated by the project of writing. No matter how deeply absorbed I become in a sub-project, as long as the other sub-projects remain in the sphere of awareness, that is not the phenomenon of concentration now in question.

Establishing this concentrative state has a profound effect on the instrumental significance and the spatial quality of my lifeworld. To show this, a brief detour is necessary. My projects determine the instrumental dimension of the surrounding entities (in Heidegger’s (1967, p. 98) language, their being as ready-at-hand (*zuhandenheit*)). Moreover, individual instruments can only occur as *moments* of instrumental totalities (ibid.). For example, this laptop is given as *serviceable-for* writing, this cup *for* holding tea, this window *for* letting the light in (in order that I can see what I am doing), and so on. And it is not the case that these instruments are first given as isolated entities that must somehow be



**Figure 5** The narrowing down of the primary projective space to one of the sub-projects, which becomes the new (secondary) projective space.

combined together into a whole: the workspace. Rather, according to Heidegger's analysis, which I agree with, the workspace as totality of relations is given first; the individual instruments can be highlighted in this totality only through a kind of abstraction. Moreover, these instrumental totalities constitute a kind of (practical) spatiality, which is not identical to the geometrical space in which isolated things appear. The geometrical space arises from practical space through a kind of abstraction (Heidegger, 1967). Heidegger (*ibid.*) has, in my opinion, convincingly shown that it is this instrumental space (and not the three-dimensional geometrical space) that is responsible for the sense of the vastness of the world, the sense that the world spreads infinitely in all directions.

This sense of the vastness of the world is founded on the multiplicity of instrumental totalities, which is itself founded on the multiplicity of projects. The narrowing down of the projective horizon—the 'collapse' of the multiplicity of projects to a single project—does not do away with this practical space. What happens, rather, is that the entire practical space *condenses* in a certain manner into a single instrumental totality—the instrumental totality determined by the project to which the primary horizon has been narrowed down to. In the running example, the entire *world* appears as the project of writing; and it is impossible, from within this remarkable state of mind, to even conceive that anything else could exist. I have become the project of writing—and the world is nothing but this writing to be done. The project of writing now fills the entire *world*. And this state is accompanied by a kind of *effortlessness* that arises due to the fact that there are no other instrumental totalities that would draw my energy away from the project of writing; no effort is required to return to writing, for there is nothing to return *from*. Even the tiredness that I usually experience during the process of writing has vanished, together with the global awareness of my body; there is no pain or tiredness because there is no project of resisting the pain.<sup>70</sup> These

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<sup>70</sup> However, when this remarkable state lapses, as it is bound to do, there is a sense that certain parts of one's

descriptions will have to suffice for now.<sup>71</sup>

Sometimes the following question is asked in the contemporary discussion of

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experience, (such as bodily sensations) were neglected during the time that one was in it. William James (1890, p. 180) gives the example of a professor who: "...frequently begun a lecture whilst suffering neuralgic pain so severe as to make him apprehend that he would find it impossible to proceed; yet no sooner has he by a determined effort fairly launched himself into the stream of thought, than he has found himself continuously borne along without the least distraction, until the end has come, and the attention has been released; when the pain has recurred with a force that has overmastered all resistance, making him wonder how he could have ever ceased to feel it." This is one way to distinguish right and wrong mindfulness and concentration: the former do not make one unconscious of any aspect of one's experience but bring about a kind of optimal lucidity and clarity.

<sup>71</sup> I believe that the old man's experience in the following passage of the Zhuangzi (2009, p. 270-271) is a description of this state:

When Confucius was traveling through the forest of Chu, he came upon a hunchback who was catching cicadas with a glue-tipped stick as if plucking them up with his hand. Confucius said, "How skillful you are! Or do you have a course?"

The old man said: "I have a course. For five or six months, I practiced piling one pellet on top of another. When I could make a stack of two without it toppling over, already I would lose only a few cicadas. When I could make a stack of three, I could catch nine of ten. By the time I was able to balance a stack of five, I could catch the cicadas as if plucking them up with my hand. I settle my body like a twisted old stump, holding my arm still like the branch of a withered tree. Although heaven and earth are vast and the ten thousand things numerous, I am aware of nothing but cicada wings. Motionless, neither turning nor leaning, I would not trade away a single cicada wing for all of creation. How could I fail to catch them, no matter what I do?

Confucius turned to his disciples and said: "Using his will undividedly, the spiritual in him converges and solidifies—such would perhaps be a description of this hunchbacked gentleman here!"

mindfulness: is mindfulness a kind of “flow experience” that high performing athletes and others sometimes talk about? Differently phrased, is being mindful or concentrated (in the sense required by the teachings of the Buddha) the same as “being in the zone”? I think that when people speak of “flow experiences” what they have in mind is the kind of concentration that I have been trying to describe: the narrowing down of the primary projective horizon to a single project.<sup>72</sup> If I am right about this, then “flow” is not Buddhist mindfulness because it is not mindfulness at all. It is a kind of concentration—the ‘wrong’ kind in the context of the Buddhist path (as set out in the Pali texts). On the difference between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ samādhi, Bhikkhu Jayasaro (2017, p. 361) writes:

A cat watching a mouse hole has a kind of samādhi and so does a safe-cracker, but theirs is a natural, amoral concentration of instinct and desire, not samādhi issued from a disciplines gathering of inner forces and which provides the foundation for wisdom. [This is] ‘Right Samadhi’ (*sammasamadhi*), an essential element of the path to liberation, and ‘wrong samadhi’ (*micchasamadhi*), which leads away from it.

Right concentration is necessarily accompanied by right mindfulness: the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open horizon—but the kind of concentration that I have been discussing is *not*. Ajahn Chah makes this point in the following words (where ‘awareness’ can be interpreted as *open awareness* and ‘knowing’ as the understanding of thingly possibilities):

No matter how deep Right Samadhi becomes, it is always accompanied by awareness. There is a perfect mindedness and alertness, a constant knowing. Right Samadhi is a kind of samādhi that never leads you astray. This is a point that the practitioner should clearly

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<sup>72</sup> For a discussion of “flow”, see: Nakamura (2002)

understand. You can never dispense with the knowing. For it to be Right Samadhi, the knowing must be present from the beginning right until the end. Please keep observing this. (Jayasaro, *ibid.*)<sup>73</sup>

While ‘flow’ is not an integral part of the eightfold path, I suspect that it has its own benefits. It may even aid the development of the factors that do constitute that eightfold path. To give an example: to develop flow is also to increase one’s general concentrative capacity (it is, after all, a kind of concentration), and this may carry over to the development of the right kind of concentration. But, it must be admitted, there are also reasons to doubt this (that wrong concentration aids the path). For flow still involves a project (a craving) to realise a goal, and the suffering caused by holding onto this project may offset the benefits

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<sup>73</sup> The situation is in fact more complex than I have portrayed it to be. For there is (at least) another kind of wrong concentration. Above I said that the narrowing down of the open horizon necessarily *unfolds-from* the feeling of being *tuned-in*. But, in fact, this is not sufficient to make narrowing into ‘right’ concentration. For, in addition, once the primary horizon has been narrowed down, it is necessary to again become *tuned-in* to *its* sub-horizons; to become aware of the multiplicities that constitute it. In other words, for concentration to be right concentration is not sufficient that it *unfold-from* mindfulness it must also constantly *unfold-together-with* it. If the latter condition is not satisfied, a kind of *wrong* concentration will result. I think that this is the kind of wrong samādhi that Ajhan Chah had in mind when he spoke the words recorded in the following passage:

Samadhi can be divided into two kinds: wrong samādhi and right samādhi. Take good notice of this distinction. In wrong samādhi the mind is unwavering. It enters a calmness which is completely silent and lacking all awareness. You can be in that state for a couple of hours or even a whole day, but during that time you have no idea where you’ve got to or what the state of your mind is. This is wrong samādhi. It is like a knife that you’ve sharpened well and then put away without using. You gain no benefit from it. It is a deluded calm that lacks alertness. You think that you’ve reached the end of the practice of meditation and don’t search for anything more. It’s a danger, an enemy. At this stage, it is dangerous because it prevents wisdom from arising (*ibid.*).

of increasing one's general concentrative capacity. On a related point, I suspect that unwholesome concentration is an essential moment of many kinds of (unwholesome) phenomena, one being sexual craving. For, one characteristic of sexual craving is that it completely absorbs the one of whom it takes hold into the project of getting the object of desire. In this case at least, the suffering that arises from not being able to fulfil the project clearly offsets the benefits that come from the associated concentration. Incidentally, and I will end the chapter with this thought, it seems to me that in large part the pleasure associated with sexual craving stems from the high degree of (wrong) concentration that this phenomenon brings with it.



## CHAPTER III:

### *Mindfulness in Action*

While the last chapter took important steps towards a phenomenology of mindfulness and related phenomena, much work still needs to be done. But much of that work, which would involve expanding these investigations into such phenomenological themes as temporality, embodiment and intersubjectivity, can be left for another occasion. There are, however, two glaring gaps in our analysis that must be filled before this discussion can draw to a close.

The first has to do with the practice of insight (*vipassanā*) that, according to the teaching of the Buddha, mindfulness makes possible. The issue, sometimes spoken of under the heading of the relationship between mindfulness and wisdom, has been with us from pretty much the beginning of the discussion, and the last chapter itself was not entirely silent on the topic. There it was said that mindfulness brings into view the way that phenomena fit-together, that this disclosure is only implicit and that a special kind of reflectivity is called for in order to make it explicit. To nurture this reflective stance is to practice insight or *vipassanā*. But what is meant by ‘reflectivity’ here? Is it actually a question of a reflective act, the kind of intentional experience that bends back in order to take the stream of consciousness as its intentional object? Or is it rather a matter of some kind of judgment? Is it a combination of the two, perhaps, or something else altogether? And, whatever its precise nature, how does this reflectivity arise from within the feeling of being *tuned-in*; how, in other words, does mindfulness make *vipassanā* possible? And what is the role, if any, of concentration (the narrowing down of the open horizon) in all this?

The second issue has to do with the phenomenological nature of *ātāpi*, the kind of effort that is constitutive of *tuning-in-tuning-out*. The last chapter did have something to say about what *ātāpi* is *not*: it is not the kind of effort that goes into the realisation of a project. But it

left us in the dark regarding the *positive* nature of this phenomenon. This, too, is something that we now need to try and get a handle on.

In order to tackle these issues, this chapter will take a somewhat different approach than the previous ones. It will attempt to learn about these matters by scrupulously observing—through the lens of the framework developed in the preceding chapters—two individuals who are, or so I will claim, actually engaging in a practice of this kind. The individuals are Edmund Husserl himself and the renowned master from the Thai Forest Tradition of Buddhism: Ācariya Maha Boowa. This approach also promises to show that actual practitioners move within the categories of our framework—that the preceding efforts were not merely an exercise in abstract and futile speculation.

### *i. MINDFULNESS IN HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS*

In addressing the themes that he was addressing, Husserl was constantly skirting around phenomena—such as the open perspective and thingly possibilities—in terms of which I tried to develop a phenomenological account of mindfulness, and related phenomena. If it is true, as I tried to show, that these phenomena are very tightly intertwined with and even presupposed by some of the key ideas of his own phenomenology (such as the *epoché*) then it may appear as quite surprising that in Husserl's work we fail to find a systematic discussion, or even a recognition, of these themes. Despite this absence, however, in his actual phenomenological investigations, Husserl was in fact practicing *tuning-out-tuning-in*. Or so I will attempt to show in this section. I expect this claim to strike many Husserl scholars as very surprising, if not totally outlandish. For this reason, it is necessary to build a convincing case for it, and to do so slowly and carefully. To approach this goal, I will take apart what I consider to be one of Husserl's most impressive phenomenological investigations, in such a way as to reveal the machinery of mindfulness, and related phenomena, as they churn away in the background thereof.

But at the very outset it is necessary to deal with the following objection to our thesis. *Tuning-out*, according to our definition, is the practice of distancing oneself from our possibilities, including intentional possibilities. But, according to Husserl, every phenomenon is a correlate of some intentional experience. If this is so, how can I possibly claim that Husserl was practicing *tuning-out*? For, one may wonder: would that not imply that he was distancing himself from the intentional experience in which the phenomenon in question is given? But how could distancing himself from the experience that gives the phenomenon, be a way of getting to know and describe that phenomenon? What an absurdity! The thesis that Husserl was practicing *tuning-in-tuning-out* seems to be in danger of crumbling to the ground even before its defense can get underway. Let us see if we can

rescue it.

Here it is essential to keep in mind the difference between the actual intentional experience in which the phenomenon is given and the intentional possibilities that *fill-in* the transcendental horizon. While the intentional experience is *founded* on the transcendental horizon—there could be no intentional experience without a transcendental horizon of intentional possibilities—the two are not identical. It seems to follow from this that *tuning-out* of intentional possibilities is not the same as *tuning-out* of the intentional experience that gives the phenomenon. So one way of responding to the above objection is to say that the claim that Husserl was *tuning-out* of intentional possibilities does not imply that he was *tuning-out* of the intentional experience in which the phenomenon in question is given. This response will not do.

The intentional experience is founded on the transcendental horizon (and the intentional possibilities that *fill-it*). For this reason *tuning-out* of intentional possibilities will *bring about* a certain distance between oneself and the intentional experience in question—even though, strictly speaking, this distancing is not the same as *tuning-out*. Let us rephrase the objection in light of these remarks and see if that opens up another, more satisfactory way of responding to it: *if tuning-out brings about a distance between oneself and the intentional experience in which the phenomenon is given, and if Husserl claims that every phenomenon is given in some intentional experience, how can I claim that Husserl was practicing tuning-out?*

The key phrase is ‘Husserl claims...’ For it is essential to keep apart Husserl’s methodological reflections (what he thinks he is doing when practicing phenomenology) from what is actually going on in his phenomenological investigations. As a number of scholars have noted, Husserl’s methodological reflections are often much less convincing

than his actual phenomenological work, and the former often lag behind the latter.<sup>74</sup> With this in mind, it is time to deal with the above objection. I agree with Husserl that every *appearance* is constituted in some intentional experience. But is the mode of *appearance* the only mode that a phenomenon can take? If the phenomenon can assume other modes, what mode does it assume in the context of concrete phenomenological work? To approach this crucial question, I will begin with some reflection on the phenomenon of correlation itself (arguably the key theme of Husserlian phenomenology). In bringing the phenomenon of correlation between the intentional experience and its object into view as a phenomenological theme, did Husserl have it in view as an appearance?

If he did have it in view in that way then the phenomenon of correlation must have

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<sup>74</sup> According to Poellner (2007) Husserl's "... actual practice is often more persuasive than his second-order reflective characterization of it." Heidegger, according to Zahavi (2017, p. 43), "...observed that Husserl's original self interpretation in *Logische Untersuchungen* was quite inadequate, and that it was consequently necessary to distinguish between Husserl's meta-reflections and his actual analyses ...". To give a specific example, according to his own meta-reflections on his practice, Husserl believed that in the *Logical Investigations* he was only investigating the 'really inherent content of intentional experiences' and not the intentional object towards which the experience is directed. But the actual phenomenological investigations themselves make it pretty clear that he *was* in fact taking the intentional object into account. As Zahavi (ibid.) comments "[g]iven that Husserl as a matter of fact does investigate the correlation between act and intentional object in *Logische Untersuchungen*, he is contradicting some of his own methodological guidelines." Another example is where Husserl tries to impose his general model of intentionality (and in particular the schema 'apprehension-sensation') on all intentional experience and in particular on the categorial intuition, as Sokolowski (1964, p. 71) writes: "...Husserl felt that his general theory of intentional structure was valid for all intentional acts, categorial ones included. It shows also to what extent Husserl felt that his schema of apprehension and sense content was absolutely necessary for the constitution of objectivity. In trying to find representants for categorial objects, Husserl is simply trying to force his schema on their constitution. He is so convinced that any objectivity we encounter can only be accounted for by dualistic schema "apprehension-sensation," that he construes a way in which to fit this schema into our constitution of categorial objects".

appeared to him in light of his own possibilities. And it is plausible that Husserl's phenomenological investigations were coloured by the feeling of "*I can describe this phenomenon*". In other words, the phenomenon here appears on the ground of the phenomenological project—a project that endows the phenomenon with the instrumental meaning: *to-be-described*. But even if this stance of the phenomenological investigator plays a role in phenomenological investigations, the crucial question here is: is this the standpoint or perspective that allows the inner structure of the phenomenon to show itself?

A key characteristic of the phenomenon of correlation is the moment of mutual dependency between the actual intentional experience and the transcendental horizon. Differently put, every intentional experience *necessarily unfolds-together-with* a transcendental horizon; whenever the possibility of the one comes into being so does the possibility of the other. If these are the kind of structures and laws that Husserl was discovering in his phenomenological work, then everything that we have found out up to this point suggests that such discoveries involve *tuning-out* of the transcendental horizon and *tuning-in* to the open horizon. If that is correct, Husserl did not have the phenomenon of correlation in view as an appearance—as something given to and constituted in light of his own possibilities—but as *vividly present*, as manifesting within the open perspective and in light of its own, thingly possibilities. But admittedly this is no more than a hint. In order to more conclusively establish the proposition that Husserl was practicing *tuning-in-tuning-out*, I will now *deconstruct* what I consider to be one of his most impressive phenomenological descriptions in order to show the presence of *tuning-out-tuning-in* therein. This is the study of 'categorical intuition' in the *Investigation VI*.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> If I am correct in what I aim to show here, then the gap between the 'realist' phenomenology of the *Logical Investigations* and the later, transcendental phenomenology, is not as great as it is often portrayed as being. For, the essence of all phenomenological work involves *tuning-in-tuning-out* and the transcendental is just

Not everything in Husserl's writings (including the piece of writing with which we will be concerned in the following) is phenomenological, in the strict sense of the term. Often we find the philosopher engaging in arguments, drawing distinctions, appealing to what is obvious to common sense, expounding the views of someone else, criticising those views through various considerations and so on. If this were all that he did, in essence, Husserl would have been no different from any other philosopher. But he *was* different and what made him so is the presence of what may be called the *phenomenological element* in his work. But it is also true that the two approaches—the argumentative (understood in a very broad sense) and the phenomenological—co-exist harmoniously therein. In fact, the preparatory stages of phenomenological analyses frequently involve the use of arguments and other such philosophical tools. This often yields a hypothesis—the confirmation, refutation or refinement of which is the purpose of the phenomenological study. But while Husserl employed a wide variety of methods in the preparatory stages, he was fully conscious that the final verdict on all truth claims must be left to intuitive evidence and the phenomenological investigations by means of which such evidence can be achieved. As Husserl (1970b, p. 179) writes:

The real premises of our putative results must lie in propositions satisfying the requirement that what they assert permits of an *adequate phenomenological justification*, a fulfilment through evidence in the strictest sense. Such propositions must not, further, ever be adduced in some other sense than in which they have been intuitively established.

Husserl undertakes some of his phenomenological investigations with the goal of addressing some longstanding philosophical issue (such as the status of 'ideal' entities). Others arise

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another, potentially quite important, field of such work.

from the need to address an outstanding question that arose from an earlier phenomenological study of his. The latter is the case with the study of ‘categorical intuition’ in the *Investigation VI*.

Earlier on in the *Investigations*, Husserl circumscribed a phenomenon that he termed ‘fulfilment’ (Husserl, 1970b, Investigation VI, Chapter II). Fulfilment is what happens when a *meaning-intention* comes into contact with a corresponding *intuition*: where we go from *emptily* entertaining a meaning (such as ‘white’ or ‘paper’) to actually having an intuitive acquaintance with that to which the meaning-intention refers. Here the meaning-intention and the corresponding intuition enter a particular kind of union of which we say that the intuition has *fulfilled* the meaning-intention or, from the perspective of the object referred to, that we now actually have before us what we were previously merely thinking about. Husserl (1970b, p. 272) writes: “I *see* white paper and *say* ‘white paper’, thereby expressing, with precise adequacy, only what I see.” Difficulties arise, however, when we consider ‘complex meaning-intentions’, such as the thought or judgment that ‘this paper is white’.<sup>76</sup> As Husserl affirms in the continuation of the above passage, complex meaning-intentions, too, are subject to fulfilment: “...[t]he same holds of complete judgments. I *see* that this paper is white, and express this by saying ‘this paper is white’. In other words, it is

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<sup>76</sup> What I am here calling ‘complex meaning-intention’, Husserl speaks of (in translation) in a number of different ways and from a number of different perspectives. The terms he uses to point towards this phenomena include ‘complex meanings’, ‘categorical forms’ ‘total statements’, ‘structured, articulated expressions’, ‘complete judgments’, ‘the predicate mode of statement’ and so on. Here it is important to keep in mind the fourfold difference between (1) the intentional experience (2) its meaning, (3) the grammatical form that this meaning may take and (4) the intentional object towards which the intentional experience is directed (and which the meaning expresses). These are all ‘aspects’ of the complex meaning-intention. It seems to me that Husserl often prefers to speak in terms of complex or propositional meanings. In my exposition, I am primarily looking at the phenomenon as an intentional experience.



not only that ‘white’ and ‘paper’ find fulfilment in intuition but we also ‘see’ that the paper *is* white.” The *being* white of the paper, too, “...is self-given, or at least putatively given, in the *fulfilment* which at times invests the judgment, the *becoming aware* of the state of affairs supposed.” Switching examples, Husserl further enforced the point: “[n]ot only what is meant in the partial meaning *gold*, nor only what is meant in the partial meaning *yellow*, itself appears before us, but also *gold-being-yellow* thus appears” (ibid. pp. 278-279). Husserl’s question is: *what* fulfils the complex meaning-intention?

The answer is not straightforward. “If a man thinks the fulfilment of nominal meanings clear enough...” Husserl (ibid. p. 271) writes “...we shall ask him how we are to understand the fulfilment of total statements...What may and can furnish the fulfilment for those aspects of meaning which make up the propositional form as such, the aspects of ‘categorical form’ to which, e.g. the copula belongs?” The issue can also be expressed in the following way. The simple meaning-intention and the corresponding sense intuition are the necessary and sufficient conditions for ‘simple’ fulfilment. In the case of ‘complex’ fulfilment, however, while it will turn out that the complex meaning-intention and the sense experience are necessary conditions, they are not sufficient. In particular, sense intuition is not the experience that fulfils the complex meanings-intention, “[i]t is hopeless, even quite misguided, to look directly in perception for what could give fulfilment to our supplementary formal meanings”, “[f]orms...as forms of meaning craving fulfilment, can find nothing that could fit them in perception or acts of like order” (ibid. p. 276), “[t]he ‘a’ and the ‘the’, the ‘and’ and the ‘or’, the ‘if’ and the ‘then’, the ‘all’ and the ‘none’, the ‘something’ and the ‘nothing’, the forms of quantity and the determination of number etc.—all these are meaningful propositional elements, but we should look in vain for their objective correlates (if such may be ascribed to them at all) in the sphere of real objects, which is in fact no other than the sphere of objects of *possible sense perception*” (ibid. p.

278).

The phenomenological investigations that we are going to study below were undertaken with the end in view of addressing the question: *what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for complex fulfilment?* Let us pause at this point in order to reflect on the nature of Husserl's strategy so far. He first draws the reader's attention to an actual, existent phenomenon: *complex fulfilment*. Then he proceeds to point out a lack in our knowledge of the *conditions* (to be more precise, the *experiential* conditions) under which this phenomenon comes into being. There must be something, Husserl maintains, that fulfils the complex meaning-intention, but this something cannot be sense perception, even if (as we shall see) sense perception is involved—and in fact plays a key role—in the process. Finding this something that fulfils the complex meaning-intention calls for phenomenological investigations.

Having formulated the issue that he sets out to resolve, Husserl sketches out a possible solution, 'the hypothesis'. And the role of the phenomenological study is to confirm, refute or refine this hypothesis. In this sense, Husserl is working like an empirical scientist: formulating hypotheses and testing them through experience (but 'experience' does not mean for Husserl what it does for the scientist). In the case at hand, the hypothesis is stated in the following passage:

Certainly one can tell one's auditors intelligibly and unambiguously that 'I see that this paper is white', but the thought behind such talk need not be that the meaning of this spoken sentence expresses *a mere act of seeing*. It may also be the case that the epistemic access of our seeing, in which the apparent object announces itself as self-given, serves to base certain connective or relational or otherwise formative acts, and that it is to *these* that our expression in its changing forms is adjusted, and that it is in such acts, performed on a basis of actual perception, that our expression, in respect to such changing forms, finds fulfilment. If we

now combine these founded acts or rather act-forms with the acts which serve as their foundation, and give the comprehensive name ‘founded act’ to the whole act-complex that result from such formal ‘founding’, we may say: Granted the possibility just sketched, our parallelism may be re-established, but it is no longer a parallelism between meaning-intentions of expressions and mere percepts which correspond to them; it is a parallelism between meaning-intentions and the above mentioned *perceptually founded acts* (ibid. p. 273).

In short, the hypothesis is that there exists a particular kind of intentional experience, which Husserl will shortly call a ‘categorical intuition’ (or a ‘supersensuous percept’), that is distinct from but not unrelated to sense perception and it is the categorical intuition that *fulfils* the complex meaning-intention.

Up to this point, Husserl has been setting the stage for the actual phenomenological work. As he himself writes in the beginning of §46 of *Investigation VI*, which is where that work truly begins and which is revealingly titled ‘Phenomenological analysis of the distinction between sensuous and categorical intuition’:

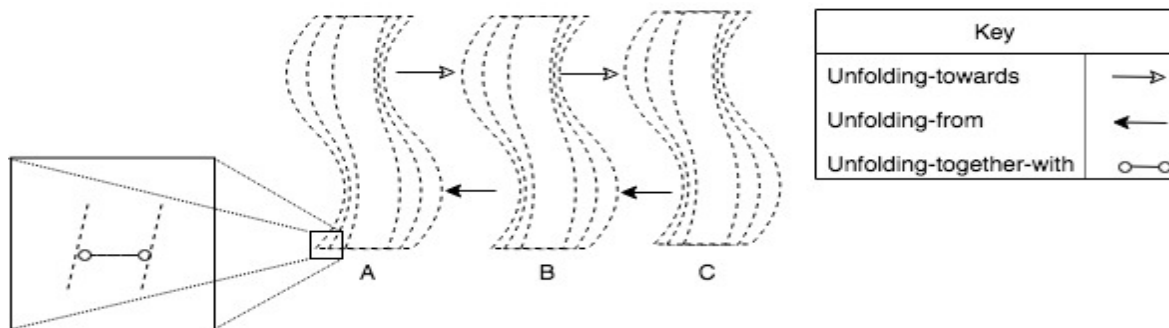
The division between ‘sensuous’ and ‘supersensuous’ percepts was only very superficially indicated and quite roughly characterised above. Antiquated talk of external and internal senses, plainly stemming from the naive metaphysics and anthropology of daily life, may be useful for pointing out the sphere to be excluded, but a true determination and circumspection of the sensory sphere is not thereby reached, so depriving the concept of categorical perception of its *descriptive underpinning*. To ascertain and clarify the said distinction is all the more important, since such fundamental distinctions as that between categorical form and sensuously founded matter, and the similar distinction between categories and all other concepts, depends wholly on it. Our concern is therefore to seek *more profound descriptive characterisations*, which will give us some insight into the

essentially different constitution of sensuous and categorial percepts (or intuition in general) (ibid. pp. 281-282, my emphasis).

The phenomenological investigation begins with ‘straightforward’ or ‘sense’ perception, which Husserl demarcates in a preliminary manner as follows: “[i]n *sense*-perception, the ‘external’ thing appears ‘in one blow’, as soon as our glance falls upon it. The manner in which it makes the thing appear present is *straightforward*...” (ibid. p. 283). Earlier (see: Part II, Chapter I), I suggested that such a perception (a perception of an *actual* object, an ‘external’ thing within the world) is the form that perception takes in the natural attitude. I called it *mundane* perception (for the following purposes, ‘mundane’ and ‘straightforward’ will be used interchangeably). If I am right about this, then Husserl’s phenomenological investigations of sense perception are from the start constrained by this starting point. In other words, while he does disclose the ‘deep structure’ of sense perception, that structure only appears to him in the role of making possible mundane perception. This may have prevented him from getting at this deep perceptual structure in its purity and in all its possibility. But this is not a point that I now wish to pursue (although I will have a bit more to say about it as the discussion progresses).

Breaking into the ‘deep structure’ of straightforward perception, Husserl finds “...a continuous perceptual flux...an immediate fusion of part-intentions...of part-acts into one act” (ibid. p. 284). The *part-intentions* or ‘percepts’ that make up this continuum can be divided into two kinds, which I will call ‘partial-percepts’ and ‘disjoined percepts’. Partial-percepts exist *simultaneously* and as a group in every phase of the continuum. An illustration will help. I throw my glance at the cup and see it straightforwardly. This means that it appears to me as a unified, unarticulated object in the midst of the world. I am not, at this point, explicating the cup into parts. Nevertheless I have an *implicit* awareness that the cup is made up of a multiplicity of parts: it has a handle, a certain shape, colour and so on. How

am I aware of these implicit parts? The answer, according to Husserl, is that this straightforward perception of the cup is itself constituted of a multiplicity of co-present partial-percepts, each of which is directed at a different part of the cup. To phrase this in terms developed in the last chapter: partial-percepts necessarily *unfold-together-with* other partial-percepts. The straightforward perception is not *static*, it is constantly changing; now I am perceiving the cup from one angle, now from another, now I am feeling it in my hand, against my lips and then I am hearing the sound that it makes at it thumps on the table... These are the ‘disjoined-percepts’ or phases of the continuum. Moreover, every such phase is constituted out of partial-percepts; for every ‘time slice’ of the continuum is directed towards a multiplicity of parts. In our terminology, here one disjoined-percept or phase (A) is *unfolding-towards* another (B), and when (B) comes into being will do so by *unfolding-from* (A). (A) and (B) are constituted of a multiplicity of partial-percepts that are *unfolding-together-with* each other. I have tried to represent all this in *Figure 6*.



**Figure 6** The ‘deep structure’ of straightforward perception. A, B and C stand for the disjoined percepts or phases of the continuum. The white headed arrow represents the *unfolding-towards* structure. The black headed arrow represent the *unfolding-from* structure. The dotted wavy lines within each phase represent the partial-percepts. The line with the two circles at each end represents the *unfolding-together-with* relation that obtains between the partial-percepts.

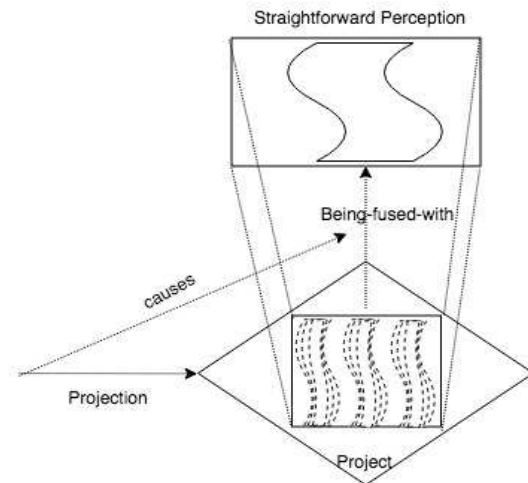
The phases of the continuum that are *yet-to-come* are sketched out in the *unfolding-towards* structure of the phase that is right now in existence. And, I propose, they are sketched out therein as *thingly possibilities*. I say this because there is a whole range of

future percepts that the actual percept *could unfold-towards*; the perception could transform in this, that or any which way. To see how it will actually unfold, which possibilities out of the whole range it will bring into being, it is necessary to *tune-in* to the continuum, to its own rhythm and patterns of becoming. And that requires that one *tunes-out* of one's own possibilities that have been imposed on this continuum (possibilities the realization of which, in normal circumstances, one is pursuing 'through' the continuum). If I am right about what I have been saying, then in bringing this continuum into view and discerning its structure, Husserl must have been practicing *tuning-out-tuning-in*.

At this point the reader may be getting an uncomfortable feeling that I am imposing my own terminology and ideas onto Husserl in order to justify the thesis that he was practicing *tuning-out-tuning-in*. Am I perhaps rigging the description for my own ends? That is not my intention at all. I have no investment in being right about this; it is not as if I desperately want to show that Husserl was in fact doing what I claim that he was doing. I am only trying to describe things as I see them. Having said that, I do appreciate the value of not jumping to conclusions too quickly. So let us slow down and reflect more carefully on what I have been saying. In what sense are the future phases of the continuum *thingly possibilities* of the 'actual' phase, the percept now in existence? That they are possibilities is evident; the future phases are not now *here* but are *coming-to-be*. But, note, the future percepts are *present* in the sense that they contribute to the sense of the actual percept. This is comparable to the way that this individual tone only has the meaning that it does because it refers to the future tones of the melody that are yet to come, and to the way that the word in the sentence that is right now actual in your awareness only has its meaning in virtue of the possible words that are yet to come. What makes these possibilities *thingly possibilities*? To address this question, I would first like to return to something that I touched on above.

This is the idea that the perceptual continuum only takes the form of *mundane* or

*straightforward* perception in the natural attitude. The mundane perception is founded on a (crystallised) project, such as the project of finishing this chapter, or the project of being caffeinated. In light of the project, the continuum assumes the form of straightforward perception which discloses some external object with an instrumental meaning, say, the cup as something *to-be-*



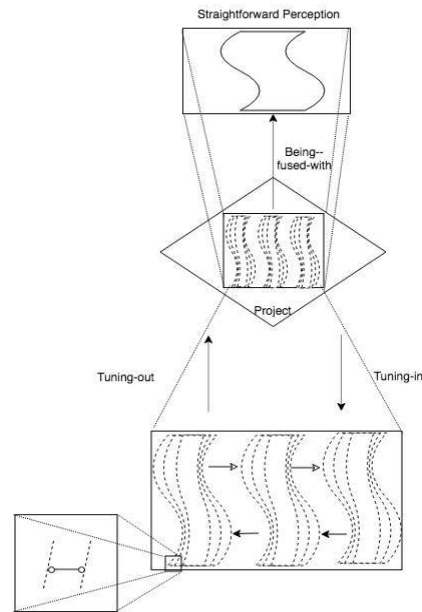
**Figure 7** A projection modifies the continuum of percepts in such a way as to give rise, through fusion, to the straightforward perception.

*drank-from*. To be more specific, the presence of the project modifies the *unfolding-towards* structure of the continuum in such a way that its phases are now, so to speak, ‘forced’ to unfold-towards a particular set of future percepts through which the experience of the cup will be constituted.<sup>77</sup> This ‘forcing’ of the continuum in a particular direction also has the effect of modifying its *unfolding-towards* structure in such a way that the disjointed percepts now become *fused-with* each other. The difference between the two structures, or at least one such difference, is found in this. When percept A is experienced as *unfolding-towards* percept B, there is a sense that A is both *different* from B and that B (because it has *unfolded-from* it) is *dependent* on A. But in the *fusion* of A with B, something like an ironing out of these *differences* and *dependencies* takes place. And in that way, on a higher level, the uniform, straightforward perception of an actual object comes into being. The modification of the continuum by the presence of the project is represented in *Figure 7*. With this in mind, let us now return to the issue of the sense in which the disjointed percepts of the continuum are thingly possibilities.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Inserted’ need not here be interpreted as some explicit act; I insert things in this way in virtue of the mere fact of existing in a certain way, as *being-in-the-world* or as a transcendental subject.

Note, first, the phenomenological difference between (a) the experience where each phase of the continuum is given as *being-fused-with* the others into the straightforward perception and (b) the experience where the phases are experienced as *unfolding-towards* and *unfolded-from* each other. Two kinds of possibilities are at work in these different experiences. In (a) my possibility or project is sensed through and in the background of the straightforward perception (or its object); the possibility of being caffeinated is present through the experience of the cup as something to-to-be-drunk from. Let us now contrast this with (b) where the coming to actuality of each phase also gives me a sense of possibility, but this is clearly not a possibility that I have put into the phenomenon but is inherent in the continuum itself. In (b) I experience a thingly possibility. Moreover, the ‘insertion’ or ‘projection’ of a project into the continuum only has the effect of pushing or directing a process that is already unfolding, or trying to unfold, in its own way, in its own direction and in accordance with its own, thingly possibilities. To put it differently, the perceptual continuum is itself characterised by the (thingly) possibility of supporting a project, of being pushed in a particular direction through the insertion of a project. But even if this possibility does not come into being, the continuum is already moving in its own direction, in accordance with its own possibilities (although, in the natural attitude, we are not explicitly aware of this). In order to disclose the continuum in its own possibilities, then, Husserl must have been practicing *tuning-out* of his projects (which would imply a distancing from the uniform straightforward perception itself) and *tuning-in* to the (thingly) possibilities of the continuum itself, as depicted in *Figure 8*.





**Figure 8** Ordinarily (top), due to the presence of a project the continuum of percepts takes the form of mundane or straightforward perception. In order to disclose the continuum as it is, it is necessary to tune-out of the project(s) and to distance oneself from the straightforward perception, and to tune-in to the (thingly) possibilities of the continuum itself (bottom).

Depending on the phenomenon, thingly possibilities will actualise themselves in different ways. In other words, not every phenomenon *unfolds-towards* (to focus on that structure for the moment) its future states in the same manner. I believe that Husserl (ibid. p. 284) is getting at this point when he writes that the relation between the phases of the perceptual continuum “...does not amount to the mere fact of temporal adjunction...” In other words, it is not as if the only thing that we can say about the continuum is that the phases that make it up succeed and precede each other temporally. Rather, the above sentence continues, “...the series of individual acts rather has the character of a phenomenological unity, in which the individual acts are fused”. This is a point that I already touched on above: that when a new percept comes into actuality, it does so by *fusing* with the percept from which it is *unfolding-from*. This allows us to speak of a *synthesis-by-fusion*. In this kind of a synthesis, the percepts that are coming into being do not alter the intentional object of the percepts from which they are *unfolding-from*. Rather they fuse with

their predecessors in such a way as to maintain the intentional reference to the object in existence, while enriching the overall quality of the experience in a certain manner. It is as if each new percept is feeding the earlier one, and as a result of this feeding, the original percept (the one with which this particular continuum began) *fattens*, and through this growth, on a higher level, the straightforward sense perception comes to be.

It is becoming clear that Husserl was not merely *tuning-in* to the continuum, finding its natural rhythm and allowing the phenomenon to, so to speak, carry him along with it. Having *tuned-in* Husserl was also *isolating*, *comparing* and *contrasting* the unique way in which the perceptual continuum brings its possibilities into actuality. This reflective stance is not, I believe, a moment of mindfulness (of the feeling of being *tuned-in* as such). For it is conceivable that one could merely *tune-in* to the phenomenon without reflecting on and isolating its structure in the way that Husserl is doing here. While mindfulness opens up the possibility of taking up this reflective perspective, this possibility is not necessary but is rather one that must be cultivated. What is in question here, I propose, is nothing other than ‘*vipassanā*’, the kind of wisdom practice that, according to the teachings of the Buddha, mindfulness makes possible. This practice, according to what we have learnt so far, involves isolating the unique way that a phenomenon brings its possibilities into actuality. And that often involves contrasting the phenomenon in question with some other phenomenon. Let us now take a closer look at how such contrasting works in the context of Husserl’s investigations.

Earlier I quoted a passage where Husserl speaks of the simple meaning-intention as *craving* fulfilment. It is possible to interpret this in the following way. The meaning-intention, in itself, refers to the corresponding intuition as a possibility towards which it is naturally unfolding—and if this possibility comes into actuality, it will do so by entering the relation of *fulfilment* with the meaning-intention. Like the perceptual continuum, the

meaning intention, too, is *unfolding-towards* something: the corresponding sense intuition, (which makes up the terminal point of the same flow or process to which the meaning-intention itself belongs, a process that of course does not always live out its full lifespan and which is often cut short by some happening or other). Even in his earlier study of the simple meaning-intention, then, what Husserl was doing can be described as *tuning-in* to the possibilities offered by the phenomenon itself. But *tuning-in* was not all that he was doing. He was also *isolating* the possibilities offered by the phenomenon and *discerning* the manner in which it brings these possibilities into being. Formally speaking, we can say that the meaning-intention stands in the same relation to the intuition that *fulfils* it, one of temporal adjunction, as two disjointed percepts or phases of the perceptual continuum do. Unlike the percepts of the continuum, however, the meaning-intention does not synthesise with the corresponding intuition by *fusing* with it. Rather, the synthesis between the meaning-intention and the intuition is one of *fulfilment*; the sense intuition *illustrates* or *confirms* what the meaning-intention sketched out in an empty manner. The important point here is that *contrasting* the synthesis-by-fulfilment with the synthesis-by-fusion as two ways that phenomena bring their possibilities into being allows Husserl to bring into explicit awareness the unique phenomenological nature of the perceptual continuum. And to do that is to have an *insight* into what this phenomenon truly is and of how it differs from other phenomena. Here, I propose, Husserl was practicing *vipassanā*, the kind of reflective practice that arises only once the phenomenon's thingly possibilities have been disclosed through the feeling of being *tuned-in*.

I hope that at this stage the reader is getting a solid glimpse into the true mechanism at work behind the scenes of Husserl's phenomenological investigations. To get an even clearer view, let us now return to the main question of the current investigations: *what fulfils the complex-meaning intention?* Like its simple counterpart, the complex meaning-intention

is ‘craving’ fulfilment. It, too, is *unfolding-towards* something the synthesis with which would *fulfil* it. What is this ‘something’? To answer this question, Husserl (ibid. p. 286) now takes what we can consider as his second meditation object: the fact that something can always “...be grasped by us in explicating fashion: acts of articulation can put its parts ‘in relief’, relational acts bring the relieved parts into relation, whether to one another or to the whole.” Note that because this phenomenon of articulation is directed at some actual object within the world, it too represents the *mundane* form of judgment (the form judgment takes in the natural attitude).

*Tuning-in* to this phenomenon, Husserl finds himself in the deep structure of the straightforward perception, the perceptual continuum that we have been studying. In the next phase of the analysis, Husserl discerns that this continuum contains different possibilities. One such possibility dictates that the continuum will develop into a straightforward perception of something. The process may then die off. This possibility can be described as *necessary*; it is always coming into being (as long as the straightforward perception lasts at least).<sup>78</sup> Another possibility dictates that every partial-percept of a continuum A can be ‘promoted’ into the first member of a new continuum B. This is a situation where the partial-percept in question becomes a straightforward perception in its own right. This possibility, however, is not necessary; the continuum will only develop in this direction if certain conditions are met. Where such conditions do obtain, the partial-percept ( $\alpha$ ) of a perceptual continuum A becomes the first member of a new continuum B (represented in Figure 9 by the thick red background line—which is meant to signify that the object of  $\alpha$  is the intentional object or the main theme of continuum B). At the same time as it takes this new role,  $\alpha$  continues to perform its old function in A: of presenting an implicit

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
<sup>78</sup> Even in the situation where the straightforward perception develops into a categorial intuition, a situation that we will now study, the straightforward perception is there as a basis or foundation.

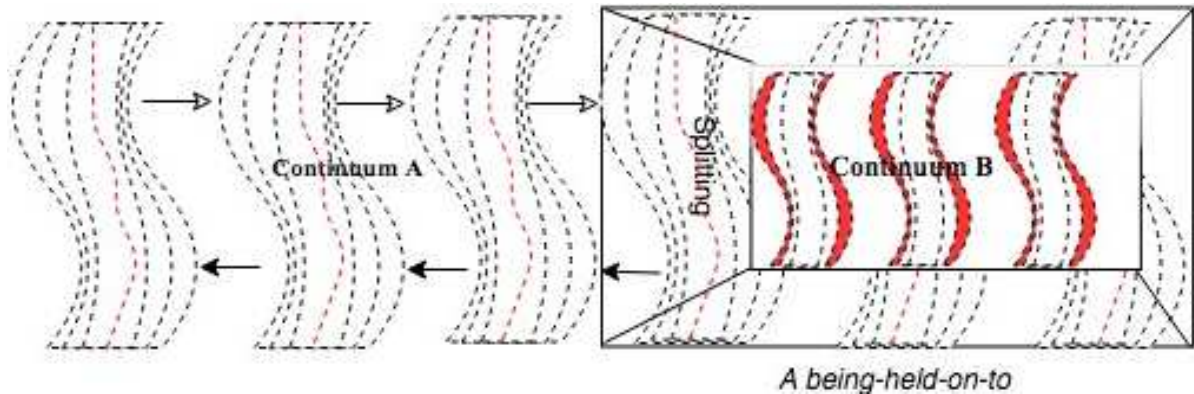
part of the object (in figure 9, this role of  $\alpha$  is represented by the red wavy line, a partial-percept of continuum A).<sup>79</sup> Here continuum A can be described as *splitting* into continuum B. While it is necessary, *splitting* is not sufficient for the original straightforward perception to become an act of articulation.<sup>80</sup> In addition, A must continue to be *held-on-to* in the background. And while it is being held-on-to in this way, B arises, so to speak, within and on top of A. Differently put, here B does not *unfold-from* A, which would imply a temporal disjunction between the two. Rather B both *originates-from* and *unfolds-together-with* A. Here we do not, so to speak, allow ourselves to fall into the object—say from the experience of the cup into the experience of the handle, which would involve losing awareness of the cup altogether and becoming aware only of the handle. The awareness of the cup (which includes the awareness of the handle as an implicit part) persists in the background. And while it does so, a new perceptual awareness arises and directs itself at the handle as its explicit intentional object. The presence of  $\alpha$  in both A and B brings about a *coincidence* between them, which ensures that A and B do not merely float side by side or on top of each other as two distinct sense perceptions. Rather, because of the coincidence, A and B enter a relation of *foundation* through which a novel, ‘founded’ intentional experience arises that has as its intentional object the state of affairs *that the cup has a handle* (or that *the handle is a part of the cup*). This founded intentional experience is the categorial intuition

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<sup>79</sup> Note that ‘ $\alpha$ ’ does not here carry the same meaning as it does in the Husserlian text being discussed.

<sup>80</sup> On its own, splitting of a continuum results in a phenomenon where we delve deeper into the object, e.g. we go from the experience of the cup to the experience of its handle, and then perhaps from the experience of the handle to the fine grained material of which it is made, and then further down. This sounds like a kind of concentration. It is revealing, in this connection, that Husserl (ibid. p.287) describes what I am here calling ‘splitting’ as a ‘narrowing down’ of the total percept to a partial-percept. It would be interesting to investigate further whether this is in fact a kind of concentration and, if it is, of how it differs from and relates to the kinds of concentrative phenomena discussed in this work.

(represented in Figure 9 by ). And it is the categorical intuition that, according to Husserl's phenomenological analysis, fulfils the complex meaning-intention.



**Figure 9** The process where the straightforward perception becomes a categorical intuition.

It should be clear from the above that the categorical intuition, like the straightforward perception, is a kind of *process*.<sup>81</sup> It is, in other words, a form that evolves across time in its own particular way. While this form arises on the basis of, and presupposes, the straightforward perception, it is something different from it. Moreover, the categorical intuition is present in the perceptual continuum as a possibility. While, as far as I can see, Husserl does not say this explicitly, that this is his view can be straightforwardly inferred from both the above analysis and the following statements that he does make. Categorical forms (the objective correlates of categorical intuition) Husserl (ibid. p. 288) says, are “...not genuinely present in the unarticulated percept ... as a straightforward phenomenon, but...are in it only as *ideal possibilities*...”<sup>82</sup> Husserl (ibid. p. 286) repeats essentially the same point

<sup>81</sup> “Categorical constitution is a process, just like the constitution effected in [straightforward] perception” (Sokolowski, 1964, p. 68).

<sup>82</sup> Sokolowski (1964, p. 64) comments on this as follows: “It is...misleading to say that a categorical object results from the *application* of a logical form to first-order objects, as though the form existed first and then was placed on them. Instead, all we have to begin with are the first-order objects. An operation is carried out on them which results in a new, higher-order object...The logical form is like the trace of the operation

in reference to the sensible object: “A sensible object can be apprehended by us in a variety of ways. It can, first of all, be apprehended in ‘straightforward’ fashion. It is this possibility, which like all other possibilities here in question must be characterised as ‘ideal’, which characterises the sensible object as sensible object”. ‘All other possibilities here in question’ includes the possibility of the perceptual continuum becoming a categorial intuition. This means, to repeat the point already made, that the *categorial intuition* is contained in the continuum as an ‘ideal possibility’. And it is only a perceptual continuum and not, say, a rock or a wish that is characterised by this possibility. It should be clear that what Husserl is here calling ‘ideal possibilities’ overlaps closely with what I have been calling ‘thingly possibilities’. Husserl’s phenomenological investigations, then, involve listening to and *isolating* thingly possibilities and discerning the unique way that the phenomenon brings these possibilities into being. To listen in to the possibilities of phenomena in this way is just a description of *tuning-in*. But how could one *tune-in* and listen that way unless one *tuned-out* of the possibilities that have been imposed on the phenomenon and that prevent one from hearing what the phenomenon itself is trying to say?

## ii. THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF ĀCARIYA MAHA BOOWA

I tried to show in the last section that phenomenological investigations involve the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*, and on the basis of having *tuned-in*, the nurturing of a kind of *reflection* that allows the manner in which the phenomenon brings its possibilities into being, to be brought into explicit awareness. While in Husserl’s work we fail to find explicit performed on first-order objects; it comes at the end of the process, not at the beginning. It arises in or is constituted by our intentional activity” The crucial point that Sokolowski fails to make here is that the *possibility* of giving rise to the categorial form is an intrinsic possibility of the sensuous or straightforward object. So it is not true that “all we have to begin with are the first order objects”. Rather the first order objects are given in their possibilities, such as the possibility of giving rise to a logical form.

reflections on the nature of the ‘instruments’ (such as mindfulness) that make such work possible—what we do find therein are the concrete results that *signify* (for the one who knows what to lookout for) their inconspicuous background presence. This state of affairs contrasts sharply with the one that we find in the records left behind by a practitioner from whom we are going to attempt to learn from next: a meditation master from the Thai Forest Tradition of Buddhism: Ācariya Maha Boowa. The text that we will be studying ‘*Arahattamagga Arahattapalla: The path to Arahantship*’, can be described as Boowa’s spiritual biography. It contains a quite detailed description of the path of practice Boowa walked towards the final goal of Buddhism (a goal that he is widely believed to have attained). The focus here will primarily be on the ‘second part of the book’, spanning from pages 17 to 32, where the practice of insight is described in quite some detail, and which gives a strong impression of the phenomenological nature of *ātāpi*: the kind of effort that is constitutive of *tuning-out-tuning-in*.

I will begin with the note that the text in question is not concerned with formulating precise definitions of such terms as ‘mindfulness’ and ‘concentration’ (or their Pali or Thai equivalents), nor is its aim to offer careful descriptions of the phenomena at which these terms point. And this is only to be expected. For the text is not a scholarly work. It was compiled from a collection of discourses that Boowa delivered to a mixed audience of monks and lay Buddhist followers, on the theme of “his own path and practice”. Its primary objectives (which in my view it accomplishes remarkably well) are: to motivate the audience to take up the actual practice, to install danger signs at places where the practitioner is likely to encounter obstacles, and to give some impression of the actual fruits that the path can yield. For better or for worse, a philosophical work such as the current one cannot rest content with this but must strive for clarity, both regarding the terms being used and the phenomena being referred to by those terms. This will involve seeing Boowa’s practice from



the perspective of our framework (and seeing our framework from the perspective of his practice). And the hope is that through this dialogue further light will be shed on both.

Three instruments play a key role in Boowa's description of his practice: mindfulness, concentration and insight (wisdom). Mindfulness and concentration—and Boowa's account of the struggle that he went through in trying to gain mastery over them—are described in the first part of the text. The practice of insight (what it involves and of how it relates to mindfulness and concentration) is described in the second. The following discussion proceeds roughly in that order.

The first task will be to align Boowa's description of mindfulness and concentration with our own. I will begin with the notion of 'converging', the event where the mind or awareness (*citta*<sup>83</sup>):

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<sup>83</sup> This term appears to be used in different ways by different Buddhist schools (even within *Theravada* Buddhism). In his translation of the *Abhidhammattha Sangha*, Bodhi (2012, p. 27) writes that "[t]he Pali term *citta* is derived from the verbal root *citi*, to cognize, to know" and he translates the term as 'consciousness' or 'mind': "...the principal element of experience, that which constitutes the knowing or awareness of an object". For Bodhi (*ibid.* pp. 27-29) consciousness seems to mean the transient episodes of awareness that are constantly arising and ceasing "...*citta* is nothing other than the act of cognizing, and that act is necessarily impermanent, marked by rise and fall" (*ibid.*). In the Thai Forest Tradition to which Boowa belongs, however, the term appears to be used in a different way and, there, the distinction is often made between these transient experiences and the underlying, stable awareness (*citta*) that knows them. Another master from this tradition (a student of Boowa's), Venerable Paṇṇāvaḍḍho (2014, pp. 245-246) writes that the masters of...

...The Thai Forest Tradition have always placed a special emphasis on what they call "the one who knows". In doing so they make a fundamental distinction between two different aspects of the mind: the unchanging knower, and the fluctuating states of mind that are known. Because we fail to understand the difference, we take transient mental states to be real, to be the mind itself. In fact, they're just changing conditions that never remain stable from one moment to the next. The knowing essence of the mind [*citta*]<sup>84</sup>—the one who knows—is the only stable reality.

...gathers all of its outflowing currents into one point, this is known as *citta* ‘converging’.

The practice of *samādhi* meditation is a method for concentrating all of these diverse currents into one focal point, thus centering the *citta* into a condition of complete stillness and calm (Boowa, 2012, p. 108).

‘Converging’ and ‘narrowing’, I propose, are alternative but complementary ways of describing concentration or *samādhi*. Allow me to expand upon this. To speak of the primary open horizon as being constituted by a multiplicity of sub-horizons is to speak from the perspective of the *vividly presented* phenomenon itself. It is to be saying something like: this coarse-grained reality is made up of subtler realities. Narrowing, then, is the event where the coarse-grained reality transforms into a subtler reality, and it brings *samādhi* into view from the perspective of the *vividly presented* phenomenon. Now, the division of the coarse-grained phenomenon into subtler phenomena is mirrored in the dispersion of open awareness itself into subtler streams of awareness. This situation is comparable to the correspondence between the implicit parts of the perceived object and the partial-percepts of a straightforward perception that was described in the last section (but keep in mind that the

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Paññāvaḍḍho goes on to say that the term is better left untranslated:

The Pali word “citta” is often used when referring to “the one who knows”. The word *citta* itself is very difficult to translate. When discussing the nature of the *citta*, language has its limitations. Attempts at translating a word like *citta* into English always leads to misunderstanding because no comparable English equivalent exists which encompasses all aspects of its true meaning. In fact, the true nature of the *citta* cannot be expressed in words or concepts. Concepts such as mind, soul or spirit all miss the point...the *citta* is completely unlimited. Because it encompasses everything, the *citta* has no boundaries by which to delineate it.

relation between open awareness and the vividly presented phenomenon is not a intentional relation). In speaking of the mind's 'outflowing' or 'diverse currents', I believe that Boowa is pointing at these dispersed rays of open awareness itself. And just as the vividly presented phenomenon is characterised by the possibility of being narrowed down to one of its constitutive parts, so open awareness is characterised by the possibility of "concentrating these diverse currents into one focal point". 'Converging', therefore, brings *samādhi* into view from the perspective of open awareness itself.

This will help make sense of the difference between that which Boowa calls 'continuous *samādhi*' and 'meditative calm', which is described in the following passage:

...a fundamental difference exists between a state of meditative calm and the *samādhi* state. When the mind converges and drops into a calm, concentrated state to remain for a period of time before withdrawing to normal consciousness, this is known as meditative calm. The calm and concentration are temporary conditions that last while the mind remains fixated in that peaceful state. As normal consciousness returns, these extraordinary conditions gradually dissipate. However, as the meditator becomes more adept at this practice—entering into and withdrawing from a calm, unified state over and over again—the mind begins to build a solid inner foundation. When this foundation becomes unshakable in all circumstances, the mind is known to be in a state of *continuous samādhi*. Then, even when the mind withdraws from meditative calm it still feels solid and compact, as though nothing can disturb its inward focus (ibid. p. 17).

It should be clear that 'meditative calm' stands for *samādhi*. It is not as straightforward, however, to make sense of what '*samādhi*' means in the context of the expression '*continuous samādhi*'. It cannot mean *narrowing* of the open horizon (to resort to that way of looking at *samādhi* for the moment). For in describing this state as 'continuous' and as

being present in ‘all circumstances’, Boowa is pointing towards something that is compatible with the existence of the multiplicities of phenomena that constitute ‘normal’ life. But in *samādhi* this multiplicity disappears as awareness withdraws into subtler and subtler realities. If continuous *samādhi* is not concentration, what is it? The last sentence of the above passage points the way towards an answer. *Continuous samādhi*, according to Boowa, arises from and upon the *withdrawal* from *samādhi* (meditative calm). ‘Withdrawing’, I propose, corresponds to what I earlier called ‘broadening’: the event where the secondary primary horizon reverts to its sub-horizon status reestablishing the awareness of the primary open horizon (see: Part II, Chapter II, Section iv.). In other words, *withdrawal* is the return from *samādhi* to ‘bare’, unmodified mindfulness. This means that ‘continuous *samādhi*’ really means *continuous mindfulness*: the state where the feeling of being *tuned-in* has become one’s *default* state of mind. A mind with continuous mindfulness is...

...always even and unperturbed. It feels completely satisfied. Because of the very compact and concentrated sense of inner unity, everyday thoughts and emotions no longer make an impact...Completely peaceful and contented within itself, nothing is felt to be lacking (ibid. p. 17)

In an apparent conflict with this interpretation, however, the following passage describes continuous *samādhi* as...

...an intense state of focused awareness, assuming a life on its own, independent of any meditative technique. Fully calm and unified, the knowing presence itself became the sole focus of attention, a condition of mind so prominent and powerful that nothing else can arise to dislodge it. This is known as the mind being in a state of continuous *samādhi*. In other words, the *citta* is *samādhi*—both are one and the same thing (ibid.).

Does this description of continuous *samādhi* as an ‘intense state of focused awareness’ not suggest that what is being referred to here is *concentration* after all? To deal with this question, the reader is asked to recall the difference between *samādhi* in the sense of momentary concentration (*khanika samādhi*), and *samādhi* in the proper sense of the term. Unlike the latter (which arises from the narrowing down of the open horizon), momentary concentration is intrinsic to mindfulness; it arises from the ‘narrowing’ of the transcendental to the open horizon. If ‘continuous *samādhi*’ is taken to mean *continuous momentary concentration*, then (in agreement with the above proposal) the expression refers to *continuous mindfulness* as seen from the perspective of its concentration aspect. And I propose that is how the expression should be interpreted. Here it is essential not to underestimate just how unified and focused a mind with momentary concentration really is. Relative to the ordinary mind (dispersed as it is throughout all sorts of projects and worldly concerns) the mindful mind (the mind with momentary concentration) is indeed calm, unified and *intensely* focused. It is only relative to ‘*samādhi*’ in the proper sense, that such adjectives may appear as inappropriate when applied to it.

This suggests that the practice of *samādhi*—“entering into and withdrawing from a calm, unified state over and over again”—can yield the state of continuous mindfulness. Does this not imply that mindfulness is dependent on concentration? And is that not in opposition to our account, according to which concentration is dependent on, and arises from within, mindfulness (the possibility of narrowing the open horizon opens up only once one has first *tuned-in* to it)? The conflict is only apparent. In certain cases, it can appear *as if* concentration is developed first and that mindfulness arises consequentially. This happens in the case of the practitioner who cultivates the possibility of narrowing—without first developing the feeling of being *tuned-in* independently, for its own sake. In the experience of such a practitioner, mindfulness and concentration may even be indistinguishable. Until

and unless, that is, the practitioner reaches the point in the practice where *samādhi* drops off, (i.e. the practitioner withdraws from *samādhi*) while the feeling of being *tuned-in* (and the associated momentary concentration) remains as a continuous state of mind. In other words, the cultivation of *samādhi* is at the same time the cultivation of mindfulness, even if the practitioner is not explicitly conscious of this fact. This can be described as the practice of ‘indirectly cultivating’ mindfulness. This is comparable to the following situation. Suppose, if only for argument’s sake, that the feeling of anger presupposes the feeling of being hurt: whenever I am angry with someone, I have also been hurt in some way (either by the person at whom I am angry or by someone else). Consequently, whenever I allow anger to arise and grow in my mind I am at the same time allowing the underlying feeling of hurt to grow and increase. But I may not be explicitly aware that anger is dependent on the feeling of being hurt (the two may be indistinguishable in my experience), and that the increase in the former leads to an increase of the latter. Nevertheless, whenever I ‘cultivate’ anger I am at the same time (indirectly) ‘cultivating’ the feeling of being hurt, and it is possible that, after the anger disappears, the feeling of being hurt remains as my default mood. Likewise, even if concentration is dependent on and can only arise from within mindfulness (as the preceding chapter tried to show), it is still possible to cultivate concentration without *directly* cultivating (or even being explicitly aware of the presence of) mindfulness. This very well may be the path that Boowa himself took. This would explain why he emphasises the concentrative dimension of mindfulness instead of the other ways of seeing the phenomenon.

Not only is mastery of mindfulness and concentration not the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path, there is even a danger of becoming the victim of one’s success in these practices. The bliss and tranquility of these states may so enthrall the practitioner that he or she drops the motivation to develop further towards insight or wisdom. On this, Boowa (p.

18) writes:

... with *samādhi* as its habitual condition, the mind feels no desire to think about anything. It views thoughts as an unwanted disturbance...the *citta* is so inwardly concentrated that it tolerates no disturbances. Because of this sublime tranquility—and the tendency of *samādhi* to lull the mind into this state of serene satisfaction—those whose minds have attained continuous *samādhi* tend to become strongly attached to it.

A little later in the text, Boowa (p. 32) retells his own experience of getting ‘stuck’ in this way:

The problem is that *samādhi* is so peaceful and satisfying that the meditator inadvertently becomes addicted to it. This happened to me: for five years I was addicted to the tranquility of *samādhi*; so much so that I came to believe that this very tranquility was the essence of Nibbāna. Only when my teacher, Ācariya Mun, forced me to confront this misconception, was I able to move on to the practice of wisdom.

For us, too, the time is right to move towards the theme of insight and wisdom. As a first step in that direction, it is necessary to bring into view Boowa’s subject matter on which he will practice insight (*vipassanā*). The second part of the text describes, in Boowa’s (p. 31) own words, “...the path for those who are practicing meditation so as to penetrate to the truth of the *khandhas* [aggregates], using painful feelings as the primary focus”. For our purposes, however, it is not sufficient to know merely *that* painful feelings are the subject matter. It is also necessary to understand *how* they came to be so. How, in other words, does the pain ‘announce’ itself as a theme of insight? The following passage describes the moment the pain appears in Boowa’s awareness:

While sitting one night I started focusing inward as usual. Because it had already developed a good, strong foundation, the *citta* easily entered into *samādhi*. So long as the *citta* rested

there calmly, it remained unaware of external bodily feelings. But when I withdrew from *samādhi* many hours later I began to experience them in full. Eventually, my body was so racked by severe pain that I could hardly cope. The *citta* was suddenly unnerved, and its good, strong foundation completely collapsed. The entire body was filled with such excruciating pain that it quivered all over (ibid. p. 18).

The first task is to align the main points with our framework. While practicing meditation one night, Boowa narrowed down the open horizon to such an extent that the sub-horizon of pain completely vanished from his awareness; he “entered into *samādhi* [and while in that state] remained unaware of external bodily feelings”. Many hours later, Boowa withdrew from *samādhi*. This means: through *broadening*, the primary open horizon was reestablished in his awareness. As at this stage of his spiritual development Boowa had reached the state of *continuous mindfulness*—upon withdrawing from *samādhi* he did not return to the ordinary way of relating to the world (mindlessly pursuing projects) but instead remained established in the feeling of being *tuned-in*. It is at this point that the pain *appears*. This means that Boowa’s initial encounter with the pain takes place from within the open perspective—implying that he is going through the ‘excruciating pain’ at the same time as he is experiencing the calm and equanimity that is intrinsic to the feeling of being *tuned-in*. The following passage seems to support this interpretation:

Although the bodily pain was obviously very strong, I could see that the *citta* was calm and unafflicted. No matter how much discomfort the body suffered, the *citta* was not distressed or agitated. This intrigued me. Normally the *kilesas* [mental defilements] join forces with pain, and this alliance causes the *citta* to be disturbed by the body’s suffering (ibid. p. 20).

But how to harmonise this with the statement (quoted above), that with the appearance of



the pain his mind was “...suddenly unnerved, and its good, strong foundation completely collapsed”? Moreover, the following description makes it quite clear that in an important sense Boowa continues to identify with the pain:

The pain began as hot flashes along the backs of my hands and feet, but that was really quite mild. When it arose in full force, the entire body was ablaze with pain. All the bones, and the joints connecting them, were like fuel feeding the fire that engulfed the body. It felt as though every bone in my body was breaking apart; as though my neck would snap and my head drop to the floor. When all parts of the body hurt at once, the pain is so intense that one doesn't know how to begin stemming the tide long enough just to breathe (ibid. p. 19).

There is a tension here. On the one hand, Boowa is openly aware and *tuned-in* to the pain—he does not identify with it but allows it to unfold in accordance with its own possibilities. On the other hand, he continues to experience the pain as an aspect of his psycho-physical identity, as something happening to and within himself. Two notions will play a key role in dissolving, or at least lessening, the tension: *thematization* and the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*.

*Thematization* (which precedes the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*) is the event where one's projects—which were previously mindlessly pursued through external action—appear explicitly or *thematically* as contents of internal acts: such as thoughts, expectations and images (see: Part I, Chapter II, section iii.). In a slightly different form, *thematization* continues to play a role in the practice even after mindfulness has been established, as I will now explain. The feeling of being *tuned-in* to thingly possibilities is at the same time the feeling of being *tuned-out* of one's projects. But this is only a *temporary* freedom, where the projects retreat into a kind of *dormancy*. What can happen from here is that—with mindfulness established—a dormant project stirs into life: it arises *thematically* before the

mind tempting the practitioner into becoming mindlessly absorbed in it. In Boowa's case, this is the project of avoiding the pain:

The desire to get rid of pain is a *kilesa* [mental defilement] that increases the level of discomfort by turning physical feeling [read: vividly presented pain] into emotional suffering. The stronger the pain is, the stronger the desire to rid oneself of it becomes, which leads to greater emotional distress (ibid. p. 29).

This is what I think is happening here. For a few moments, Boowa is *tuned-in* to the possibilities of the pain itself. But with the *thematization* of the project of avoiding the pain, the *vividly presented* pain transforms into pain *to-be-avoided*. This transformation throws Boowa out of the open perspective into the natural perspective.<sup>84</sup> From here, his task is to *tune-in* to the pain again, and so on. Here Boowa finds himself in that meta-stable place, which the last chapter compared to the boundary that exists between a nightmare and wakefulness. And it is here that it is necessary to engage in the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*. But the following should be noted. In the cultivation of mindfulness, the practitioner is standing in the natural perspective and is attempting to *tune-in* to the open perspective. But here Boowa is already established in the open perspective and the role of *tuning-out-tuning-in* is to *preserve* and *protect* what has already been won. Nevertheless, the kind of effort that this practice calls for is the same. This is *ātāpi*. Let us now see if we can say something more positive about its phenomenological nature.

### *iii. EFFORT*

From what we know up to this point, *ātāpi* is a constitutive moment of *tuning-out-*

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<sup>84</sup> Or it could be the transcendental. But for the sake of simplicity here I will focus on the natural.

*tuning-in*; it can be conceived as a kind of force that lives in the space represented by the middle '-'. The last chapter showed that this is not the kind of effort that goes into the realisation of a project. But there the question was left open: what is *ātāpi* in positive terms? And how does it differ from that which is usually called 'effort'? The discussion has brought us to a place where these questions can be addressed more thoroughly. To make a start, consider the following way of describing Boowa's initial encounter with the pain. At first, he has the pain in view; he is mindful and *tuned-in* to it. With the *thematization* of the project to get rid of it, the *vividly presented* pain withdraws from his awareness. Having 'lost' the pain in this way, his task is to bring it into view again. And for a while he succeeds. But before long the pain withdraws again, and so on. *Ātāpi* is the effort that goes into keeping the meditation object in view in this way, of preventing it from withdrawing. I think that most meditators will see in this a fair description of their practice. Underneath this apparently straightforward description, however, some profound things are going on.

To show this, it will help to contrast the situation that the meditator finds himself in here, with that of the ornithologist. The ornithologist is trying to keep track of a bird that cannot stop fretting about—which rests still for a few moments before suddenly flittering away in a flash, frustrating the observer's attempts to keep it in view. One moment the bird is there, in the purview of the binoculars. In the next, it 'withdraws' and is lost from sight. On the surface, the meditator's relation to his meditation object (in the context of *tuning-out-tuning-in*) appears to share a similar structure with the relation that obtains between the ornithologist and the bird. But note the following difference. In the latter case, the loss of the subject matter leaves the observer (and the instruments) *intrinsically* unaltered. When the bird disappears from sight, both the scientist and her binoculars remain intrinsically what they were before. It would be absurd to say that the disappearance of the bird altered the observer in any way other than removing the *relational properties* that obtained between

them. The case is quite different in the case of the meditator. Here the loss or withdrawal of the subject matter implies an *intrinsic* modification of the observer. Let us look closer.

What does it mean to ‘lose’ the pain, for it to withdraw? It means that one is no longer conscious of the pain *as it is*, the pain no longer appears as *vividly present* and in the light of its own (thingly) possibilities. Rather, the pain now appears in the light of one’s own possibilities, such as the project of realising a pain-free state. Projecting a possibility of ours into its *unfolding-towards* structure transforms the *vividly presented* pain in a manner comparable to the way that a projection modifies the perceptual continuum into a straightforward perception (see: the last section, especially Figure 7.) Here I will only mention a couple of characteristics of this transformation, leaving a more detailed treatment for another occasion. Firstly, what were previously distinct and differentiated instances of pain now become *merged* in such a way that, on a higher level, something that I will call ‘psychical pain’ appears. Psychical pain is a relatively uniform and persistent structure. It is experienced as an *actual* state of my *actual* body, itself apprehended as an *actual* dimension of my psycho-physical self. To put it differently, the projection brings about a shift from the open to the natural perspective. Second, this psychical pain is characterised by the instrumental meaning *to-be-overcome*. And to respond to this instrumental solicitation—which means nothing else than becoming mindlessly absorbed in the project of avoiding the pain—is for the pain to withdraw, for it to be ‘lost from sight’. It is at this point that the *vividly presented* pain becomes *suffering*:

...when you believe that you are your body, and your body hurts, then you are in pain. Being equated, body, pain and the awareness that perceives them then converge into one: your painful body (ibid. p. 25)

As I said, the thematised project is the catalyst of this transformation. And this project is

itself a manifestation of delusion (*avijja*). As Boowa (ibid. p. 22) writes...

...pain, body and *citta* are all distinctly separate phenomena. But because of a single mental defilement—delusion—they all converge into one. Delusion pervades the *citta* like an insidious poison, contaminating our perceptions and distorting the truth. Pain is simply a natural phenomenon that occurs on its own. But when we grab hold of it as a burning discomfort, it immediately becomes hot—because our defining it in that way makes it hot.

The key point here is the following one. *The transformation or withdrawal of the vividly presented pain, is at the same time the transformation of open awareness (in front of which the pain was allowed to be what it is).* In other words, the ‘loss’ of the subject matter is at the same time the loss of the observer. It is not as if, to describe the alternative situation, the pain simply disappears or withdraws from open awareness, leaving the latter as it is (which *is* the situation of the ornithologist when she loses track of the bird).<sup>85</sup> This opens up a new way of understanding the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*, and the kind of effort that this practice calls for.

Turning back to Boowa’s description, *tuning-out-tuning-in* can be described as the practice preventing the pain from becoming “...bound up with one’s sense of being”, of not allowing oneself to become “entangled in [the pain]” (ibid. p. 29). This is the practice of not allowing oneself to interpret:

...the pain in personal terms, as an inseparable part of who you are, for that runs counter to the pain’s true nature. It also undermined the techniques used to investigate the pain, preventing wisdom from knowing the reality of feelings (ibid. 27).

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<sup>85</sup> Of course, the pain can be lost in the sense of ceasing, in which case open awareness can remain unaltered. But the cessation of the pain is something different from its withdrawal from open awareness.

Here ‘entanglement’ can be defined as the event where open awareness (instead of simply allowing the phenomenon to be what it is) incorporates the phenomenon into its own identity.<sup>86</sup> This has the effect of transforming open awareness into psycho-physical awareness. The practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in* can therefore be described as the practice of transforming one’s very mode of being or way of existing. Here one goes from the human mode of existence (which is characterised by psycho-physical self awareness, and wherein the phenomena are either incorporated as something ‘internal’ or they are pushed out as something ‘external’ to this self), to a mode of being that allows the phenomena to be what it is. This allows the difference between *ātāpi*, and what is usually called ‘effort’, to come into a sharper focus. That which is usually called ‘effort’ is the expenditure of energy required to transform an *unrealised* into a *realised* project. This is a transformation within the human mode of being, and the effort that this transformation calls for is the effort to transform the human being from one mode or state into another. By contrast, *ātāpi* is the effort called for in order to bring about a transformation from the human mode of being to a different mode of being that is characterised by open awareness and thingly possibilities. Or, conversely, *ātāpi* can also be described as the effort required to prevent open awareness from transforming into psycho-physical awareness.

Earlier I suggested that the practice of cultivating mindfulness should not be conceived as a kind of attention *training* (Part I, Chapter III, Section iv.). To train attention is to attempt to take control of reality in a particular way (my attention is like *this*, but I want it to be like *that*). The above discussion gives us even more reasons to look at things in this way. Any

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<sup>86</sup> Besides ‘entanglement’, Boowa speaks of this process as a ‘converging’ (not to be confused with the ‘converging’ of *samādhi*) ‘merging’, ‘lumping’ and a ‘binding’ together of (to put it in our own terms) the vividly presented phenomena with the open awareness.

attempt to control a phenomenon (in the fundamental sense of inserting a project into its open horizon), will have the effect of transforming open awareness itself into psycho-physical awareness. As soon as you attempt to control something, you lose yourself. But the ‘purpose’ of *tuning-out-tuning-in* is precisely to prevent such a transformation, and this implies that such a practice is incompatible with the *will-to-control*. *Ātāpi* is much more like the ‘effort’ that goes into *trusting* something or someone. To assume the opposite attitude is to be saying to one’s meditation subject: “I do not trust you! I cannot allow you to be what you are! I must jump in to the drama and tell you what to do and what you should become, even if the price that I have to pay for that is the price of becoming something other than what I actually am (the open awareness that allows things to be what they are)”. To practice *tuning-in-tuning-out* is to practice letting go of the habit of speaking to things in this way.

I am not going to sit here and pretend that the above is the final word on the matter. Indeed, it is no more than a start. But, alas, it is a start nevertheless. To end this discussion of *ātāpi*, I will leave the reader with a couple of analogies that may help bring this phenomenon into a sharper focus.

Perhaps the closest parallel to the above situation (that the natural attitude has to offer) is found in an experience that one can have when looking at oneself in the mirror (here it may help to imagine one of those unusual mirrors that stretch and warp the reflection in all sorts of ways). Imagine that you are looking into a mirror, but instead of apprehending what you see as a reflection of *yourself*, you are aware of it as a mosaic of colours and shapes. Here there is a clear sense of the difference between the observed and the observer. This stance is not easy to maintain, however. Soon enough, you will apprehend the mosaic *as yourself*. And with that transformation, the sharp line that previously existed between the observer and the observed is obliterated. But here you can engage in the following kind of practice. Once *you* begin to appear in the mirror, gently distance yourself from *yourself* and

try to apprehend the mosaic of colours and shapes as they are. You may succeed for a while, but soon enough, you will be pulled in again. This is comparable to the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in*. To allow the pain to unfold *as it is*, is like being aware of the mosaic. To become entangled with the pain is like apprehending the mosaic as yourself.

The second analogy resorts back to the dream. Suppose that some pain appears while you are in a lucid dream. Being lucid you can come to the understanding that this pain is just another manifestation within the mind that is dreaming the dream; that the pain is no more to be identified with than anything else in the dream. You can at least imagine standing back from the pain and allowing it to be what it is. But, suddenly, you lose the lucid perspective and become immersed in the dream. At that moment you become completely bound up with the pain, which you apprehend as something happening to your dream character. Imagine now that you are not completely drawn in to the dreaming perspective. You still feel the possibility of entering the lucid perspective. Latching onto this possibility, you reenter the lucid perspective once more and see the pain as something outside of you. But, soon enough, you are drawn in again... Consider the kind of effort required to maintain yourself in the lucid perspective, to resist the tendency to build a self-identity around the pain. This is clearly not like the effort that goes into changing the dream world in any way; of realising some project within the dream. It is something quite different.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Here it is instructive to contrast this situation (where one is switching back and forth between the lucid and the dreaming perspective) with the one where the dream character tries to focus on the pain by controlling his or her attention. In the later situation, the pain is apprehended as something within the dream towards which the dream character turns and which it tries to keep in view. But this is obviously something very different from the practice of entering the lucid perspective, removing the dream character and allowing the pain to be what it is.



#### *iv. INSIGHT*

Success in *tuning-out-tuning-in* stabilises the open perspective. One is now *tuned-in*. But that only brings about a *temporary* freedom from desires and discontent, and in particular from the project of escaping the pain (by realising a pain-free state). At any point, the dormant project may stir into life again. In order to become *permanently* free of this project (to cut it off at the root) it is necessary to develop the feeling of being *tuned-in* in the direction of insight (*vipassanā*). In other words, it is necessary to see the *truth* of the pain, what it really is—for that is the only way that the mind will let go of the tendency to identify with it. What is the nature of the practice that makes such an insight possible? And how does it arise from within the feeling of being *tuned-in*? What role, if any, does concentration play in this? These are some of the questions that the following continuation of our dialogue with Boowa will concern itself with.

In order to develop mindfulness into insight, according to Boowa, the meditator should not “...avoid the pain by focusing...attention elsewhere” and should “...resist any temptation to wish for the pain to go away” (ibid. p.26). The disappearance of the pain (if it comes) will arise as a consequence of insight. But it should not be posited as the goal of the practice:

...the neutralization of pain is merely a by-product of the clear understanding of the principle of truth. It cannot be taken as the primary objective. That will only create the conditions for greater emotional stress when the relief one wishes for fails to materialize (ibid.).

With the *vividly presented* pain in view, the meditator should *avoid* “...concentrating single-mindedly on pain to the exclusion of [other phenomena]...” (ibid. 27). Instead, the task is to “...[f]ocus directly on painful feelings when they arise and strive to understand their true

nature” (ibid.). But is there not a tension here? What is the difference between ‘concentrating single-mindedly’ and ‘focusing directly’?

Here I will outline two possible interpretations of what ‘focusing directly’ may mean. The first interpretation resorts to the idea of *mindful attention*—the form that attention takes within the feeling of being *tuned-in*. With the primary open horizon in view, the possibility exists of *foregrounding* one of its sub-horizons, which will have the effect of pushing the other sub-horizons into the *background* of the primary open horizon. This is a form of attention that can only arise within the feeling of being *tuned-in* (the disclosure of the open horizon). *Mindful* attention (as the function of foregrounding *vividly presented* phenomena) is therefore something quite different from ordinary attention (which foregrounds *actual objects*). *Mindful attention* also differs from concentration. The latter *narrows* down the primary horizon to a sub-horizon and this has the effect of removing the other sub-horizons from awareness altogether. Mindful attention, by contrast, only *highlights* or *foregrounds* a sub-horizon—while keeping both the primary horizon and the other sub-horizons in the background of awareness (from where they can be *foregrounded* at any point). According to the first interpretation of ‘focusing directly’, then, this expression designates the *foregrounding* of a sub-horizon within the primary open horizon.

According to the other possible interpretation of ‘focusing directly’, the development of mindfulness into insight *does* involve the narrowing of the primary horizon to one of its sub-horizons—here the sub-horizon of pain. But this narrowing cannot go so far as to remove the possibility of *broadening* from awareness altogether. In contrast to this, ‘focusing single-mindedly’ (which is what the meditator should not do), designates the situation where the narrowing is developed to such an extent that the possibility of *broadening* disappears from awareness.<sup>88</sup> Focusing single-mindedly is what the meditator

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<sup>88</sup> Boowa (ibid. p. 36) suggest that when the mind converges deep into *samādhi*, *broadening* (*withdrawing*)

should not do because (as we are about to see) the practice of insight requires that the meditator is able to zoom in and out of the sub-horizons in order to *contrast* and *compare* them.

It seems to me that both interpretations of ‘focusing directly’ allow for the possibility of zooming in and out (albeit in different ways). According to the passage below, however, *samādhi* is not essential to insight practice but only a kind of a complement to it. This suggests that by ‘focusing directly’ Boowa was probably referring to the *foregrounding* function of *mindful attention*:

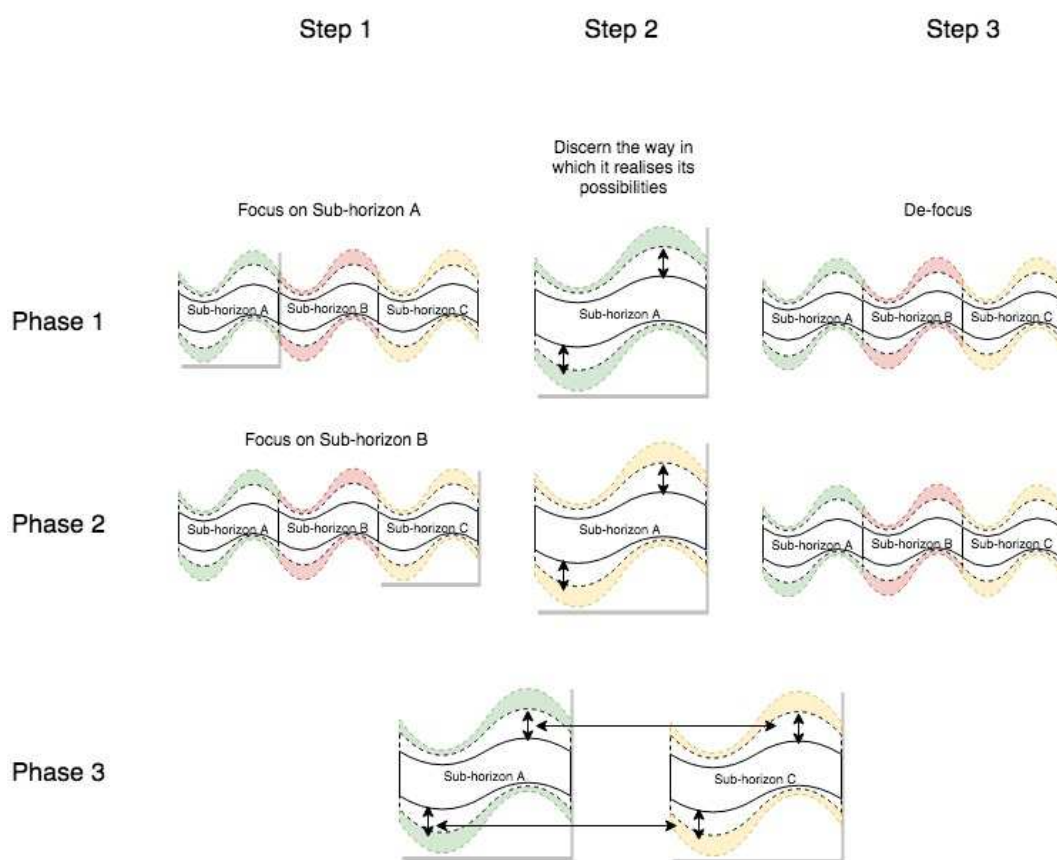
When fatigue sets in, experienced meditators know instinctively that the time is right to rest the mind in *samādhi*. So they drop all aspects of the investigation and concentrate solely on one object. Totally unburdening themselves, they enter into the cool, composed, rejuvenating peace of *samādhi*. In this way *samādhi* is a separate practice altogether. No thoughts of any kind infringe upon the *citta*’s essential knowing nature while it rests peacefully with single-minded concentration. With the *citta* absorbed in total stillness, the body and the external world temporarily disappear from awareness. Once the *citta* is satiated, it withdraws to normal consciousness on its own. Like a person who eats a full meal and takes a good rest, mindfulness and wisdom are refreshed and ready to return to the work with renewed energy. Then, with purposeful resolve, the practice of *samādhi* is put aside and the practice of wisdom re-established. In this way, *samādhi* is an outstanding complement to wisdom (ibid. pp. 39-40)

*Mindful attention* will play a crucial role in the following description of how the feeling of being *tuned-in* develops into the practice of insight (*vipassanā*). In order to set the stage, it is important to keep in mind that, in this phase of the practice, Boowa is trying to

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cannot be brought about intentionally but occurs passively “[o]nce the mind is satiated with *samādhi*, it withdraws on its own...”

achieve insight into the difference between pain (*vedanā*), materiality (*rūpa*), and awareness (*citta*). For the sake of simplicity, I will here focus on the path of insight that leads to direct knowledge of the difference between pain and materiality. According to my interpretation, the development of mindfulness into *vipassanā* proceeds in three phases, which are represented in *Figure 10*. Keep in mind that this practice presupposes that the practitioner is established in the feeling of being *tuned-in*.



**Figure 10** A representation of the steps involved in the development of mindfulness into *vipassanā*.

In **phase 1**, the task is to:

...[f]ocus clearly...and don't allow your [*mindful attention*] to wonder from the specific point you are investigating. Keep it firmly fixed on one aspect. For instance, focus your full

[*mindful*] attention on the pain and analyze it until you understand its distinguishing characteristics... (ibid. 27).

Phase 1 can be divided into three steps. The first involves *foregrounding* the sub-horizon of pain (represented in Figure 10 as the green sub-horizon A). This will involve ‘flowing’ with the pain’s natural rhythm—the meditator should “sweep through the areas that hurt and then whirl around the most intense ones” (ibid. p. 20). The reason that the meditator is instructed to whirl around the intense pain, I propose, is because those areas are likely to reawaken the project of escaping the pain, thereby throwing the meditator out of the open perspective. Having become intimate with the natural flow of the pain in this way, the second step of phase 1 involves *isolating* the ‘distinguishing characteristics’ of the pain. This, I propose, involves explicating the unique way that pain brings its possibilities into being, the unique way in which the different phases of the pain *unfold-towards, unfold-from, unfold-together-with* each other (this is represented in Figure 10 under step 2 with the line with arrows at each end). In the third and final step of phase 1, the task is to *de-focus* (another function of *mindful attention*) back into the primary open horizon (and bring all the sub-horizons into view).

From here, **phase 2** begins. The task now is to “...turn to look at the *citta* [or materiality] and strive to know its true nature directly” (ibid.). The second and third steps of phase 2 are the same as those of phase 1, except that the meditator is now working with a different phenomenon. In the case at hand, the meditator now *foregrounds* the *material* aspect of the phenomenon, say the material aspect of the knee that is in pain (represented in Figure 10 by the yellow sub-horizon C). In the next step, the task is to *discern* the way that materiality unfolds its possibility. In this way the meditator’s work is to “separate out and isolate each aspect”, “...always working to separate the feeling from the body”, “[h]aving observed the body, [mindfulness and *vipassanā*] quickly shifted their attention to the

pain...” (ibid. p. 20). This suggests that the movement from phase 1 to phase 2 is not linear but involves a back-and-forth movement: the meditator investigates the pain, shifts to materiality, investigates it for some time before shifting *mindful attention* back to the pain again and so on. And in this way the meditator becomes intimate with both phenomena. One consequence of having become intimate with, and understood the way that, these phenomena bring their possibilities into being will be that they will stand out in the primary horizon with a certain *prominence* (they will exhort a stronger *allure* than the sub-horizons that did not feature in the investigation, which will withdraw into a kind of a background).

**Phase 3** takes off from here and it involves *foregrounding* both A and C (e.g. pain and materiality) *within* the primary open horizon and putting them into a kind of a *relation*. The task here is to ask “Are the two identical? Compare them” (ibid. p.27) Through this relational process, the fact that *A* is *different from* B can itself become *vividly present*. And here one may actually come to *see*: feeling (*vedāna*) is different than materiality (*rūpa*). And this opens up the space for understanding that, since the body and pain are intrinsically different phenomenon, the painful feeling are not a threat to the body.<sup>89</sup> It is only because awareness is ignorant of how things are that things appear to be so. And actually seeing this is for *vipassanā* to become *panna* or wisdom. But that is a topic for another day.

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<sup>89</sup> I will note here, however, that this only describes the process of gaining insight into the difference of phenomena. Arguably a modification of this process is involved in coming to know other relations between phenomena, such as the fact that phenomena A is dependent on phenomenon B. But it is too late in the discussion to go into this.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This work set out to accomplish two major objectives: to articulate a phenomenology of mindfulness, and related phenomena, and to work out the implications of that phenomenology for some of the main themes of classical phenomenology. Having now reached the concluding part of the discussion, it will help to present, in summary, the key findings and point the way that future investigations of this kind could take.

*What is mindfulness?* Mindfulness is the feeling of being *tuned-in* to the open *perspective* or *horizon*—a horizon filled-in by *thingly possibilities*. But just as the state of sleep must be distinguished from the experience of falling asleep, so mindfulness must be distinguished from the practice of cultivating mindfulness. This is the practice of *tuning-out* of the transcendental horizon—a horizon filled-in by our possibilities—and of *tuning-in* to the open horizon. *What kind of effort does the practice of tuning-out-tuning-in call for?* It calls for the effort to *transform* oneself from the psycho-physical self (which either incorporates the phenomenon into its self-identity or stands opposed to it as something external-to-self) into *open awareness* that allows the phenomenon to be what it is. From a different angle, this is the effort required to *trust* the phenomenon to unfold in accordance with its own possibilities. *What is the relationship between mindfulness and attention?* Mindful attention—the kind of attention that can only arise from within the feeling of being *tuned-in*—is the function of *foregrounding* a sub-horizon within the primary open horizon and pushing the other sub-horizons into the background (from where they can be *foregrounded*). Mindful attention differs from concentration (*samādhi*) in that the latter involves the *narrowing down* of the open horizon to one of its sub-horizons—which then becomes the new (secondary) primary horizon. This operation is repeatable and the number of repetitions determines the depth of concentration. *How does mindfulness give rise to insight (vipassanā)?* Here it is a matter of *foregrounding* (via mindful attention) a sub-

horizon, *isolating* and *discerning* its possibility structure, zooming out, *foregrounding* another sub-horizon, *isolating* and *discerning* the way it brings its possibilities into being and then stepping back and *contrasting* the two in such a way that their difference becomes *vividly present*. *How does this practice relate to phenomenological seeing?* I tried to show that—at least in so far as Husserl’s phenomenological investigations are concerned—there is no difference; Husserl was practicing *tuning-in-tuning-out*, and through insight (*vipassanā*), bringing into explicit awareness the different ways that phenomena realise their possibilities.

This work does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatment of these phenomena. It only represents a beginning and an illustration of a possible way that a dialogue between Western phenomenology and Buddhism could proceed. In the remainder of this discussion, I would like to highlight four possible paths that future investigations of this kind could take.

(1) Remaining in the context of Husserlian phenomenology, there are at least two important issues on which a future work of this kind could focus. The first would involve undertaking a comparison between *vipassanā* (the kind of insight practice that mindfulness makes possible and which, as I tried to show, Husserl actually makes use of in his actual work) and the *eidetic reduction*. To briefly point out one difference that I think separates the two approaches: while in the practice of *vipassanā* the practitioner must at all times remain close and intimate with the phenomenon—with the actual, factual reality as it brings its possibilities into being—the *eidetic reduction*, while it also begins with an actual example, quickly moves into the sphere of imagination, into the generation of possible variants which (in a certain way) takes the eidetic practitioner away from the factual situation. To illustrate, remember how essential it was for Boowa to remain present with the actual pain and how this called for a strong resolution not to escape the pain in any way—which would include imagining variants of the pain that he was currently experiencing. And, counter intuitively perhaps, it is in these moments of crisis that true insight and wisdom grow. As Boowa (2012,



p. 19) himself says: “Before I found myself cornered like that with no way out, I never imagined that wisdom could be so sharp and incisive”. Such a comparison may have important lessons to teach us about the very nature and role of philosophical reflection in our lives. Generally speaking, in the Western tradition, it seems that the philosopher is allowed to direct his reflective powers to anything whatsoever that strikes his fancy. In Buddhism, by stark contrast, the subject matter of insight emerges from concrete life itself—from within the feeling of being *tuned-in*. Boowa did not arbitrarily chose pain as his subject matter. Rather, the pain arose with a real force, announcing itself as *the* subject that is to be investigated. Instead of saying that Boowa chose the pain, it would be closer to the truth to say that the pain chose him. This line of thought—which brings philosophical reflection back into contact with concrete life and with a particular kind of *practice*—could have serious implications for the very meaning of what it is to do philosophy and engage in philosophical reflection.<sup>90</sup>

From the exposition of Husserl’s phenomenology in this work, the reader may have the impression that Husserl was completely blind (in so far as his explicit reflections are concerned at least) to the open perspective and its rich phenomenological structure. I actually do not think that is the case. I think that Husserl did glimpse the open perspective (but it was no more than a glimpse) under the heading of the *hyletic data*. According to Husserl, every intentional experience can be divided into two dimensions: the *noetic* and the *noematic*. Where the noetic further splits into: the noesis (the apprehending forms) and the *hyletic data* (the material that these forms take up and work over). Now one way, and I think

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<sup>90</sup> Ajahn Chah advises that one should not force oneself into insight but should wait until the subject matter arises on its own:

...in meditation, only when something comes up should you investigate. Otherwise, merely contemplate your present experience. Simply maintain the mindfulness to be aware of that. If nothing comes up, then rest at ease (Jayasaro, 2017, p. 396).

it is the most productive way, to understand the transcendental, is to restrict it to these apprehending forms, the *noesis*, and their *noematic* correlates—and I think this is how Husserl’s followers, such as Sartre and Heidegger, went on to conceive the transcendental. But I believe that this identification of the transcendental with the *noesis* and *noema* should not lead us to abandon the idea of the *hyletic data*. For the *hyletic data* could be interpreted as a manifestation of the open perspective.<sup>91</sup> To complete the picture, the natural perspective would then arise as a consequence of the transcendental perspective ‘imposing itself’ on the open perspective. While in his actual investigation Husserl was indeed *tuning-in* to the phenomenon he was studying—to the very *impression* of those phenomena before they are taken up and worked over by our meanings—he never took up the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in* for its own sake.<sup>92</sup> If he did, he may have come to an explicit awareness of the

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<sup>91</sup> It is revealing that in certain writings Husserl described the *hyle* as being ‘alien to (transcendental) consciousness’, as something that transcendental consciousness ‘receives’ from the outside (Husserl, 1991, p. 93).

<sup>92</sup> Why didn’t Husserl (and others, like Sartre) take up this practice of *tuning-out* of the transcendental and *tuning-in* to the open perspective? I suspect that there is a very deep and important reason for this. I believe that the transcendental perspective overlaps with what the Buddhist texts speak of as ‘ignorance’ (*avijja*): the force that hides and obscures the truth. Here ‘ignorance’ is not just an absence of some propositional knowledge but a real, tangible force, as Bodhi (1994, p. 10) writes:

Ignorance is not mere absence of knowledge, a lack of knowing particular pieces of information. Ignorance can co-exist with a vast accumulation of itemized knowledge, and in its own way it can be tremendously shrewd and resourceful. As the basic root of dukkha [suffering], ignorance is a fundamental darkness shrouding the mind. Sometimes this ignorance operates in a passive manner, merely obscuring correct understanding. At other times it takes on an active role: it becomes the great deceiver, conjuring up a mass of distorted perception and conceptions which the mind grasps as attributes of the world, unaware that they are its own deluded constructs.

open perspective and of its difference from the transcendental. And then he may have realised that to see the open perspective as ‘hyle’—as material for consciousness to work over—is to see it as if through a veil. Nevertheless, Husserl’s investigations into the hyletic dimension could shed further light on the structure of the open perspective, the feeling of being *tuned-in* and other related phenomena and it would make for an interesting project to attempt to draw these lessons. Given that arguably no other idea of Husserl’s has been attacked more viciously (especially by other phenomenologists) than the idea of the *hyle*, any possible attempt to defend the suggestion that the hyletic dimension overlaps with the open perspective would need to consider and answer these objections. I personally think that the objection can be answered, and that this would be a very worthwhile thing to do.

On a more general note, I think that this blurred vision of the open perspective is a symptom of a wider disease that has taken hold of many thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition, especially in the transcendental tradition inaugurated by Kant. In Kant himself, I believe, the open perspective only appears under the title ‘sensations’—the very stuff that the forms of understanding and intuition shape into the phenomenal world. Arguably this blindness to the open perspective (to the open awareness beyond transcendental awareness) is most severe in Sartre, who could only conceive the dimension ‘beyond’ the *for-itself* as the *in itself*—an absurd meaningless mode of being about which nothing can be said, for it has no meaning in itself; all the meaning comes from (human/transcendental) consciousness. If Sartre had spent some time learning to meditate, he might have acquired the ability to penetrate into this “in itself” and to discover a whole new dimension of being, a rich and wondrous reality. But, in some sense, it is unsurprising

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If this is so then there is something intrinsic in the transcendental perspective that prevents us from *tuning-in* to the open perspective and seeing things as they are. And it is this force that we are fighting against when we practice *tuning-in-tuning-out*. I hope to address this at some length in the near future. This important issue arose in conversation with Yuko Ishihara, who I would also like to thank for reminding me of it.

that this general blindness to the open perspective should exist. For in order to really experience this reality ‘outside’ the transcendental subject, it is necessary to cultivate mindfulness, to practice *tuning-out-tuning-in*, and as we have seen that is no straightforward matter, and it requires nothing less than a transformation of our very manner of being (and, as I will discuss below, also a transformation of our ethical life). This brings us to Heidegger.

(2) Remaining in the context of *Being and Time*<sup>93</sup>, the question could be raised: *what implications does this account of mindfulness have for our understanding of the human being’s mode of being, and of its relation to other modes of being?* Conversely: *how can Heidegger’s phenomenological/ontological study of the different modes of being in Being and Time help further refine our account of mindfulness, and related phenomena?* It is well known that in *Being and Time* Heidegger tried to show that the entities that we ourselves are (*Dasein*) exist as *being-in-the-world*. In my understanding, *being-in-the-world* is Heidegger’s description of the transcendental perspective.<sup>94</sup> If that is true, then the open perspective is a mode of being on which *being-in-the-world* is itself founded. Moreover, I think that a strong case could be made that what I have been speaking about under the title of ‘open perspective’ is nothing but Nature herself— in her true mode of being. This Nature is the reality that lies ‘outside’ the human subject and within which the human subject, as *being-in-the-world*, belongs. (But it is also a reality that the human subject is able to *tune-in* to and, in that sense, this ‘outer’ reality is the ‘real’ inside of the human subject). Expanding the investigations in this direction would require this notion of Nature to be distinguished from the nature as she appears within *being-in-the-world*—whether as *ready-at-hand*,

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<sup>93</sup> I realise that Heidegger underwent a ‘turn’ in his thinking and, I have been told, that some of his later ideas may overlap with those developed in this work. But since I am not (yet) very familiar with later Heidegger’s work, I am afraid that I cannot comment on the ‘later Heidegger’.

<sup>94</sup> See: Crowell and Malpas (2007)

*present-at-hand* or in any other mode of being that is founded on *being-in-the-world*. Nature in the former sense is not something that appears in-the-midst-of-the-world: being-in-the-world is itself ‘in’ Nature. In this way, our findings could push the philosophy of *Being and Time* further by introducing a mode of being—the mode of being of Nature—that Heidegger (at least in *Being and Time*) does not take into account and whose ontological structure we have already started to disclose in this work. This would set up the task of working out the relation between this mode of being and those that do feature in the philosophy of *Being and Time*.

It is now time to turn to the second question: *how can Heidegger’s phenomenological and ontological study of what it means to be human help further refine our understanding of mindfulness?* We have already described *tuning-in-tuning-out* as the practice of transforming our mode of being. In light of the above, this can be rephrased thus: *tuning-out-tuning-in* is the practice of transforming Dasein’s mode of being from *being-in-the-world* to a mode of being that allows the phenomenon to unfold in accordance with its *Nature*. But what, generally speaking, is this phenomena that I have been calling ‘transformation of being’? I think that *Being and Time* contains important clues for addressing this question and therefore for shedding light on our particular issue. Recall Heidegger’s description of how an entity (such as a hammer) can *transform* from existing as *present-at-hand* to *ready-at-hand* (or conversely). As to the possibility of such a transformation for the entities that we ourselves are, Heidegger only mentions the possibility that the human being can appear as *present-at-hand* (in the mode of being of a mere object). Moreover, for Heidegger this *transformation* is a distortion of the primordial way that the human being exists: as *being-in-the-world*. But *must* a transformation of our mode of be a distortion? If Nature is indeed foundational for being-in-the-world, then the transformation of Dasein from being-in-the-world to Nature (a transformation that the practice of *tuning-out-tuning-in* can bring about) would be a

disclosure of a more primordial way of being. To shed further light on this, it would be helpful to take up the study of this transformation—where an entity alters its mode of being—for its own sake, and Heidegger’s work is filled with invaluable (but unrefined) insights regarding the nature of this phenomenon.<sup>95</sup>

(3) There is a glaring gap in our account that is impossible to ignore: nothing of substance has been said about the role of the body within the feeling of being *tuned-in*. What makes this omission even more embarrassing is that, from the very first chapter, mindfulness was described as a transformation of the instrumental body into an experience of the body *as it is*: a transformation where (to resort back to Tolstoy’s description) the body becomes “full of life and conscious of itself”. And in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* chapter, we interpreted the instruction to contemplate “the body in the body” as the instruction to break “with its instrumental hiddenness and to bring the body forth from its withdrawn state”. This is the *Natural* or the *Thingly* body: the body as it is when it is freed to unfold in accordance with its own possibilities. Here the task opens up of describing the relation between: the Thingly body and the Instrumental body (which has preoccupied the phenomenologists) and the Object body (the body as it appears *in-the-midst-of-the-world*, which is the way that the scientist relates to it). But there exists a more important and urgent reason for giving a phenomenological account of the Thingly body, and working out its role in the context of the

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<sup>95</sup> While in *Being and Time* Heidegger does not take the transformation of Dasein’s mode of being—and in particular the possible *positive* significance of such a transformation—as an explicit theme, he does touch upon the topic, albeit ever so slightly. In his discussion of death, he says that:

In the dying of the Other we can experience that remarkable phenomenon of Being which may be defined as the change-over of an entity from Dasein’s kind of Being (or life) to no-longer Dasein” (Heidegger, 1967, p. 281).

Buddhist path. This has to do with the fact that the Thingly body is deeply intertwined with the ethical implications of our discussion. And this is the last point I would like to touch upon.

(4) We should be aware of a definite tendency in the Western adaptation of the Buddha's teachings, and in the teaching of mindfulness in particular. This is the tendency to divorce the mindfulness aspect of the Buddhist path from morality (*silā*), and especially the code of discipline that accompanies the moral teachings. Many different forces are at work behind this tendency, and obviously this is not the time to go into the details. But I think that a crucial factor here is the assumption that the practice of cultivating mindfulness is in some sense independent from the practice of cultivating the moral or 'wholesome' mental qualities (such as generosity or friendliness). After all, one tends to think, what does my capacity, or lack thereof, for being *tuned-in* to the breath, say, have to do with whether I steal, take intoxicants or commit adultery? Do our findings have anything to contribute to this question? I think that they do, and what they have to contribute is *very* important.

To begin with, it will be helpful to once again reflect on the relationship between mindfulness and insight. For mindfulness to be 'right' mindfulness in the Buddhist sense, it must be developed into insight. To put it differently, mindfulness must occur in a context where it is connected up with insight. This context is not imposed upon mindfulness from the outside: it is drawn from within it—by cultivating its inherent possibility of being developed into insight. This means that the practice of insight (*vipassanā*) is inconceivable without a basis in mindfulness (but the converse is not the case—mindfulness can exist without insight). And in this sense it is revealing that mindfulness occurs *before* insight in the schema of the eightfold noble path. Perhaps the reason for that is precisely that insight can only come *after* mindfulness and as a development of it. Following this line of thought, it is instructive to note that morality (*silā*) comes *before* mindfulness in the eightfold path.

This can be taken as suggesting that, just as insight can only arise from within mindfulness, so *mindfulness can only arise within the mind that has developed the moral qualities to some extent*. Morality is the soil on which mindfulness needs to grow. If this is true then there is an *internal* connection, an unbreakable bond, between mindfulness and morality, just as there is between mindfulness and insight and between mindfulness and (right) concentration. What is the nature of this bond? Here I can only begin to sketch an answer to this question.

To be mindful is to be in tune with the way that phenomena bring their possibilities into being. This includes one's own, Natural or Thingly Body—the body as it is in the feeling of being *tuned-in*. The Thingly body is a necessary sub-horizon in the primary open horizon.<sup>96</sup> This implies that if the body is not freed to unfold its own possibilities then it will be impossible to establish the feeling of being *tuned-in*. Now, up to this point, only one way in which phenomena can be prevented from unfolding their possibilities has been discussed. This is where the phenomenon is pushed towards our possibilities (and projects in particular). But I believe that there is another way: by the means of *tensing or closing up*—which is a bodily phenomenon. Tensing is a *closing up* of thingly possibilities (and of the open perspective) in the dimension of the body. *Opening up* is the opposite movement of freeing the body to unfold its possibilities. *Opening and closing up are contrary possibilities*. Even if this could all be shown to be so, one may wonder: what does it have to do with the question of the relationship between mindfulness and morality?

I think that a phenomenological description of 'unwholesome' mental qualities (such as anger, greed, hatred, jealousy and so on) would show *closing up* as an invariant structure of this class of phenomena. In other words, whenever such qualities appear in the mind they are

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<sup>96</sup> But, as we have seen, it is possible to 'withdraw' from the primary open horizon—and therefore the Thingly body—by developing concentration. But it is also true that concentration can only arise once one has tuned-in and opened up the body to some extent.



accompanied by bodily *tension*. And I believe that the ‘wholesome’ qualities (such as kindness, generosity, and so on) are inseparably bound up with the *opening up* of the body. If all this could be established (and I am not suggesting that merely stating that it is so shows it to be so) it would follow that if one is cultivating mindfulness—which implies *opening* the body *up*—it would be *counterproductive* and *contradictory* to not cultivate the wholesome qualities, and to allow the unwholesome ones to arise in the mind. It is clear how an ethics naturally follows from this—assuming that one understands mindfulness to be the highest good, or at least as one of the highest goods. But, if this is all that can be said, how does one get to something like a universal ethic? Such an ethic would follow if everyone accepted the feeling of being *tuned-in* as the highest good. But why should one accept that?

I think that there is a convincing answer to this question, but it would take a whole work to justify it. Once again, here I can do no more than sketch out the plan for such an undertaking. Again, I think that a phenomenological investigation would show that the phenomenon of pain or suffering (any kind of pain or suffering) contains the phenomenon of *closing up* as an essential moment, while pleasure and happiness (any kind of pleasure and happiness) contains the phenomenon of *opening up* as an essential moment. And the higher the degree of *opening up*, the more intense and enduring will be the associated pleasure or happiness. And the more intense and enduring the pain or dissatisfaction, the higher will be the degree of *closing up*. To give the reader a taste of where I am going with this, I would now like to briefly consider what is arguably the highest *worldly* pleasure of all: sexual pleasure.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> My intention behind introducing this example is not to shock or hurt anyone. The reader should keep in mind that, first and foremost, I wrote this work for myself, in order to sort out and clarify aspects of my life and practice. And my intention behind writing about sexual desire is to understand it and thereby hopefully to gain some control over it. And in my experience, sexual desire is one of the most powerful—arguably it is *the* most powerful—factors that prevents the feeling of being *tuned-in* from arising. And one way of combating this

Consider the following fact about the (male) sexual organ. This is one part of the body that is (in a very special sense) outside of volitional control: it cannot be moved in the way that the arms or facial muscles can. Nevertheless, it has the possibility of movement: of going from some actual state to another in a more or less orderly sequence. But this movement—sketched out in the organ as its own thingly possibility—can only be brought into actuality through some external happening; never as a *direct* actualisation of our possibilities. Moreover, unlike such phenomena as “the beating of the heart” or “the movement of the breath”—which are also to a large extent outside of our volitional control—once this part of the body begins to move, it is impossible (in normal circumstances) to ignore this movement by pushing it into the undifferentiated background of awareness. The pleasure associated with the movement is too intense. The sexual organ seems to accomplish its work by giving the being no choice but to become *tuned-in* to its natural rhythm. This *opening up* and *tuning-in*, I believe, is the foundation of the sexual pleasure.<sup>98</sup> And I believe that what is true of sexual pleasure is true of pleasure more generally (to some extent, every pleasure involves some degree of *opening up*). But, while compared to other worldly pleasures, the sexual pleasure is indeed very intense, it is almost nothing compared to the pleasure that mindfulness as the feeling of being *tuned-in* brings with it. This is because being *tuned-in* is *opening up par excellence*—it is pleasure in its purity. The key point here is that a person who managed to establish the feeling of being

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force is to reflect on it philosophically. And if philosophy were forbidden from going into such vital issues, I would forbid myself from going into philosophy.

<sup>98</sup> This together with the pleasure that arises in dependence on unwholesome concentration that is constitutive of sexual desire (see: Part II, Chapter II, Section v.) Also, the pleasure associated with the moment of *tuning-in* necessarily *unfolds-together-with* the pain associated with an unrealised goal of the craving (a goal that is never realised—except temporarily). I suspect that this contrast between the pleasure and the pain in the core of the craving plays an important role in determining the unique intensity of the pleasure.

*tuned-in* could come to understand that what he or she ‘really’ seeks (whether through sexual pleasure or in some other way)—the *opening up* of their being—is present in its pure form in the feeling of being *tuned-in*. Having realised this, this person could see that they *should* nurture the wholesome qualities, and that they *should not* allow the unwholesome to arise. But the development of these important ideas must wait for a future occasion.

## Glossary

I have decided to include a glossary at the end of the discussion in the hope that it will help the reader keep track of the technical terms introduced through the discussion. The below ‘explanations’ or ‘definitions’ will not be intelligible independently of the text; they are at best only an aid that the reader can use to remind themselves how the term was described earlier. It is worth reflecting on the fact that composing a list like this in many ways goes against the very spirit of phenomenological work. In this kind of philosophical endeavour, the meanings of terms unfold together with the discussion and apprehending every step of this evolution is intrinsic to understanding the meaning in question, and to bringing one’s awareness to the phenomenon being described. There is no shortcut from this path. In this text also, certain technical terms are introduced with a very approximate meanings, meanings that functions like seeds that the remainder of the discussion then fertilizes and waters until the meaning developed further and further. But no matter how far it develops, it always points back to its original definition and cannot be understood without it. In other words, there is no real away around the fact that in order to understand what is being said in the text it is necessary to *carefully* follow the discussion and to reflect upon and try to isolate on those aspects of one’s experience that are being described. Having said that, the following list may still aid some readers, especially in the later chapters, by reminding them of how the terms were earlier described.

I have purposely avoided ordering the below terms in an alphabetical order. I have rather chosen to begin with the ideas that should be familiar to most phenomenologists and which will serve as a basis for introducing the new ideas discussed in this work.

**Transcendental horizon.** The horizon disclosed to the phenomenologist after the successful execution of the epoche.

**Our possibilities.** The kind of possibility that fill in the transcendental horizon. Our possibilities are of two kinds: intentional possibilities and projects. Examples of intentional possibilities are the possibility of perceiving or touching something. Examples of projects are the possibility of repairing a house or becoming a philosopher.

**Crystallised mode.** The mode that the transcendental horizon assumes in the natural attitude. In this mode, our possibilities are not apprehended as such, as moments of the transcendental horizon, but rather as qualities of something external.

**Natural perspective.** The perspective that one finds oneself in when the transcendental horizon is in the crystallised mode.

**De-crystallised mode.** The mode that the transcendental horizon assumes when it becomes visible as such. In this mode, our possibilities appear as such.

**Transcendental perspective.** The perspective that opens up when the transcendental horizon is in the de-crystallised mode.

**Crystallisation.** The event where the transcendental horizon reconfigures itself from the de-crystallised to the crystallised mode.

**De-crystallisation.** The event where the transcendental horizon reconfigures itself from the crystallised to the de-crystallised mode.

**The epoche.** The practice that can lead the phenomenologist from the transcendental to the natural perspective. The epoche can be seen from two perspectives: as either the project of preventing crystallisation or as the project of realizing de-crystallisation.

**Thematization.** The event where a project that is no longer able to be pursued through an external action manifests as the content of some internal action, such as a thought or an image. When that happens the project in question becomes *thematized*. Thematization precedes and conditions the possibility of practicing tuning-out-tuning-in.

**Disenchantment.** The practice of distancing oneself from a thematized project. It involves counterbalancing the projects feeling tone. For example, if the thematized project is pleasant then the practice of disenchantment would involve bringing to mind something with the opposite, unpleasant quality.

**Tuning-out.** The movement of distancing oneself from the transcendental horizon and our possibilities. Tuning-out is an abstract moment that can only exist in the context of tuning-in-tuning-out.

**Open Horizon.** The horizon within which phenomena appear vividly present and which is disclosed after the successful execution of tuning-in-tuning-out. To tap-in to the open horizon is to have the feeling of being tuned-in.

**Thingly Possibilities.** The kind of possibility that fill in the open horizon. Thingly possibilities are outlined in the phenomenon as its own possibilities.

**Primary open horizon.** The open horizon as it appears within the feeling of being tuned-in. Here the totality of phenomena present themselves as unfolding in the same direction, as being a part of the same, uniform flow.

**Sub-horizons.** The primary open horizon is in fact constituted of a multiplicity of sub-horizons which make up the primary open horizon. Each of these horizons unfolds its possibilities in different ways. This means that the uniform flow that one first discovers upon tuning-in is in fact divided into a multiplicity of heterogenous flows.

**Narrowing.** (Concentration, *samadhi*) Narrowing is a (thingly) possibility of the

primary open horizon. The actualisation of this possibility leads to the narrowing of the primary open horizon to one of the sub-horizons that constitute it. After narrowing, the sub-horizon in question becomes the new (secondary) primary horizon. To nurture the possibility of narrowing is to cultivate concentration. The depth of concentration is a function of the degree of narrowing; the more narrowing, the more concentration.

**Broadening.** The event where the secondary primary horizon revers back to its sub-horizon status, re-establishing the primary open horizon.

**Open Perspective.** The perspective that one finds oneself in within the feeling of being tuned-in.

**Open awareness.** (Mindful awareness, *sati* in the sense of lucid awareness) The form that awareness takes in the open perspective. Contrasts with both transcendental awareness of the transcendental perspective and psychophysical awareness of the natural perspective.

**Vividly Presented Phenomenon.** How the phenomenon manifests within the open perspective. A vividly presented phenomenon contrasts with both Objects (the way that phenomena manifest in the natural perspective) and Appearances (the way that phenomena manifest in the transcendental perspective).

**Thingly Understanding.** (intrinsic intelligibility of the phenomenon, *sampajāna*) The kind of understanding that discloses thingly possibilities. Contrasts with Projective Understanding which discloses projects. It is a kind of patient listening, an awaiting of the phenomenon to become what it is—to unfold its thingly possibilities. Some of the structures that make up this understanding are: *Unfolding-towards*. A structural moment of the thingly understanding that listens in to the futural thingly possibility: the state that this phenomenon will become or unfolds towards.

*Unfolding-from.* A structural moment of the thingly understanding that listens in to the just past thingly possibility: the state from which this vividly presented phenomenon is becoming or unfolding-from. *Unfolding-together-with.* A structural moment of the thingly understanding that listens in to the co-present thingly possibility: the state that is co-current or unfolding-together-with this vividly present phenomenon.

**Tuning-in.** (*sati* as remembering). The other side of tuning-out. It can only exist as in the context of tuning-in-tuning-out. It is the positive movement towards the open horizon and the thingly possibilities that fill it.

**Tuning-in-tuning-out.** The practice of cultivating mindfulness. Its two moments are tuning-out (distancing oneself from the transcendental horizon and our possibilities) and tuning-in (moving towards the open horizon and the thingly possibilities). This practice potentiality leads to the establishment of the feeling of being tuned-in.

**Atapi.** The kind of effort that is constitutive of tuning-out-tuning-in. This is the effort called for in order to bring about a transformation from the human mode of being (from transcendental or psycho-physical self-awareness) to a different mode of being (open awareness). It can, conversely, be described as the effort necessary to prevent open awareness becoming psycho-physical awareness.

**The feeling of being tuned-in.** (The mindful state, right mindfulness, *sati*, the contemplative state, *anupassanā*). The potential fruit of the practice of tuning-in-tuning-out. It is the state of tapping-in to the open perspective (while one's standpoint) remains in either the transcendental or the natural perspective.

**The pattern of mindfulness.** The unique form that the stream of consciousness takes within the feeling of being tuned-in. These are some of its moments:

**Mindful Memory.** The form that memory takes within the feeling of being tuned-in.



**Mindful Attention.** The form that attention takes within the feeling of being tuned-in. This kind of attention is the function of foregrounding one of the sub-horizons within the primary open horizon and of backgrounding the other sub-horizons.

**Mindful Reflection.** (*Vipassana*) A kind of discriminative judgment that arises from within the feeling of being tuned-in and which is a modification or development of thingly understanding. It involves contrasting and differentiating the different ways that phenomena brings their thingly possibilities into being. It involves foregrounding (via mindful attention) a sub-horizon, isolating and discerning its possibility structure, *zooming out* (mindful attention), foregrounding another sub-horizon, isolating and discerning the way it brings its possibilities into being and then stepping back and contrasting the two in such a way that their *difference* becomes vividly present.

**Wrong Mindfulness.** The feeling of being tuned-in to the primary projective space of the transcendental horizon.

**Right Concentration.** A state that results from the narrowing of the primary open horizon.

**Wrong Concentration.** A state that results from narrowing of the primary projective space of the transcendental horizon to one of the sub-projects that constitutes it.

**Tapping-in.** The state where while one's standpoint remains in some perspective A one 'taps-in' to another perspective B. For example, in establishing the feeling of being tuned-in while one standpoint remains in either the transcendental or the natural perspective one *taps-in* to the open perspective and is able to make use of it.

**Shifting the Standpoint.** The event when one actually shifts one's standpoint from perspective A to perspective B.

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