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Beginner's Mind: Paths to the Wisdom that is not Learned

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“The goal of practice is always to keep our beginner’s mind....In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities; in the expert’s mind there are few.” Shunryo Suzuki Roshi (Suzuki, 1970, p. 21)

“By magic we do not mean unnatural power over the phenomenal world, but rather the discovery of innate or primordial wisdom in the world as it is. The wisdom we are discovering is wisdom without beginning, something naturally wise...” Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (Trungpa, 1984, p. 103)

“God put the self revealing truth in everything that exists...” Shaykh Muhammad Said Al-Jamal ar-Rifa’i ash-Shadhuli (Al-Jamal, 2002, p. 167)

Embedded in most of the world’s spiritual traditions is some version of beginner’s mind/primordial wisdom teachings. Such teachings and the paths they introduce have been marginalized by scholars as mysticism, suppressed by their parent religions as heresy, and largely ignored by our psychological and social sciences. I believe it is time to pay attention to these teachings. Aside from their inherent value, they may have important contributions to make to psychology, education, religion, and to decision making in an increasingly complex and dangerous world. Furthermore, if there is to be an academic discipline of Wisdom Studies, it needs to incorporate the traditions in which wisdom is something decidedly different from the usual candidates of rules, skills, or life experience. In order to focus the discussion in this chapter, I will examine two specific case studies of beginner’s mind paths, one from a non-theistic Buddhist source (the Kagyu-Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism), the other from a Western religion (the Shadhiliyya Sufi order). The last part of the chapter will show how versions of beginner’s mind teachings and practices are becoming more widespread today -- including a movement called Contemplative Education which is introducing some of the practices into public schools.

What is meant by beginner’s mind? William James speaks of “that which is seen as most primal and enveloping and deeply true” (James, 1902, p. 34). The beginner’s mind claim, ordinary yet radical, is that we already have such basic wisdom -- the “innate primordial wisdom in the world as it is,” the “self revealing truth” that “God has put into everything that exists” (see quotes above). Thus people do not need to acquire more information, more logic, more ego, and more skills to make them wise. What they need is to unlearn what they have accumulated that veils them from that wisdom. When they do this, it is believed, they find not only what they

themselves really are already but what the world actually is, and, from that vantage point, they can live a good life.

The psychological picture that corresponds to beginner's mind (which I will also call "inner path") teachings is of different levels of mind (or modes of functioning or ways of knowing). On the surface is the mind of ordinary concepts, emotions, desires, fears, even boredom – the mind with which everyone is familiar. Below that is the mind that is more in contact with basic wisdom and better able to see and act from it. This point may be clarified, hopefully, by a computer analogy. Imagine the ordinary surface mode of knowing as a particular computer program running on a more basic operating system. In daily life (and in psychology and cognitive science -- and wisdom studies?) researchers mistake the limited surface program for the whole system. The research community keeps trying to study how the system works, but all it can see is the functioning of the program in which it, as well as the people it is studying, are confined. Every attempt to see beyond or get out of the program, either in science or religion or scholarship, is frustrated because to try to get out, one is only using the operations of the program itself. The situation would be hopeless, except that it is the operating system that supports and defines the program in the first place and the operating system that offers the escape keys that allow one to return to it.

Although this is basically a claim about psychology, two religious traditions are examined as examples because it is within religions, particularly the meditative and contemplative strains in religion, that different modes of knowing and the levels of wisdom such modes might reveal have been most clearly codified and taught. Psychology and cognitive science generally take religions to be no more than cognitive beliefs about personified deities whose purpose it is to provide illusory comfort or to explain things that science can explain better. Such an approach obscures the other aspects of religions. As people pursue an inner path, their vision of religious objects changes radically; perhaps that is why inner path teachings have historically had such uneasy relations with their parent religions. If scientists and educators dismiss everything related to religion out of hand, they may miss the chance to understand aspects of the mind that no other part of society can as readily bring to our attention.

It is a hallmark of beginner's mind teachings that the deeper levels are said to be accessed only by letting go. While discipline and effort may be recommended as the first step toward restraining the unruly surface mind with its accumulation of information and habits, it is ultimately only by relaxation and surrender ("like a Brahmin housewife whose daily chores are done" or "like a bale of hay whose bailing wire has been cut"-- Tibetan sayings) that the seeker is understood to become progressively able to enter into the deeper stages of his functioning. This may be seen in religions when they speak of surrender, mystery, beyond concept, humbleness, grace, or letting God do it. Artists too talk of *receiving* inspiration, lovers of *falling* in love, athletes of entering "the zone," and ordinary people of the virtues of *sleeping* on a problem. Most therapists, parents, diplomats, and teachers can recall one magical moment when, without effort, they "just knew what to say." But for any of this to have sustained impact, it needs to be the right kind of letting go; otherwise the seeker may just shrug off his glimpse and continue running around "like a madman" using his surface mind as always. So guidance is needed.

Traditionally, inner path teachings of all kinds tended to be secretive passed only from teacher to a small circle of intimate students. Much can go awry in the transmission of teachings that speak to levels of the mind beyond what most people imagine they have. That paranoia appears to be changing presently, perhaps under the pressure of global crises, and a number of interesting mass movements have arisen. Tibetan lamas are offering empowerment ceremonies as blessings to the Western public at large; Jewish and Christian contemplative practices are being rediscovered and fostered; traditional Islamic Sufi teachers are inviting everyone of all religions to join them to help bring love and peace to the world; and Indian gurus are offering *diksha* (a transference of enlightened energy) to vast numbers of people without the traditional requirement that recipients henceforth be bound as formal students to that teacher. (As one Indian teacher puts it, “Mankind has already done his *sadhana* (religious practices), so now he is ready for enlightenment,” Bhagavan, 2005). There is a general belief in these movements that it is only by a radical change of heart on a mass scale that the world can be saved.

Both teachers and recipients of such mass teachings are sometimes spoken of as protected by the principle of “self secret.” In its simplest form this just means that a person only understands what he is ready to understand. An example might be St. John of the Cross’ popular work *Dark Night of the Soul* (1976). People commonly speak of their “dark night of the soul” when they mean a terrible period of their life in which disasters befell or they were deeply depressed. But what St. John is referring to as darkness is a state in which the soul moves toward God on an illuminated inner journey that is dark to the outer eye of ordinary prayer and devotion. It is not thought to harm people to understand the work according to their need at a given time nor to harm the inner path for them to do so.

So far I have been speaking somewhat abstractly, but the real way in which children and adults learn new concepts is through concrete examples (Rosch, 1999b). Thus a significant portion of the chapter will be occupied by a comparison of two specific lineages both of which present clear cases of the beginner’s mind approach yet contrast in other important respects. The Shadhiliyya Sufi lineage, like other Western religions, defines fundamental wisdom in terms of God; the Kagyu-Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism see such wisdom as beyond concepts altogether. Given the prejudices that theistic religions have about the nontheistic ones, the ignorance nontheistic religions have about contemplative paths in theistic religions, and the ignorance and prejudice that scientists generally have about all religions, such a study appears to be well warranted. Note that in studying these two lineages, I am not making the claim that their wisdoms are the same thing (how could anyone know?), or that all religions are the same (obviously they are not), or that all forms of Buddhism have a beginner’s mind core (highly debatable). Rather the point is to convey what beginner’s mind paths are like through examples, thereby perhaps opening a space for discussion of what such paths are and how they might be of significance.

A further word about reading the chapter, particularly the material on the two lineages: inner path teachings are evocative. They are designed to penetrate through the familiar shell of the outer mind to touch, stir, and evoke those levels of mind deeper than what ordinarily passes for understanding. I’ve thus included traditional teaching stories and quotations whenever possible as they are what carry the transmission of the meanings. It would be helpful for the reader to allow this material to have its say briefly on its own terms before translating it into

labels, jargon, or judgments. Among the labels most likely to be obstructive: a) Mysticism. This is a dismissal; it implies that the teachings of such paths are not relevant to normal people or to the everyday world. b) Unscientific. This implies that our present sciences and methods of study already include everything basic about human minds and the rest of nature and will remain just as they are in perpetuity. c) Wisdom as personal transformation. This likens wisdom to personal therapy rather than to something related to truth. These are among the views in our society that I believe need to be held in abeyance if we are to have hope of understanding these traditions or of benefiting from what they might have to offer.

Introduction to the Two Lineages

What is meant by beginner's mind? Let's look now at the two case studies and begin with a story from each lineage about how their founding figure came to his path:

A popular Kagyu teaching story tells how the human founder of the lineage, Naropa, is brought to a path of inner wisdom. Naropa is said to have already been a Buddhist monk, a renowned scholar, and a professor at Nalanda University, a center of Buddhist learning in northern India circa the 10th century C.E. (The following account is based on Guenther, 1963.) One day Naropa is sitting on his balcony with his back to the sun studying his books on grammar, epistemology, spiritual precepts and logic when a terrifying shadow falls across the page. He sees behind him an old woman with 37 hideously ugly features (in many versions described at length). She asks him what he is looking into. He replies that he is studying the books on grammar, epistemology, spiritual precepts, and logic. She asks, "Do you understand them?" He says, "Yes." She asks, "Do you understand the words or the sense?" He says, "The words." The old woman is delighted, rocks with laughter and begins to dance, waving her stick in the air. Naropa adds (perhaps wryly), "I also understand the sense." At this the old woman begins to weep and tremble and throws her stick down. Then Naropa asks the fateful question: "How is it that you were happy when I said that I understood the words, but became miserable when I added that I also understood the sense?" She replies, "I felt happy because you, a great scholar, did not lie and frankly admitted that you only understood the words. But I felt sad when you told a lie by stating that you understood the sense, which you do not." (Guenther, 1963, p. 25). Naropa asks how he can learn the meaning, and she directs him to seek the teacher Tilopa. As Naropa reflects on the vision of the old woman, he realizes that her ugly features are actually aspects of *samsara*, the suffering world of conditioned existence. (The old woman is understood in context to be *Vajrayogini*, the tantric wisdom deity, who appears as ugly to those who cannot see.) Deeply moved to renounce *samsara* and find wisdom, he leaves his position at the university and sets out on a quest to find his teacher.

Having been inspired to enter the path, the next phase in this kind of wisdom narrative is meeting one's teacher. For a simpler version of this than what happens next to Naropa, one can turn to the life of Abu al-Hasan ash-Shadhdhuli, founder of the Shadhiliyya Sufi order. (The following is based on Al-Jamal & Abdullah, 1998.) Born in 1196 C.E. in an area west of Iraq, Abu al-Hasan had been raised as a practicing Muslim, had studied at a famous *madrasa* (religious school) in Fez, and had already become a promising Sufi student. Instructed to follow a light that will guide him to his true teacher, he arrives at the holy mountain of Jabal 'Alam, makes the standard ritual ablution (*wudu*) at a spring at the base, and climbs the steep mountain.

At the top, he goes forward in reverence and awe to meet his Master, but the Shaykh greets him by asking if he has made ablution, and when he answers “Yes,” tells him, “You cannot come to us in a state of impurity. Return and make *wudu*.” He goes down the mountain to the spring, makes ablution again, and climbs back up the mountain, but is again rejected with, “I told you to return only when you had purified yourself with the ablution.” This sequence repeats until he goes down the mountain with “the question of his rejection turning in his heart,” and is shown the meaning of his trial and what it is necessary for him to do. “This time, as he made his ablution, he emptied himself of everything that he knew, or thought he knew, or that he had learned and taken in...and he destroyed all his attributes, pictures, and prejudices, until he knew that he was left with only a vast space ...inside him which was waiting...” (Al-Jamal & Abdullah, 1998, p. 317). Now when he makes the ascent, his teacher embraces him with deep love and says, “If you wish to fetch water, you take an empty bucket to the well to do so.”

These stories illustrate what is meant by a wisdom that cannot be taught or understood with our usual outer faculties of mind and that cannot be reached by accumulating information, skills, life experience, or accomplishments. In the stories, both Naropa and Abu Hasan already have outer learning and achievement, but these are not the vehicles that will serve them on their quests; in fact they are obstacles. Both already have the outer forms of their religion, but these do not suffice. While neither are told to abandon those forms (doctrine, spiritual precepts, ritual ablution), they are required to penetrate through the forms to their deeper meanings. Both travel far to find a teacher but, as we shall see, are to find the true guide and wisdom close at home - “closer than your eyes” is the Buddhist saying, “nearer than your jugular vein” the Sufi.

Keep in mind, of course, that neither figure has yet begun his training. In the remainder of the chapter I will attempt to sketch those paths and show how the teaching methods used for inner wisdom differ from the outer teaching methods with which we are familiar. Concluding sections will offer some examples of how teaching consonant with beginner’s mind wisdom can be applicable in our secular school setting.

The Kagyu-Nyingma Tibetan Buddhist lineages and the Shadhiliyya Sufi lineage are particularly suited for comparison as beginner’s mind paths. Historically, each lineage is the product of the most recent form of its parent religion. It is generally known that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam developed in historical order and that Sufism is part of Islam (often called the contemplative or mystical side of Islam). Buddhism also has a lengthy history, usually classified both by scholars and practitioners into three main stages called *yanas* (vehicles). The earliest form of Buddhism is now represented by the Theravada school of Southeast Asia; the next development was the Mahayana (Great Vehicle), the many diverse forms of which spread from India to East Asia and are now spreading to the West. The final historical form of Buddhism is the Vajrayana (Diamond Vehicle) which arose in northern India, spread through China to Japan, and then moved north into Tibet where it had its most complete development. Now, with the Tibetan diaspora, it is spreading into Asia, Europe, and North America. Despite doctrinal disputes and wide differences in form, Buddhism did not split into self-identified separate religions as did the theistic religions of the West. Earlier Buddhist teachings are generally incorporated and built upon by the later schools (somewhat in the way that the Christian bible includes the Old Testament). For example, the eight stages of consciousness of the Yogacara (consciousness only) school described by Shen (this volume) is a Mahayana

doctrine that the Vajrayana includes but then “goes beyond” (as will be discussed later). Of interest from the teaching perspective, in the three-*yana* approach of Tibetan Buddhism it is assumed that the path of an individual practitioner recapitulates the historical development of Buddhism.

Obviously there are beginner’s mind paths and aspects of beginner’s mind teachings beyond what is discussed here. Christianity has a long tradition of explicit inner paths, as shown in the Kanangeser and Bright chapter (this volume). In Japan there is also a history of secular forms that can be practiced as inner paths: the way (*do*) of tea, of archery, of flower arranging, of martial arts – even less formally the way of striving to be a good employee or good daughter-in-law. For purposes of exposition, however, this chapter will concentrate on our two examples.

Both Tibetan Buddhism and Sufism are organized through lineages of teacher-to-student transmission rather than in terms of doctrinally defined sects, as is the case in Western religions. There are four main lineages in Tibetan Buddhism and hundreds of Sufi lineages and branch lineages. Because there is much interchange of students and teachings between friendly lineages, especially in Tibetan Buddhism, lines of transmission can become serpentine, and some teachers may hold teachings from more than one lineage. It is for this reason that I am presenting a joint portrait of the Kagyu-Nyingma lineages for the Tibetan Buddhist example.¹

In some respects the teachings of the Kagyu-Nyingma Buddhist and Shadhiliyya Sufi lineages would appear diametrically opposed; the Sufi professes the creator God of Western religion; Buddhism is non-theistic. The Sufi talks of God in humanlike terms, for example as having intentions or being pleased or angry, whereas Buddhism eschews speaking of basic reality (later Buddhism does have a basic reality) in any such way. There is no explicit record of historical contact between the Shadhiliyya lineage and either Hinduism or Buddhism which makes this a more interesting group to compare with Buddhism than would a Sufi order originating in India and professing hybrid East-West ideas (such as Hazrat Inayat Khan’s Sufi Order of the West). Given the overt differences between the two groups, it is particularly revealing to examine some striking convergences that appear in their inner paths.

First a few convergences in their outer sociological form: both lineages are active in the contemporary world and are spreading to Europe and the United States. Both stress, at least in their modern forms, the potentials of using everyday life as the path to wisdom. Both are hierarchical with much emphasis on the importance of the teacher student relationship that sometimes causes friction in Western contexts. Both identify themselves as lineages in the sense of a direct teacher-student transmission beginning from a primordial source outside of time (the “natural state” for the Buddhist, God for the Sufi), through the radiance of that source (the ground luminosity for the Buddhist, the Mohammedan light for the Sufi), through the founding figures of their tradition (the Buddha, Muhammad), and finally through the individuals who initiated and perpetuated their particular historical line -- whom we have just met. In both groups, the authority of the teacher comes from the understanding that he ultimately represents the primordial source - but, in this case, so does the student. In this chapter, I will highlight teachings from contemporary teachers in order to explore the two paths not as cultural curiosities

but as, in the Buddhist saying, “freshly baked bread.” In so far as is possible, the attempt will be made to present the two traditions from their own perspectives. (For a historical account of Buddhism in Tibet, see Snellgrove, 1987; for a history of Sufism, see Knysh, 2000; for a sociological study of Sufism in a Western country, see Geaves, 2000.)

Both lineages see the inner path as retracing what appears in our unexamined experience (our senses and our mind) to its original source, then returning to the world to be of help - a process that will eventually be seen to occur each moment. The methods of both paths are highly experiential. The Shadhiliyya Sufi speaks of the path as a sequence of four major Stations (*Maqam*). The structural equivalents in the Kagyu² lineage are the four Abhishekas (empowerments, Tib. *wang*). While technically the abhishekas are part of ritual, more broadly they can be seen to be representative of elements of the entire path.

The paths of both lineages begin with the student imprisoned in the dark, confused and veiled state of the outer layer of his mind. This is called *samsara* in Buddhism and the *Dunya* in Islam. Both end with the realization by the student, or at least his initiation into, the deepest truth as seen by that lineage. For both lineages that final level is referred to as Secret in that it cannot be known with the more outer levels of the mind. I will be describing and drawing parallels between each of the four levels in the Sufi and the Buddhist lineages. Let me repeat that exploring parallels between the two paths is not a claim that they are the same; in particular, it is not a claim that God in Shadhiliyya Sufism is the same as the Kagyu Very Secret (or any other tradition’s absolute) - after all, who could know?

There is a general problem with exposition of these kinds of teachings whether in a paper like this or in an actual teaching situation. Since each stage is increasingly beyond the emotions, concepts, and presuppositions of the surface mind, strictly speaking none of it is describable. Furthermore, the final stage in both paths is that the student is no longer separate from the fundamental truth or reality, and because that is what he was (timelessly) all along, there are not really any stages - nor any path for that matter. Since the teacher is one who ideally knows himself thus and is speaking from that place, even the first stage is transmitted and described basically from the point of view of the last stage. In short, expositions are linear but the path is not. However, that is also why presentation of these teachings is thought to be possible at all. As Tibetans say, “You are offering meat to a young tiger, not a tree.”

I. The Outer Level: the Stations of the Personality (*Nafs*) (Sufi), the Outer Abhisheka (Buddhist)

The outermost layer of the mind is the way in which we are said to experience ourselves and the world when we are operating through the habitual functioning of the body and mind. Why do anything else? Buddhism, from its beginning, stresses the suffering inherent in that condition. The Sufi talks about separation from God, but that too entails darkness and struggle; the very first of the substations in the Sufi system is called Listening to the Orders from the Darkness.

Buddhism specializes in a detailed psychological analysis of the workings of the

suffering mind. Driven by desire for what one wants, fear and aggression towards what one doesn't want, and ignorance of the real nature of things, humans and other sentient beings act in ways that only serve to increase the mental and emotional states that they are trying to alleviate. Such motivations, called the three poisons in Buddhism, center around one's self, a self which actually has no inherent reality. The three basic poisonous drives build into self-perpetuating habitual realms of dissatisfaction in which sentient beings are imprisoned moment after moment and life after life, endlessly circling in *samsara* (the wheel of life, i.e. life as seen from and perpetuated by the suffering egocentric outer layer of the mind). However, through it all, according to later Buddhist schools, the basic nature remains unchanged like the sun hidden by clouds, and a longing for the awake wisdom state propels fortunate beings toward the path.

For the Sufi, the initial state of the self, the *nafs* (the components of one's outer personality), is also a fearsome abode. "Be careful of your *self* for it is a big snake and if it bites you it will kill you." (Al-Jamal & Abdullah, 1998, p. 8). The *nafs*, like the Buddhist description of ordinary consciousness, "contains all the things that come from your self - your perception, your hearing, your feeling, the voices in your mind, and the desires of your heart, that say this and that or ask why or what." (Al-Jamal, 2002, p. 47). As in Buddhism, this is seen as an imprisoning and meaningless circle. "Travel not... like the donkey at the mill. Roundabout he turns, his goal the same as his departure." (Shaykh Ibn 'Ata'illah quoted in Al-Jamal & Abdullah, 1998, p. 394). All of this comprises the *dunya*, the dark outer state of separation from God and truth. Walking in the Way means walking toward God and overcoming obstacles, inspired by one's longing (*hima*) for God.

Teachers have to address people where they are. The mind of *samsara* in Buddhism and of the *dunya* in Islam presents a set of powerful obstacles that beginner's mind teachings feel they must work with. That mind is wild; constantly flitting from one worldly thought and object to another. It is blinded by concepts; the eye of the self sees only through its own ideas and pictures -- for example, it lays its own conceptions of good and bad over everything. The mind is dualistic: the self is felt as separate from the world, separated from other people, and separated from good things whether they be objects of desire or the ultimate good of God or enlightenment. Because of all this, the mind is self-centered. Such a mind is mistaken not only about its true nature but about its own benefit which leads it to (in Sufi terms) worship idols and (in Buddhist terms) practice material, psychological, and spiritual materialism; that is, the individual does everything, including the practice of religion, in a way that caters to ego, trying to make it feel comfortable. Small wonder that the actions performed on the basis of all this are the unwholesome ones that lead to bad karma (in Buddhism) or God's displeasure (in theistic systems generally).

Given the power of these imprisoning obstacles, what are beginning students in either tradition to do? The specialty of inner wisdom paths is to use those very attributes of mind that create obstacles to captivate and lead the student toward the truth "like a deer listening to a flute in the forest" (a saying attributed to Naropa). The trick is that, in the process, the student's mind, as well as the rest of the student as he imagines himself to be, is going to be destroyed and transformed.

Actions: Let's look at how this works for actions. There's a tension in all intensely

undertaken human activities between the knowledge that one has to throw oneself into the activity and make great effort and the knowledge that one is powerless to force the result to happen. This shows up in Christianity in the faith versus works debate; in athletics as the athlete's recognition that, train as he may (and must), there's no way he can produce "a hot hand" or enter "the zone;" and in Buddhism in the gradual versus sudden enlightenment debate, most often expressed in a ritualized "dharma combat" between parties who fully agree that enlightenment is always both a gradual path of practices and a timeless uncaused sudden realization.

At the outermost level, very definite actions are usually prescribed. Buddhism and Islam, like all religions (and societies), have codes of moral conduct (precepts in Buddhism, *shari'a* in Islam) that forbid harmful overt actions such as lying and stealing and substitute for them beneficial actions such as honesty and giving charity. Mental actions, such as the ungovernable wildness or dullness of the thought process, may also be addressed by techniques that are themselves actions: for example, concentration and mindfulness meditation in Buddhism or mantra-like repetition of the name of God for the Sufi. But to describe either the overt or mental practices in this way is to touch only their outer shell. If the delicate kernel of an almond is to grow, say the Sufi, it must be protected by its shell, but to eat the almond, one must eventually break the shell. The reason why the Buddhist wants the student to settle his mind is not to make him an expert concentrator or marginally better at attention tasks in his outer life (which is too often how modern psychology studies meditation), but to enable him to penetrate to the nature (understood differently in different forms of Buddhism) of the phenomenal world. The reason why the Sufi does not want his mind to "fly from place to place" is so that it can abide with God and His Creation. (For inner path discussions of the Buddhist precepts see Nhat Hanh, 1987, and for Islamic *shari'a* see Al-Jamal, 1996). The desired end result in both cases is for actions to cease entirely; that is, for the student's egoically generated acts to be replaced by actions from God (Sufi) or actions from the primordial wisdom (Vajrayana Buddhist). We'll see how this theme plays out as we go along the path.

Concepts and language: The slavery of the habitual mind to concepts and language undergoes a similar reworking. At the first level of teaching, the aim is to change the student's mistaken views and concepts to correct concepts, namely the institutional doctrines of the tradition. At the intermediate level, these doctrines warn of their own demise; the Sufi admonishes the student to drop all of his pictures, and Buddhism speaks of a raft that must be abandoned on the other side of the river. But inner path teachings have a further twist; the language of the teachings is fashioned to simultaneously communicate to the outer ear and to transmit to the dormant ear of the deeper inner levels. In fact it is designed eventually to reach through the concepts and layers of the student's mind entirely to touch the underlying truth that is beyond the mind.³ Kagyu teachers say that you need to get new ears. A Shadhiliyya Sufi example: "Give me your ear and take care not to hear any voices, only the Voice of your Beloved. Because your Beloved wants to make a holy marriage with you when he sends the Word to your ear...This word is the first Word...the first light in the world of *al-azal* (pre-eternity.) And listen to my voice to know my story which is also your story from the first." (Al-Jamal & Abdullah, 1998, p. 36). We might think of such language as metaphoric but it is the

understanding of these paths that this is the direct language of truth and that it is the supposedly referential language of the outer world that is metaphoric. The inner language may or may not refer; above all it is designed to transmit.

Dualistic Mind: The dualistic nature of the outer mind is used to advantage in a similar fashion. Initially, the teacher (guru, guide) appears as someone outside oneself, a wondrous being who engenders awe, love, devotion and obedience and thereby can transmit the teaching. Enlightenment or God is seen as something outside oneself, a passionately desired goal that drives one forward. In fact at the outer level of the mind, it is through a personified God, Christ, guru or Shaykh (Islamic guide) that the deeper wisdom is transmitted. The dualism of concepts of good versus evil provides strong motivation since the student wants to be on the side of the good. And, finally, the feeling of a lonely separated self opens the door in both traditions to receptivity to teachings of compassion and love and to the embrace of the community of fellow practitioners (called *sangha* in Buddhism). All of these techniques are common to social institutions in general. What starts to undercut the dualism in inner path teachings is inclusiveness. The conditional outer mind understands by means of divisions, duality, and judgment. Beginner's mind teachings are spoken from a position of unconditional inclusiveness. "The great way is not difficult so long as you do not pick and choose" (Zen saying)⁴. From a Kagyu path perspective, beginning mindfulness meditation as well as advanced Vajrayana ritual is understood to encompass everything, including mistakes, inattention, and impurities, as part of the practice itself. The Shadhiliyya teaches that even mistaken actions and beliefs are from God and can, handled properly, bring the student closer to God's all embracing love. The psychological claim is that when the dualistic mind is fully included in awareness rather than ignored or fought against, mind can expand to the nondual recognition of its truer nature. Here light and dark are part of the fabric and even Satan (*as 'shaitan*), as we'll see later, is obeying God.

The Ego Self: The self and self-centeredness are perhaps the poster child for the way inner path teachings work with the outer layer of the mind. The beginner enters the path in order to get rewards for himself such as gaining happiness in this life, entrance into heaven rather than hell in the afterlife, or the imagined triumph of attaining enlightenment or union with God. But the inner path teacher warns people that they are in for a surprise. The Sufi might say at an introductory talk that you are going to have to die before they die, and the Vajrayana Buddhist might add that you're not even going to be able to watch your own funeral. The Sufi saint Rabi'a asks God to burn her in hell if she worships him for fear of hell and to exclude her from paradise if she worships him for hope of paradise but to not begrudge her his essence if she worships him for his own sake. The Vajrayana warns against spiritual materialism and extols hopelessness for the ego. Interestingly, such warnings are quite seductive for students. The student may first fight against self-centeredness with asceticism and good works, later be able to witness his self centered striving with compassion, but finally realize that the supposed self, not being real, cannot actually do anything, including giving itself up. (Note again the theme of what one can and cannot accomplish of oneself.) Then it is that the path is said to become one of true surrender. "...you don't actually...give anything up, but things just go...It's like the end of the heavy rainy season...There's a little brightness in the south and west and east. The clouds begin

to lift rather than you pushing them up.” (Trungpa, 1976). And from the Sufi side: “If a person gives up a pleasure...this is an outside leaving. But if the pleasure leaves him, this is...the true witnessing (*mushada*).” (Abu al-Husayn an-Nuri quoted in Al-Jamal & Abdullah, 1998, p. 160). Basically the self has to fail at the path and thereby surrender - not our ordinary idea of teaching and learning.

The fruition of reaching such lowness will be that the student returns “to be a holy king or a holy queen” (Al-Jamal, 2002) empowered with the purified form of the qualities of the outer mind. In the Kagyu ritual of the Outer Abhisheka, the lama literally sits on a throne and is crowned with a diadem of skulls representing the primordially pure and beneficial form of the confused outer attributes. But none of this can take place if one remains at the outer level, so we must travel inwards.

II. The Inner Level: the Stations of the Heart (Sufi), the Inner Abhisheka (Buddhist)

Here the language begins to change to be less representational. The pervasive imagery is of connection, falling in love, and intoxication. Think of the first blush of romantic love in which the world becomes infused with magic. Or imagine coming home after a bad day and taking the first swallow of a stiff drink. Of course if it’s physical alcohol, in a few seconds you need another swallow, and things can soon get out of hand. And the touch of romantic love may quickly become anxiety, jealousy and the rest of ego’s tricks. But, say the Sufi, when the eye of the heart opens, one tastes the wine that is not like any other wine. This is the beginning of the divine intoxication.

On the outer level one related to other people, including loved ones and even one’s guru, as separate from oneself. One also saw God as separate, as another anthropomorphic person operating from an outer level mind like one’s own. It is at the inner level, the Sufi stations of the heart, that this begins to change into real intimacy, an intimacy that includes everything in one’s world from sense perceptions, to people, to God. This is where an I-Thou relationship with God (Buber, 1958) becomes possible. What may only have been a concept of God at the outer level becomes a taste at the inner. There is communication with God, perhaps beautiful in its expanded states, perhaps fearful in contracted states, but viable as long as one continues on the path.

In Kagyu Buddhist language, the second level is the opening of communication (of speech in an expanded sense) with reality. Here the phenomenal world begins to meet the wisdom of emptiness (*sunyata*). Emptiness at this point means that the world known to the senses, thoughts, and emotions of the outer level is seen as insubstantial, perhaps dreamlike, yet imbued with a spark of the ungraspable deepest wisdom⁵.

Both Kagyu and Shadhiliyya speak here in terms of the union of masculine and feminine. For the Kagyu the union is visualized as “deities” representing the masculine energy of the phenomenal world in union with the feminine energy of wisdom, a union that generates the bliss that intoxicates all obstacles. For the Shadhiliyya Sufi, the relationship of masculine and

feminine is the tracing back through one's humanity to the unity of the original Adam and Eve, a holy union which also generates bliss. The Sufi enjoins the student to "break his tomb" and drink the divine wine, and in the Vajrayana ritual of the inner abhisheka, the student receives a spoonful of sacred wine from a skull cup (in Tibet supposedly a real skull).

The fruition of opening to the inner level in both the Sufi and Buddhist examples is that compassion and love start to flow and circulate. In Sufi language the heart is now God's house, and the student prays, "Help me to show the flower inside my heart, so that anyone can take what they need from this flower..." (Al-Jamal, 2002, p. 53). The Buddhist vows, "May I become sustenance in every way for sentient beings to the limits of space..." (Shantideva, 1995, a phrase often used in Tibetan Buddhist Bodhisattva vow ceremonies.⁶)

III. The Wisdom Level: the Stations of the Soul (Sufi), the Third Abhisheka (Buddhist)

In folk psychology, many people have intimations of some level in themselves deeper still than the warmth of the heart. The word "soul" is sometimes used to indicate that level. For example when people say that a spouse or lover is their soul mate it indicates a bond deeper than ordinary love such that, perhaps, the union is not affected by geographical separation or that betrayal by such a person would be devastating.

In both Kagyu and Shadhiliyya this third level forms an intermediary between the inconceivable source and the everyday phenomenal world of matter and form. It is understood as the subtle radiance of the source. For the Sufi it is the world of the 99 names of God; these are names for qualities of God. In Vajrayana Buddhism it is the world of the reality of the mandala. The atmosphere of this level is indicated in the Sufi instruction to "Change every quality in your heart to become a new quality full of light." (Al-Jamal, 2002).

The 99 names comprise many kinds of qualities such as compassion, power, peace, wisdom, and unity (see, for example, Al-Jamal, 2001, and Al-Jerrahi, 2000). The qualities are alternatively treated as attributes of an external God and as one's own attributes to be developed. What this means in practice is that the student is alternately, or even simultaneously, receiving a quality (for example peace), embodying it, and giving it to others. Students are encouraged to contemplate the qualities in depth and to repeat the Arabic names for them like mantras to nurture those qualities in themselves. They are also taught to use the qualities to effect specific purposes such as protection or healing. The essence of all the qualities, like the essence of everything else, is God.

The Tibetan mandala is also a structure of unity representing the sacred form of the universe. The basic meaning of the mandala has been expressed as "All things are included in the sphere of self-born wisdom." (Trungpa, 1981). Just as the 99 qualities of God are manifestations of God, so the energies of the mandala are considered the radiance of the undefinable sacred ground beyond mind. The confused outer mind grasps at the energies of this radiance with the karmic habits that turn it into a material world of insatiable desire, fear, aggression, and ignorance. The function of the mandala is to transform the energies back into their wisdom

aspects (more accurately to recognize them as what they always were). The mandala is ringed by fierce protectors whose role it is to assure that energies received into the mandala are properly transformed. Each section of the mandala represents a specific confused outer energy, its wisdom transformation, and the Buddha activity that corresponds to that wisdom. Students do practices in which they identify with these energies for the purpose of transforming their own and the world's confused energies into their corresponding wisdoms. (Insert Figure 1 about here) It is the teachings of this third and the fourth level of human functioning that most distinguish Vajrayana from Mahayana Buddhism, and it is the images and ritual aspects of mandala practices that people in the West most associate with Tibetan Buddhism in particular, since that is the observable form of the empowerments (*wang*) given as public blessings.

Let us take a tour of a basic mandala to look at correspondences between the principles of the mandala and the types of names and qualities of God. Note that the purpose of such an exercise in both traditions would be compassion; compassion and mercy are the first two qualities of God among the 99 names, and compassion is considered the reason behind all Buddha activity in Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. We enter the mandala through the east gate. This is where the penetrating energy of anger cuts through the aggression of outer-level concepts and emotions to reveal the peaceful mirrorlike wisdom (*vajra*) that lies beneath them. Mirror-like wisdom shows all things in their pure form, empty (see endnote 5) yet luminous. The Buddha activity associated with mirror-like wisdom is that of pacifying. In the Sufi stations of the soul, the image of the mirror is also central as the student is to see all things as a mirror of God. From this vision, he can begin to receive the many qualities of peace, protection, and security that God is offering him.

To the south of the mandala, the hungry-ghost mentality of poverty, pride, and greed, when pacified, is revealed as none other than awareness of the inherent richness of the universe (*ratna*). The corresponding wisdom is that of equanimity. The Buddha activity is that of enriching, which is also the energy of expansiveness and generosity. Likewise the Sufi in the stations of the soul, having surrendered the poverty of his *nafs* (personality) and now seeing the face of God in all his trials and circumstances, abides in equanimity. Among the 99 names, there are qualities of self-sufficiency, generosity, and expansiveness. The connection between poverty at the outer level (the ego doesn't actually possess anything) and the discovery of inner richness is a theme in many spiritual traditions; e.g. think of "Blessed are the poor in spirit..." of the Christian beatitudes.

In the west of the mandala, the seductive energy of passion which seeks to draw towards itself objects of pleasure and desire and thrust away objects of pain and fear is liberated through equanimity into its true nature as the clear and gentle vision of what is truly beneficial. This is called the wisdom of discriminating awareness (*padma*). The Buddha activity is that of magnetizing (i.e. of attracting and bringing together). Through the guidance available in the awareness that discriminates what is useful to the path from what is harmful to it, blessings, beauty, good fortune, and the highest good fortune of meeting with the true dharma can be attracted and brought into situations. Among the 99 names of God, there are an abundance of qualities of God's guidance, vision, knowing, and wisdom as well as love and beauty. The humble and faithful student of the soul can attract these qualities to himself and others. Put another way, God draws the open and willing student to His qualities and Himself, and the more

realized a Sufi teacher, the more power he has to be a channel of this for others.

In the north of the mandala the tightly clenched energies of jealousy and miserliness, when relaxed and informed by the wisdom of discriminating awareness, are released as the powerful energies of the wisdom of all accomplishing action (*karma*). The Buddha activity is that of destroying – destroying understood as the destruction of whatever needs to be destroyed and care for whatever needs care. Among the 99 names of God, there are attributes of power, majesty, dominion and accomplishment, since God – and the student who is now identifying with God’s attributes – can do anything that is needed.

In the center of the mandala is the wisdom of all encompassing space (*buddha*). It represents the true form of the embodiment of the animate and inanimate universe: unified, self existing, all encompassing, space-like in its unreality to the eye of the outer mind, luminous to the subtle eye. The 99 names of God also contain qualities of unity, self subsistence, all pervasiveness, and light. In Sufi imagery, at the level of the soul, the tomb of the body is broken, and the body is now light.

Vast and panoramic as all this may be, it is not yet the ultimate for either tradition. Behind the mandala principle in the Vajrayana and behind the qualities of the soul as understood by the Sufi is the essence itself. In Shadhiliyya Sufi language, Adam never actually left the garden, but in order to reach and penetrate to the garden of the essence, it is necessary to surrender all idols completely, to “die.” At the end of the stations of the soul is the *fana*, the death of the soul into God. A being who is completely drawn to God and surrendered to Him might pass very gently into the *fana*, but that is not the case for most people. One image of the needed purification is of fire. On the outer levels, the *shaitan* (Satan) was an enemy, but from the deep perspective of the soul, Satan, in deep love and surrender to God, accepts his appointed role as the guide of the darkness who tests mankind and guards the gate of the essence so that none may pass without burning off everything in them that is not of the Truth. Here the Satanic fire plays much the same role as the fierce Tibetan protectors (*mahakalas*) who ring both the periphery of the mandala and its innermost chamber.

On the Kagyu Buddhist path one must also die. At the end of Naropa’s trials (not described in this account), he cuts off his head and limbs and uses them, together with his blood, to make a mandala in the desert for his teacher. Only then can he receive the final teaching. It is understood that while previous practices may have resolved desire, aggression, and the heedlessness of the outer levels of ignorance, now the student must penetrate through his basic ignorance itself. As with the Sufi *fana*, the imagery for most students is of fire. When the phenomenal world and wisdom meet fully at the level of the mandala, the yogic fire of *chandali* ignites. In the words of the teacher Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, “...it begins to expand and it begins to burn heaven, and it begins also to burn and consume earth, and then it also begins to consume and burn what’s in between the two...It begins to burn anything you thought was the saving grace for your life in the past: your little memories, your little works of art, your little poetry, your little music, your little philosophy, your little science, your little love affair, your little bank account, your little expense account, your little house, your little husband or wife, your little children...It consumes everything you have laid any kind of trip on...that fire is not the fire of destruction, necessarily...That fire is a very productive fire...That fire actually destroyed

precisely what needs to be destroyed, and it cultivates what needs to be cultivated...There is a sense of tremendous productivity and faith and hope whereby you could actually let go...” (Trungpa, 1978)

IV. The Essence: The Stations of the Secret (Sufi), The Abhisheka of That (*Mahamudra* and *Maha Ati*)⁷ (Buddhist)

In both traditions, the essence, altogether beyond the grasp of the mind, is inexpressible. It is beyond time, beyond causality. It is said to be the real object of human desires; in the words of the poet Rumi, “When grapes turn to wine, they’re wanting this. When the night sky pours down, ...[it’s] wanting this.” (Barks, 1995, p. 262)⁸. Perhaps everyone has occasionally had an ungraspable, unknowable, and unforgettable glimmer of a truly other way of knowing and being that is worth everything. The Shadhiliyya Sufi speaks of the first light of creation (the Mohammedan light) and of the deep secret love. The Kagyu and Nyingma lineages teach the clear light (the ground luminosity) and the Great Perfection. The Sufi speaks of God. Buddhism goes to great lengths not to speak of anything that could be grasped as a concept. Both traditions teach that the world as it appears in the previous levels, particularly in the outer level of *samsara* and the *dunya*, is not real in itself - the essence is the only actual reality. Both traditions speak of unity, perfection, compassion, luminance, timelessness, completion.

Pause: This is not yet the end, but note what we are seeing at this point. We started with two different religions. The Shadhiliyya Sufi begins with our standard Western notions about God and man, but by the time he reaches the level of the secret, he has shed both himself and his conceptions of God. The Kagyu-Nyingma Tibetan Buddhist begins without Western concepts of God, but by the time he reaches the essence, he asserts that he has gone beyond mind. We might well reconsider our preconceptions and clichés about religion.

Many questions may now arise. Are the two traditions talking about the same thing? (After all, one might use the same tool to crack the outer shell of an almond or of a pecan, but the sweet inner flesh would not be identical.) And what are the implications of same or different, or of one way or the other? My hope is that this chapter will lead to an additional question: with what kind of mind is one asking (whatever the question), and with what kind of mind is one willing to receive an answer?

At issue is that concepts change meaning at different levels of the mind. Consider obedience, an important aspect of the Sufi and Vajrayana paths, as well as of the Christian contemplative path (Kanangeser & Bright, this volume). Obedience is one face of surrender and a common method of training for surrender and letting go. But the understanding of both what one is surrendering to and who is doing the surrendering changes with stages of the path. The outer mind, experiencing itself as a separate ego, may obey parent, spouse, guru or God through any number of self referencing motivations such as fear, desire to be loved, desire for reward, or giving up to a hopeless situation with no known alternatives. At the level of heart (using the Sufi

terminology), obedience could become an I-thou intimate communication with a not completely separate other, be that other a person, moral system, natural order, or one's God. At the soul level, "obedience" is the embodiment and transmission to others of natural or God given virtues and powers such as peacefulness, strength, or compassion. And at the level of the secret, the concept of obedience becomes mute altogether as the realized person acts directly and inherently from the deepest wisdom beyond mind (Buddhist) or from God (Sufi). (Re Christianity, note St. Augustine's dictum that freedom for the elect means that they can no longer will to sin).

If scientist, scholar, or educator persist in asking and answering questions about the deeper levels of experience using only the outer level conceptual mind, the phenomena asked about will dissolve or mutate into something quite different, leaving only misunderstandings. It is possible, nonetheless, with proper respect for what is at issue, to have reasonable communications between the levels; that is because what may appear from the path perspective as different levels are not really separate to the eye of completion. We turn now to the completion part of the journey.

V. The Return

The essence is not a place (there is no place) where one dwells in time (there is no time), but conditionally speaking, after the death into God of the *fana*, is the *baqa*, the return. In returning the student is changed; he now perceives everything through the eye of the secret. The Kagyu-Nyingma Buddhist speaks of it this way, "If you have been properly consumed by this cosmic fire of *chandali*, then you could be anywhere and you could become anything - but always connected with whatever is needed...you begin to realize that the *jnana* (wisdom) principle contains a tremendous sense of fullness. Then you again go back and restep what you have gone through...Having attained unity, you go back and restep the whole thing." (Trungpa, 1978).

Returning to the third level, the Kagyu student may say, as is sometimes done in an abhisheka ritual when pulling the blindfold from one's eyes, "The structure and inhabitants of the mandala become real." The Shadhiliyya Sufi student is, at this point, said to embody the qualities at the soul level so that he is himself now the *qibla*, the direction of prayer. Return from death in the essence should confer a profound (and perhaps radiant) equanimity. For the Buddhist there should be no preference even for enlightenment over confusion, since enlightenment is itself a relative condition which depends on confusion, and the essence is beyond both. It is also beyond paradise for the Sufi, as we saw earlier for Rabi'a. Thus for the Shadhiliyya lineage, the fully realized Sufi is not the ecstatic but the sober Sufi. Psychologists and neuro-scientists could well take note of this; studies of meditative and religious experience have all assumed that what is at stake are particular kinds of experience, but the essence of inner path teaching is that the kind of experience one is having is ultimately irrelevant. Ecstatic experiences, painful or boring experiences, they are equally the essence of truth or, for the Sufi, of God -- and thinking otherwise is the essence of obstacles.

Returning to the second level, the eye of the heart is now fully open. In Buddhist language, "compassionate energy arises without pretense." The Sufi says, "If you look at people with these eyes (the outer eye), you do not like them, but if you look with the Eye of Reality, you

can see that everything is perfect.” (Abu al-Hasan ash-Shadhdhuli quoted in Al-Jamal & Abdullah, 1998, p. 396). The Sufi student should see God’s face in every face and send the love and the mercy to everyone.

The final fruition is the return to the first level, the outer world, the confused world to give to others what one has realized. At this point it can be seen how the levels telescope into a unity; the *nafs* (elements of the personality) that listen to the orders from the darkness are, from the perspective of the purity of the essence, the perfect *nafs* possessed by the completely realized man (*Insan al-Kamil*). From the perspective of the Buddhist Great Perfection, the complete practice is “just ordinary life itself.” (Khentse, 1970). But the understanding of action in ordinary life has changed. For the Vajrayana Buddhist, action out of wisdom means action (properly non-action or spontaneous action) fully in contact with the realities and needs of the situation and unencumbered by the strategies of the self centered ego or by preconceptions or methods. This is sometimes called crazy wisdom (*cholwa*). Likewise the Sufi no longer “asks how or why” but turns to God as “the ears he hears through and the eyes he sees through and the hands he strikes through and the feet he walks with.” (Hadith Qudsi⁹). The student constantly asks how to do things. The Buddhist now says you just do it. And Rabi’a’s answer when asked “how” was, “You know of the *how* but I know of the *howless*.” (Al-Jamal & Abdullah, 1998, p. 64).

In the final vision, we see the Sufi as caliph of his kingdom under God¹⁰ and the Buddhist as the wise and compassionate universal monarch, crowned with the wisdoms of the mandala. For both, it is a vast vision. Ibn Arabi says, “My heart has opened into every form. It is a pasture for gazelles, a cloister for Christian monks, a temple for idols, the Tables of the Tawrah (Torah), and the Book of the Qur’an.” (Al-Jamal & Abdullah, 1998, p. 311). And the Buddhist finally fulfills his Bodhisattva vow to offer sentient beings that mind of the essence which is “the inexhaustible treasure which removes the world’s poverty, the supreme medicine which cures the world’s sickness, the tree which provides rest for beings weary of wandering on the paths of existence,... the rising moon of mind which dispels the torment of the *kleshas* [conflicting emotions], the great sun which puts an end to the obscurity of ignorance...” (phrases from a Bodhisattva vow ceremony based on Santideva,1995).

VI. Applications to Education

People smile when the Austrian satirist Thomas Bernhard calls school “a machine for the mutilation of my mind.” (see Bernhard, 1985). Who in the “civilized” world has not, at least sometimes, felt that way? Yet surely what we want is an educational system that enables people to access aspects of their minds capable of making creative and wise decisions in an increasingly complex political, religious, and scientific environment. So long as people remain trapped in the conceptual and emotional boundaries of the outer mind, Buddhist, Sufi and others would assert

such an education to be impossible. Formal educational systems around the world specialize in feeding information to the outer mind, and it is generally done in such a way that students are socialized (some might say brainwashed) into abandoning all other portions of their intelligence. This is not because public schools are secular; most religious education also consists of the delivery of information, only in this case information about particular theologies. There is nothing wrong with knowledge on the outer level; the outer world blossoms when seen (and lived) in its proper perspective. It is the cutting off of access to the deeper levels that are said to nourish the outer that is at issue.¹¹ Western psychology is of little help for any of this; it may describe mechanisms of the body, cognition, emotion, and personality but has remained largely oblivious to anything else. (The psychoanalytic unconscious, though sometimes called depth psychology, is generally pictured as an ego-centered manipulative homunculus that differs from the conscious outer layer of the mind only in not being conscious.) Even research done on meditation and spirituality tends to be formulated from the perspective of the outer mind; not surprisingly, if that is what is put into the research, that is what is gotten out of it (Rosch, 1999a, 2002a, b, Rosch & Fallah, in press). Is there any place for beginner's mind wisdom in ordinary education?

The beginner's mind approach ought to be applicable to education. Remember that beginner's mind teachings (even when described in dramatic and colorful fashion) concern the basic nature of the everyday mind and the way to access that nature. They say that there are levels of mind beyond the surface of our usual consciousness and habits that are increasingly real, good, and efficacious. (Actually, from a fruition perspective, talking about "levels" and even "path" is misleading.¹²) Because the methods for accessing the "levels" call for not doing, rather than being an expert doer, they are said to be fully accessible ("closer than your eyes"), always available each moment in daily life if one is but willing to notice let alone live from them, and relevant to everything, including both teaching and learning in public schools. Many people would now claim that tapping into this kind of mind on a mass level is the only thing that can, at this juncture in history, change the world in a significant way. From this point of view, trying to create wisdom by moving around concepts in the outer mind is like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

There is, in fact, a burgeoning movement in North America towards what is being called "Contemplative Education." This is defined by one of the leading institutes in the field, the Garrison Institute, as "a third way of knowing that complements the rational and the sensory." (Hart, 2003). Inspired by a number of pioneering books that both argue the need for such education and demonstrate the way in which it can be done (Palmer, 1998; Livey & Palmer, 1999; Kessler, 2000; Hart 2001, 2003; Lantieri, 2001; Forbes, 2004; Hoppe & Speck, 2005), contemplative education programs are springing up in many major American and Canadian cities. These programs tend to be directed towards three main areas: meditative relaxation and mindfulness; social-emotional intelligence and compassion; and the ability to tap into and communicate about the serious concerns of life and death that are usually considered off limits for discussion by young people in our society (this latter tapping into the tradition of wisdom by

dialog and conversation). There are programs designed for different age groups and those designed for teachers.

The reason beginner's mind inspired programs are appropriate for public education is that their practices do not owe allegiance to any particular information content. Information may be sectarian (religious, secular, scientific, and so on), but training designed to allow people to find their own basic abilities is like type O blood. To object to such programs would be like objecting to the afternoon nap in preschool. A student who begins to access his basic nature might express it in a deeper understanding of the teachings of his own religion if he has one, but equally his social relationships, schoolwork, athletics, hobbies, even his sleep.

A number of institutes are presently funding the programs designed to implement and research various forms of contemplative education: the Garrison Institute, the Impact Foundation, the Center for the Advancement of Contemplative Education, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, SEL (Social and Emotional Learning), the Mind and Life Institute, Roots of Empathy and the Tides Center's Project Renewal: Building Resiliency from the Inside Out which works with 12 schools in New York in and around Ground Zero. Naropa University in Boulder Colorado, a Buddhist inspired school, offers two degree programs in Contemplative Education: its regular Early Childhood Program and a low residency online master's program in Contemplative Education designed for working teachers. The new Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education which is being built in Vancouver, British Columbia has a special mandate for fostering education in compassion. Many of the institutes have online forums encouraging local groups of teachers, educators, and other interested parties to meet and form working groups. Even as I write this, no doubt new groups and projects are being formed and new techniques experimented with.

A cornucopia of techniques are employed by the various projects: a) The fostering of meditative relaxation and mindfulness might use secular meditation, yoga, attention training, exercises where children focus on their breathing, thoughts, or eating, body scanning, visualizing a safe place, slowing down, "chilling," noticing bodily sensations, stopping and waiting for three breaths, finding a quiet personal space, centering, grounding and calming oneself. Such techniques also allow tuning into one's own emotions and ways of relating with people. b) Classic compassion practices include generating thoughts of loving kindness for oneself, one's relatives, friends, and others, including enemies. An innovative program designed by Mary Gordon of Roots of Empathy brings mothers with their infants into a classroom once a month for a year so that students may form their own relationships with the mother and infant. (A particularly haunting story from this project: a 14 year old boy who had lived in a succession of foster homes since he was four took the baby and gently rocked it for awhile, then asked the instructor if someone who had never been loved could still be a good father; Gordon, 2006.) c) Other techniques designed to connect students to their deep intuitions include working with the arts, storytelling, spending time in nature, and discussion groups of difficult topics important to the student.

One of the things that contemplative education is willing to address that is normally shunned is the simple but pervasive experience of not knowing. The outer mind flees from not knowing as from death -- and contemplatives know that, in a sense, we do die and return each

moment. This is one of the everyday faces of the death that is talked about at the deeper levels of inner wisdom paths. Education usually deals with the issue by packing the outer mind with more information and skills so that there will always be something familiar to hold onto. The price for this is constant struggle and tension. Another price is stagnation, because it is in the gaps that novelty and creativity occur.¹³ A first principle of contemplatives East and West is to stay with not knowing. Contemplative education explicitly offers students, terrified of not knowing (for example of going blank on a test), a “perspective outside their usual thoughts and emotions that allows [them] to focus and center and ground and calm themselves, so they can access their inner knowledge” (quoted in Boyce, 2007).

While programs at the K-12 level are largely motivated by desires to foster the personal development, socio-emotional capacity, and inner life of school children, in higher education a turn towards contemplative education has been provoked by a different need, the complexity and often ill defined nature of the emerging subject matters themselves. Most universities have committees or task forces charged with suggesting innovative approaches to teaching (see for example, Harvard Magazine, 2006), and maps for a radically new mind set to deal with uncertainty, change and other issues have emerged in some surprising fields, for example business (Senge, 2006) and architecture (McDonough & Braungart, 2002).

To illustrate the issues at the college level, consider the example of a proposed pilot program for the training of engineering students at the University of California, Berkeley. Schools of engineering are becoming increasingly concerned that the complex and far reaching impacts of technology are no longer adequately served by a professional training and ethics geared to simpler processes. The systems of 21st century technology, unlike those of earlier periods, have properties that are holistic, chaotic, and may not be describable independent of the observer. Such complexity leads to impacts that are geographically global, may be imperceptible in time (such as radioactive waste), are potentially irreversible, and could have catastrophic outcomes. A different sort of mind seems to be needed to cope with such issues.

The program is an attempt to map contemplative education into the actual content of classes. The first principle is to provide an overarching mind-set or paradigm in which: 1) the world is perceived not as mechanical, as in classical engineering, but as nonlinear, and 2) engineering is seen not as an isolated technological domain but as an integrated part of society. Basic attitudes towards a subject are influential; the Buddhist and Sufi cases illustrated how the perspective of the final stage could determine introductory teaching. A core course in the new engineering program provides historical and social background so that students can learn to understand engineering problems in their social and human contexts. Core science courses are designed to be rigorous but at the same time convey the shifting nature of scientific paradigms and the relativity of concepts to the systems and networks in which they are used (a key insight in contemplative paths). The nonlinear perspective requires agility with concepts and a continuing openness of mind.

It is interesting that it appeared necessary to also include practices in the program similar to those at the K-12 level. Courses are allowed and encouraged that address the student's

personal development (at present an engineering student can meet breadth requirements with a class in art history but not a class in painting). Such classes might include body awareness, contemplative practices, and creative self-expression. Other classes are aimed at developing ethical know-how, entrepreneurship and leadership, with particular emphasis on the ability to take the point of view of others and think beyond one's own egocentric concerns. Finally, the program includes training in praxis (learning through action) in which students are placed in field settings. The goal of classes, as it has been for the younger students, is not only to impart information but to develop needed abilities and qualities in the students. Courses such as these could do much for the training of other older professionals, most obviously therapists, teachers, social workers, managers, and other service providers who deal directly with people.

Inner path teachings also offer hints towards improving general learning within the classroom. There is a good reason why the programs in contemplative education involve the training of teachers as well as students. Teachers, like parents, transmit a good deal more than information regardless of what they think they are doing; thus a teacher's personal development will affect the classroom setting and should be encouraged. For a teacher, a beginner's mind attitude of regarding students (and oneself) as perfect even in one's imperfections is useful in reducing stress and burnout. (No student asks to be stupid nor teacher to be shy.) It is often useful to consider what preconceptions and habits need to be unlearned rather than to concentrate on only what is new. The desire system, because it includes rather than rejects what is other, is a far better means for learning than the fear and aggression system; thus any way to modify the tyranny of the grading system can be useful to a class. Finally, giving up the idea that one's ego has control over anything, let alone the outcome of one's endeavors, is sometimes called the universal path to peace of mind - and is likely to magnetize better outcomes in the classroom.

But what about research proving that techniques of contemplative education work? – thus demands the well socialized outer layer of our minds. Most of the programs in contemplative education have a research component, and preliminary data, or at least case examples and quotes from participants, are available on the websites of most of the institutes sponsoring the studies. Given the successes of research demonstrating beneficial effects of mindfulness in psychotherapy (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, in press), it can be expected that there will soon be multitudes of reports documenting the benefits of the various contemplative education techniques on measurable variables such as test scores, attendance records, and behavior problems. Some teachers (and authors of books on contemplative education) have mixed feelings about reducing the rich life of the classroom to such measures. It should be pointed out that mindfulness based psychotherapies do not work mechanically (Rosch, in press); the therapist or person running the program must have some feel for the meaning behind the technique. If teachers have a sense of that “third way of knowing that complements the rational and the sensory” they will likely be able to transmit a sense of the deeper layers of the mind to at least some of their students despite pressures toward measurable documentation.

But isn't there a great chasm between the imposing stages of beginner's mind paths and (to play devil's advocate) a six year old taking three breaths and wishing well to her puppy or an engineering student studying nonlinear processes? Can one actually reach the depths and heights of such a path without its context, that is to say without the guidance and protection of the outer shell provided by a spiritual group and its specific teachings? The problem is analogous to what

happens when a religion or a secular form travels to new cultures. On the one hand, there is the danger of it losing itself entirely in the new culture, but, on the other hand, this is an opportunity for it to shed its cultural baggage and return to what it considers its core meaning. Two responses are being given to concerns about contemplative education losing its point in public schools. The more obvious is the reminder that we're not really talking about an esoteric path but of people tuning into the full range of what they already are. And seeds are always small; everything must start somewhere; and all actions are ultimately local. The second response is perhaps more interesting if less plausible (at least to the outer mind). A fair number of spiritual groups and teachers claim that there is a sea change taking place in the interconnected mental life of the planet such that awakening to wisdom can now happen more easily and with fewer traditional accouterments (for example, Ardagh, 2005). Suiting action to claim, some groups are now using methods to convey their wisdom that may involve little or no conceptual content and virtually no institutional commitments (see, for example, OnenessMovement.org) – definitely not the historical norm for movements either secular or spiritual. The attempt to apply beginner's mind methods to public education might be a blind alley, but it might also be a breakthrough since it requires the shedding of historical conceptual shells of all sorts.

VI. Implications and Conclusions

It's time to pay attention to inner wisdom paths. This paper has given an example of two such paths and how they teach their wisdom. These paths radically overturn how teaching and learning are imagined in the world of the outer mind. Here are some of the ways: the end-state is already present. One needs to unlearn rather than learn. All one's concepts need to be seen through. Language is used to transmit rather than refer. The dualities and polarities we use to guide our lives such as self and other or good and bad, rather than being augmented, are to be given up in unity. One traverses a path, but, in the end all the stages are seen as one thing, and there is no path. Rather than promising ego a rose garden, the teachings are adamant that ego is not going to get anything. To be completely poor is the gateway to richness. There is nothing the egocentric outer mind can do in its ignorance to make wise decisions, but if one gives oneself up to formlessness and death, one comes back spontaneously guided to act with the deepest wisdom for the good of all.

These paths may seem esoteric, but in both traditions it is understood that what is described is the most ordinary of realities. Each moment contains both the *fana* (the death) and the *baqa* (the return), and we have the choice of returning to our senses and mind with varying degrees of insanity or sanity. In a demanding world, science could at least explore the possibility of a means of tapping into a reservoir of wisdom that results in creative enlightened action. We need a different psychology for such an exploration (Rosch, 1999a, 2002a, b) and, as indicated earlier, perhaps a different educational system.

We also need a different approach to religion. Religion is important to people. Returning to the words of William James, it deals with “whatever is seen as most primal and enveloping and deeply true”(James, 1902, p. 34). However, if religions are captured by the ego habits of the outer mind and used to comfort and aggrandize the outer self, the mixture can become explosive. The dualities of a good me and mine versus an evil other soon follow, and shortly “ignorant armies clash by night.” Yet religion may also be the institution in society that most readily

specializes in the center of the mandala, in those faculties of the human that might lie below the surface of the mind or dwell beyond the mind altogether (which, as we have seen, does not have to be given a theistic interpretation). There are presently spiritual renewal movements in all the major religions. What magic might happen were each religion to find and embrace its own inner wisdom path?

Finally, there is the issue of governance. Both the Buddhist and Sufi examples conclude with the vision of an enlightened king, perhaps reminding many of the philosopher king of Plato's Republic. There is no obvious way to instantiate such an institution in today's world, and it may be more appropriate to think of the king as an inner figure in the first place. Wouldn't you rather be ruled by your wisdom mind than by a host of neurotic impulses vying for control? Imagine what it would be like to have a democracy in which the responsibility for enlightened kingship graces each individual.

In conclusion: from a beginner's mind perspective, blindness to all but the outer level of the mind has produced a constricted view of psychology, an obstructed educational system, a dearth of wise decision making, and a world in disarray. Beginner's mind inner path teachings suggest an alternative vision of the human being and human mind. Remember that Einstein said that problems can never be solved with the same mind that created them. He also said that imagination is better than facts.

Endnotes

1. Kagyu and Nyingma are separate lineages, but many of the most influential Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the United States hold both lineages and present the teachings as a single path. Kagyu teachings are used for the earlier stages; the Nyingma (and Dzogchen) perspective represents the final evolution. This relatively lucid format is the one that will be followed here. (Dzogchen is sometimes taken as a line of Nyingma teachings, sometimes as something separate; in either case, many Kagyu and Nyingma teachers also teach Dzogchen.)

2. The Abhishekas will be described basically from the perspective of Kagyu *sadhanas* (practices). However, the interpretation of the fourth abhisheka will use primarily Nyingma and Dzogchen renderings as is customary in joint Kagyu-Nyingma paths.

3. How can we know what is beyond the mind -- given that the senses, reason, and whatever other states of consciousness one thinks one has are part of the mind? Theistic answers make reference to God. The Vajrayana Buddhist answer is that there is an awareness that is more fundamental and more inclusive than consciousness (from a path perspective Sanskrit: *vipashyana*, Tibetan: *lhagthong*; from the more fundamental perspective of nondual awareness Sanskrit: *vidya* Tibetan: *rig pa*). This is one of the respects in which the Vajrayana sees itself as fundamentally different from the Mahayana schools (described by Shen, this volume). The Vajrayana teacher might point out (for example, Gyamtso, 1986) that all eight stages of consciousness in the Yogacara (*Weishi*, consciousness only) school of the Mahayana are only forms of consciousness (*vijnana*): i.e. six sense consciousnesses, a consciousness that turns everything into ego (the *manovijnana*), and a storehouse consciousness that contains one's karmic seeds (the *alayavijnana*). Prescient as this may be, the Vajrayana argues it is still a description of *samsara* rather than a description from the fully awakened state.

4. This saying is a somewhat loose translation of the first lines of the Hsin Hsin Ming by Sosan Zenji, the Third Zen Patriarch.

5. Here we come to a watershed in Tibetan Buddhist teachings and, in fact, in Buddhist teachings in general. Three of the four major Tibetan lineages (Kagyu, Sakya, and Nyingma) adhere to the *shentong* (other empty) interpretation of emptiness in which all things are empty of other than wisdom. Put another way, things are empty of self nature but filled with wisdom (filled with the essence). Put in a yet more advanced way, all that things really are is wisdom essence. Historically *shentong* is traced from the Buddha nature (*Tathagatagarbha*) schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The fourth Tibetan lineage, the Gelugpa, adheres to the *rangton* (self empty) interpretation in which things are simply empty of self nature, a reversion to an earlier Mahayana position. There has been a good deal of conflict in Tibet over this point. Many of the parallels with Sufism that I am exploring in this chapter depend upon the *shentong* view because it is a view that says there is a way of knowing beyond the limits of the mind. (See Gyamtso, 1986, and Hookham, 1991 for a detailed account of this distinction.)

6. A Bodhisattva vows to remain in *samsara* to work for the liberation of beings until all have attained enlightenment. He or she is vowing to continue to be reborn life after life and moment after moment in order to be helpful rather than simply driven by personal karma.

7. This is where the Nyingma lineage aspects become prominent.
8. The version here is how I have heard the verses sung. The Barks translation is a more complex rendering.
9. Hadith are the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed as distinct from the revealed text of the Qur'an. Hadith Qudsi are the most authenticated of these, sometimes given a special status midway between the hadith and the Qur'an. The least controversial way to reference a Hadith Qudsi seems to be to simply label it as such. Various lists of hadith can be found in many sources including the online service *USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts*.
10. While Islam forbids visual representations of God and the making of idols, there is a rich tradition of linguistic imagery and poetry to convey aspects of the path. Buddhism is generally more paranoid about the use of language as a snare for the mind than about visual representations. Both lineages use the language of royalty and rulership for the return of the realized person to the outer level.
11. Buddhism, for example, distinguishes between Dharma, which is wisdom, and small "d" dharma, which is the knowledge of how things work in the outer world (fire burns and so on). Buddhism recognizes, as would any viable tradition, that you need the dharmas of knowing how the mundane aspects of the outer world work to have a world in which the wisdom of Dharma can manifest. The problem is when all other forms of knowing are cut off, and dharma is left to substitute for wisdom Dharma – as in the expertise view of wisdom.
12. An oft cited Tibetan teaching story tells of a boy who leaves home in search of his father (in some versions in search of a treasure) and, after many adventures, enters a house where he finds what he was looking for -- and also finds that the house is just his old home which he has never left. Note the similarity to Maurice Sendak's popular children's books; where the wild things are in the little boy's bedroom.
13. Artistic, scientific and other forms of creativity are examples of results that one can strive towards but can't actually force to happen. There are many classic examples of inspirations and problem solutions that happened only when the would-be creator gives in to just plain not knowing what to do. Interestingly, one of Freud's early methodological discoveries that led to much of his theorizing was that it was when patients finally ran out of free associations on a topic and went blank, that was the point when, if they stayed with the blank, insights into their situation could occur.

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